

Transcript of an excerpt from an interview with Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz by Penny Rosenwasser at the KPFA Radio Studio, Berkeley, CA, 1990

Audio clip, 3:05 min.

Courtesy Penny Rosenwasser

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz: I guess, since spring, it seemed to me that things are very much in flux suddenly. I mean, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and in a much more absolutely negative way, what's going on now in the Gulf and a sense of war mobilizing very fast and out of control. It seems like things are very alive at any rate. I've been doing some speaking on the college campuses, and it seems like they're coming alive again. There are young people who are really hungry for stories of the '60s in a way that I was, you know, as a pre-'60s movement person hungry for stories of the '30s.

There's just a sense of a lot going on. And how do we put it together? I think in a way it comes together, but that we, of our generation, can't do it all. And that part of what will happen is that the experience and the—I hope—wisdom that we have from having gone through both the excesses and the skill-building of our movement will be able to join up with the kids who are the ones who are gonna have the wildness and the energy and the kind of craziness that you have when you don't really understand—a lot of kids—about death, about danger, when your lives are much freer. You know, there's a kind of risk that I was willing to take that it's very hard for me to take now. And I know what will push me to take it is people I love being in very direct trouble.

That's what pushes me, and I think that's what will push our generation, is the kids sticking their necks out in the way that only kids can, at least in this country. I mean, that's what I see. But I also see that, you know, when I think about what erupted in Gaza, in December 1987, it was the kids. You know, it was the kids pushing the adults ultimately to take risks.

Penny Rosenwasser: You're talking about the intifada.

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz: I am. Yeah. You know, I found that very moving and very instructive in a way. I've been thinking a lot about the way that each movement that I know something about has been coupled with a new form of political organizing that made it possible, that inspired it and also made it possible. When you think about labor unions, you think about sit-ins and civil disobedience and the civil rights movement and consciousness-raising groups with the women's movement.

And I think we're at a point where we don't know what the new forms are going to be and that probably it's the young people who will come up with them, and that we who are stuck, sort of, with forms which have their effect but are limited...you

know, we know them, we're kind of bored by them, we don't quite know what else to do. We have to keep plugging away and also be open to what's happening that's new that we don't quite understand yet. I think those connections with the younger people are gonna be real important if we can do them in the right way. I think about how much it would have helped us as, you know, I'm thinking about the '60s and the early '70s to have had better, more reciprocal relationships with the old left.

Transcript of an excerpt from a speech Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz delivered at the conference "Claiming Our Place: Jews in a Multicultural Society," Berkeley Hillel, CA, March 20, 1994

Audio clip, 1:26 min.

Courtesy Penny Rosenwasser

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz: I wanna turn things around slightly and take multiculturalism as an authentic welcoming of diversity as the norm and identify its alternative—for its alternative is repression, suppression, cultural supremacy, privileging, injustice, and at its extreme end, fascism.

But the fact is, an authentically multicultural world will be a world that approaches, if not achieves, egalitarianism. This means not only that we have a long way to go—in case you didn't notice—it means transformation that none of us can quite imagine at this moment, but it also means that there is one difference in all the differences that we try to embrace in our discussion of multiculturalism. There is one difference that we can't embrace or celebrate but must move to dismantle, and that is the differences of class.

Now, lest I sound like a warmed-over leaflet, which is always my fear in the mid-'90s when I say words like class and capitalism, that, as with any discussion of destroying sexism, that it's not enough to talk about fully integrating by gender the class structure that already exists, and it's not enough to talk about fully integrating by race and culture the class structure that already exists.