Bio: The late Ruth B. Mandel (1938-2020) served as the Director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics for 24 years (from 1995 to 2019). During her tenure, Eagleton's educational programs for Rutgers graduate and undergraduate students expanded, and the Institute enhanced its state and national outreach with visible public programs and Internet communications. Ruth Mandel was Board of Governors Professor of Politics at Rutgers University as well as a Senior Scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics. She was a long-time member of the Directors Board of the Institute for Women's Leadership.

In 1971, Ruth Mandel came to Rutgers as a co-founder of Eagleton's Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). As CAWP'S director from 1971 through 1994, she built the nation's premier research and education center for the study of women's changing political roles and status. During three administrations (1991 to 2006), Mandel held a presidential appointment on the governing Council of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Named Vice Chairperson of the Council by President Clinton in 1993, a position she held for twelve years, Mandel served on the Museum's executive committee and academic committee, chaired its strategic planning and education committees as well as the group tasked with proposing a governing structure for the new Museum.

Her board service also included the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the National Council for Research on Women, the National Commission for the Renewal of American Democracy, and the New Jersey Council on the Humanities. Awards include: Woodrow Wilson Public Service Award, Governor's Pride of New Jersey; Gloria Steinem Women of Vision Award, Ms. Foundation; National Women's Hall of Fame President's 21st Century Leadership Award; Breaking the Glass Ceiling, Women Executives in State Government; Distinguished Policy Leadership and Advancement of Women in Public Life, Women Legislators and College Presidents of Maryland; AAUW's "Women of Distinction" Award; Salute to the Policy Makers, Executive Women of NJ; Juliette Low Excellence in Leadership, Girl Scouts of Delaware-Raritan.

An Interview with Ruth Mandel
November 6th, 2015
Conducted by IWL Leadership Scholars Maegan Kae Sunaz and Na-Yeon Park, Class of 2017
Edited by Tara Gildea, PhD

Maegan Kae Sunaz (MKS) & Na-Yeon Park (NYP): Could you please tell us about your background, and how you ended up at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers?

Ruth Mandel: I came to this country when I was nine years old as an immigrant with my parents, who were refugees. They were fleeing the Holocaust. The family came from Vienna, Austria. During the years of their flight, my parents went through quite a dramatic story. They ended up in England, spent the years of World War II there, and then came to the United States. My mother's family—her parents and one brother—had managed to escape to the United States, and she wanted to be reunited with them. There are lots of stories in that, embedded in what I've just told you—how they escaped, what happened. The rest of my father's family never managed to escape from Europe. They were all murdered.

I grew up as an only child because, by the time my parents finally settled into normal life in this country, they felt that it wasn't like today. Today, couples are having children in their forties, but not back then. They thought it was too late. I never enjoyed being an only child, but I was [one]. Also, I had a very small family—and still have a small family—because my father's quite large family were murdered.

That's my background, but I have to say that I didn't dwell on it. When I look back, I think, "well, why didn't I focus on what had happened in Europe when I went on to study? Why didn't I study the Holocaust when I wrote a PhD dissertation?" It never occurred to me. The attention to the period didn't begin to happen until years later. When I was growing up, most people knew *The Diary of Anne Frank.* That book became a popular and widely read account of one family's experience. But I didn't think about doing anything with it.

Even though I grew up in a family that was devastated by it [the Holocaust]—their whole lives shaped and reshaped by the events in the 1930's and 1940's—I also grew up quite protected from any kind of constant emotional engagement with it, which, in some ways, is amazing. I think of my father now and the fact that he didn't sink into a kind of paralyzed despair. He kept moving forward. He was a lovely person, but there were other people who were affected differently. My grandfather never really recovered from being humiliated. He was a very dignified and very successful gentleman. He was forced to get on his hands and knees and scrub the streets with toothbrushes while people laughed and mocked him. He developed a kind of epilepsy from that and never really recovered.

So much of everyone's life is rooted in personal history and personal experience. Some things you learn from just reading, observing, and being a wide eyed, intelligent human being. But so much of how you see, what you observe, and how you will interpret it is shaped by your own personal history, your family history.

When we arrived in the United States. I was a little girl. I went to public school, and I am a strong proponent of and very grateful to public school education. I study politics now, and this political season has been dominated by discussions about immigrants and immigration. I have very strong feelings about that—about the opportunities of public education in this country and the opportunities for all different people to come here.

We were founded as a country for people from everywhere, except, unfortunately, for the people who were brought here against their will as slaves. But, the vision of the country is a place for people to escape from persecution and to come for opportunity. Nonetheless, resistance to

immigration has also been a continuous part of the history of this country. If you study the early part of the 20th century, immigration was always a difficult, controversial issue. When my parents, for instance, tried to come, there was a quota system in this country. They let certain numbers in from different countries. My father was born in Poland, so he had to wait a long time because the quota for Polish people wasn't good. My mother could have gotten in sooner because she was born in a country with a higher quota.

It's never been easy. What we see now, in the early 21st century, is a version of America's continuing struggle with immigration as an issue. But immigrants are America. It is part of the way I view everything. It's a free country—we're all able to speak freely, to protest, and be critical. I'm very much what I'd call patriotic and a believer in the basic vision and values underlying this country. And so, it's a country of immigrants, but all these immigrants are Americans. In contrast to many places in the world, the native population may be generous in letting in people from other places, but they don't necessarily see the immigrants as part of them. France, for instance, has a huge and quite diverse population now. But it's never changed the way they've seen immigrants. If you're French, you're French. Other people might be citizens. They vote and go to school there, but they're not French, right? Even if they're third generation, they're not French. In this country, though we have moments of struggle, where some nativists say that these are not real Americans, that's a very small voice in this country over our history. People feel that they're Americans, and they have a right to be Americans, right? That's the goal. That's the aspiration.

When I look back, I used to teach autobiography. One of the things I believe about autobiography is that it starts at the moment you're writing it, and you understand yourself by looking back from whatever that point is. If you write it 10 years from now, it might be a different autobiography. If you write it 20 years before that, it would also be different. It has to do with how you are constructing, seeing, and understanding the themes that are important in your life at the moment of looking back. So, what you have just heard come out of me is a very important part of how I see the country, who I am in it, and the story of my life.

MKS & NYP: **I have a follow-up question about that. You have a PhD in literature. How do you think your background in literature impacts your political work at Eagleton and at Rutgers as a whole?**

RM: I tell students very often that I do think we should all be practical. I know people now are very focused on making sure you choose courses and a major with a future job in mind. I know that's the way we see higher education now.

I was a kid in this immigrant family, and, believe me, they had no money. I don't know exactly how I got away with majoring in English. I had some kind of very deep, either naivety or optimism, that the future would work itself out. And I knew that I liked to read. My parents were actually often in their little store, which was open very late. I spent a lot of time by myself in the evenings. In my adolescence, I read a lot—not all high minded. I wasn't reading Plato and all the great works. I read all kinds of things, including junky magazines. I just loved to read! I remember once I gave a speech about reading when I was in college. The image that I used in the speech was a magic

carpet. When you read, it is just the same as having a magic carpet because you could travel through time, through space, and into other kinds of experiences.

When I came to choose a major, I chose to major in English. My father was a little concerned because he was worried about how you make a living and shape a life that is sustainable. He said to me: “well, if you were Rockefeller's daughter, I could understand you're majoring in English, but what are you going to do with it?” This is a question that so many students hear from their parents, families, and people around them. But he did not stand in my way.

I got to go to college because I lived in New York, and, there was a place called Brooklyn College, which is now part of CUNY. In those days, it cost $7 a semester to register and $20 a semester for books. That is how I was able to go as the daughter of immigrants, who rented a little basement store. We lived in other people's apartments before we could get our own apartment. They could never have sent me to an out-of-town, private college where the kids who were more affluent went. These things stay with you. When my daughter grew up, the only thing I wanted was to be able to send her to a college that she wanted to go to. That was something I thought I missed. I was able to go to college because it was a public institution. It cost very little, and my parents were fine with that. I worked in the summers and had various interesting jobs to save that money. My parents were always supportive and proud of me.

I graduated before the women's movement. I don't know where it came from, probably magazines, but I had this image to be a career woman in New York. I had this image of working in publishing and having my own apartment in Manhattan. It wasn't a way to think in those days. My mother came from an old-time background, where she did not understand that one could even think about moving out of your parents' home before you were married. She wanted me to major in elementary education at college because she said that I could get married, have children, go to work, and get home at three o'clock when the children came home from school. I resisted that, as I resisted working in my parents' store as a career for the future. My father wanted me to be a fashion buyer. He wanted me to go to a two-year program to learn how to be a buyer in a department store for women's clothing. I didn't do either of those. I just read because I wanted to read.

When I graduated, I did get a low-level entry job in New York at a big publishing company. It was in one of the many trade publications of McGraw-Hill, which was a huge publishing company at the time. It wasn't glamorous. It was a little trade magazine called *Electrical Merchandising Week*. My literary background didn't do much good. I sat at a desk, opened the mail every morning, and booked orders for advertising space. But, after about six months, I went in to see the publisher of this particular magazine. I told him that he did not need a college graduate for what I was doing and that I was going to leave.

That was my big career in New York. I had gone back during those six months to talk to some of my professors at Brooklyn College. One of them urged me to go to graduate school out of town. I think he thought that I needed to get away and learn how to live on my own. Some of my friends were political science majors, and I began to take a couple of political science courses. I took a class on the United Nations and on nationalism.

I realized that I was really interested in this. I wasn't interested in quantitative analysis and the kind of research that political scientists do now, but I was interested in world peace. So, I tried to find a new job. I wanted to get a job at the UN [United Nations]. I went there because, in my mind, the UN was the hope of the future. This is where my family history comes in. After we had come out of the Holocaust, the UN had been formed. I thought that if everyone joined the UN, then we wouldn't have any more wars, right? We'd all belong to the same thing, so we wouldn't be fighting each other. That's how naïve I was. I went there to say I want to help and work with them. They said, "Well, why don't you go home and practice your typing skills, and, then you can apply for a job as a clerk typist?" This is what women were told to do and did in those days. I didn't want to do that job.

I ended up applying to graduate schools in English because that had been my major. I got several offers to be either a teaching assistant or research assistant. I picked a school, the University of Connecticut, which offered me a graduate fellowship. I did quite well as a student of literature. I was interested in American and European literature. I just loved to read long novels, especially European novels.

And I went through a lot of other things. I got married to another graduate student at one point, and we made a deal. One of us was going to keep teaching while the other did a dissertation, and then we'd take turns that way. He finished his dissertation while I continued teaching in the program. We went to his first job in Pittsburgh. I wouldn't have to work, and I could finish my dissertation. We had a daughter there eventually. I did some teaching there. I did not like Pittsburgh. It's a nice city, but I kept feeling landlocked. I needed to be back near some ocean. I felt trapped in Western Pennsylvania. He looked for other jobs and got an offer from Rutgers in the Douglass English Department. We chose to come to New Jersey.

MKS & NYP: Why do you think having a mentor is important? Who was your mentor growing up, and how did they shape you into the person you are today?

RM: It was a word that I didn't know growing up, as it has come into our vocabulary recently. We started to talk about it early on, in our work here at the Center for American Women and Politics and in the various women's programs in general. Even though I didn't know the word as I was growing up, that doesn't mean one can't look back and say, "Oh, that person played a critical role and was a mentor."

I would say I never had a mentor. The professor that I mentioned before was a favorite English professor at college. I went back to get advice while I was in the publishing house. He was supportive and helpful. There are people who gave good advice, but I never had somebody who guided me. I did well in courses, and my professors wrote good recommendations. But I never had a mentor in the classic sense or how we think about it now.

There were two women I became very friendly with in the early years at the center. One of them was hired at the same time that I was. With two other women on our advisory board, we created the first part of the Center for American Women and Politics. She and I became colleagues and

friends. She is, still to this day, one of my closest, dearest friends. She knew so much more about politics than I did. She'd been involved in lots of things. When I came to work here, I didn't really know anything about politics. I didn't know the nuts and bolts, the nitty-gritty, and so forth. So, I learned a tremendous amount from her. Even to this day, if something comes up, and, I think of the first three people I want to talk to about something, she's right there in my mind.

I met another person in the early years at the Center for American Women and Politics because we had a project together to look at women candidates at a time when no one was looking at them. It was a partnership between our center and an organization in Washington at that time, called the National Women's Education Fund. The National Women's Education Fund was headed by a woman, who had come from Texas, and a woman named Sissy Farenthold, who had been placed in nomination for vice president in 1972. During the early days of the women's political movement, the fund was created to find women, run workshops, recruit them to go into politics, and run for office. They didn't have an academic base. We had an academic base, but we weren't on the road, going out and recruiting women to run for office. That's not what our mission was. So, we formed a partnership and got some grant funding. Through the grant I wrote a book, called *In the Running: The New Woman Candidate*, which was about the women who were running for office at that time. The person who came from Texas to Washington to head that organization was incredibly knowledgeable [about] on the ground politics**.** In fact, she got into her little car and drove around the world, recruiting women for these workshops. She ended up being a very famous woman in politics for a long time. She had known the Clintons in 1972, and she ended up becoming Bill Clinton's chief of staff when he was governor of Arkansas.

The two women with whom I worked in the early days of the women's political movement were not classic mentors. When I wrote the book [*In the Running: The New Woman Candidate (1981)]*, I dedicated it to them, to Ida and Betsy. I wanted to include a sentence—lacking mentors, we have each other—but the editors didn't want me to have it. So, the sentence didn't get in there, but the phrase has always stayed with me.

MKS & NYP: What are you most passionate or excited about in your Eagleton work? What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment so far? It's probably founding the Center for American Women and Politics, right?

RM: Yeah, I am proud of it. But I also want to say something we're not supposed to say. We've said it to each other and to other women: "don't tell younger women that it wasn't part of a plan and that it was just accidental. That it was luck or something." We're supposed to plan and take credit for what we've done. But I believe that life is both. In other words, when you're challenged with something, and, you face it really well, then that's great. That's to your credit. But so much of what you're challenged with has to do with accident, timing, and fortune. You're born into a moment, into a situation, into an economy, into physical circumstances.

If you had given me a list of 200 potential things that I might have done, and one option on the list was to found and direct the first research, education, and public service center about women and politics in the United States, it would never have occurred to me. And yet, going back to the

concept of autobiography, I could imagine writing an autobiography in which I figured out why that was inevitable.

But, the thing I'm most proud of in this world, is my daughter and the relationship I have with her and have had throughout her life. My daughter has been the deepest joy of my life. And, even in this relationship, while I think I've done some good things as a mother, I also had a lot of good luck. I just believe she's one of the people who came onto the planet as a fabulous human being. I would never put anything in front of that. It's the richest, ongoing experience of my life.

In terms of my professional accomplishments, my proudest moment is ending up here to develop the Center for American Women and Politics. I remember, when I first came here, we had to develop programs for the center, grants, and so forth. I was the one who was initially hired to develop education programs for the center. I just went into an office here and started making things up, typing up various ways you could teach women about politics.

I used my experiences with literature and with the early classic, second wave feminist works that we were all reading such as *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, *The Second Sex*, *The Female Eunuch*, etc. There were several books we were all reading, no matter what discipline you were in—English, history, psychology, and sociology. Now, individual disciplines have certain books, but there were only a few books back then. I just made up things as I went along. I had no idea how to write a budget, etc. I had a PhD in Herman Melville. So, the women at the center learned from each other. We had each other.

At the time, I wanted to write the way Joan Didion wrote. She was my inspiration because her essays were both personal and political. I was going to take a year off, I was going to write, and I was going to play with my daughter for a year. But then I read an article in the *New Jersey Home News* about this place called the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers that had gotten some money to establish a program on women and politics. When I read the article in the newspaper, I wasn't thinking New Jersey politics or local politics, but something broader—how leadership shapes the world. So, I wrote a letter and said, “I'm here. I have a PhD in literature, but I'm not working at the moment.” I was invited to come and talk to two women who headed the Executive Committee. I didn't realize at the time that they were looking for a director. I thought, “that's not me. I don't know anything about that subject.”

But in any case, these two women were very imaginative. It was a wonderful, open, imaginative period, especially in the women's movement. None of us knew anything about what we were doing. The world was exploding open in new ways. We were seeing things we'd never seen before, realizing, “oh, my God, we'd never read a book with a major female character.”

One time, I went to the dean's house for a dinner party. I was having a discussion with another English department member about my dissertation, and, the dean, who was very nice, tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Would you like to go upstairs? Leave the men down here, like a Victorian novel.” They were going to smoke their cigars, and the women would go separately. I did notice that, but it was part of the way we lived. I was used to being an equal graduate student with my husband. Suddenly, I was the faculty wife, invisible at his elbow. Women would have internalized that experience as “I'm not important. I'm not worth noticing.” But we began to see

and said, “Wait a minute. I'm a person too, and I have something to say.” So, the world was beginning to change in dramatic ways.

Anyway, these two women asked me if I would be willing to write for them a vision of how such a center would develop. So, I wrote something, and it's in the files upstairs. It's very embarrassing. One thing led to another, and they offered me to come on part time to develop education programs in order to create this new center. Later, they asked me to be the director, and I spent the next 20 plus years developing the center. Yes, I'm very proud of it. At the time we created it, the subject didn't exist. Just as we weren't conscious about what was missing in the books we were reading, the subject of women in politics just didn't exist, certainly not in academia, in studies, or in textbooks.

In order to create the subject, we had a lot to do. We developed research projects. We held a conference of elected women to find out about them. Who are they? What did they do? How did they get there? We had women from around the country. There were 344 of them in the country at the time. We invited 50 of them to come, two from each of 25 states, modeled on an Eagleton model about legislators. We commissioned someone to come to our conference and write a book about them. We got funding for that. She brought a team of interviewers and wrote a book called *Political Woman*, which was the first—we had the copyright to it—book ever about women officeholders in this country. We designed research projects using social science methods and surveyed women in office around the country. We developed education programs, a model that I made up called the Visiting Program in Practical Politics. This program involved bringing two women to campus, one Democrat and one Republican, to create—I think—the first course ever on women in politics. I got this idea from my time in graduate school. I knew about poets in residence and novelists in residence, so I just made up politicians in residence. So, you carry over what you learned from your past.

Spending almost a quarter of a century developing this center, it is now a national resource. When I stepped down as director, I did not want the center to be Ruth Mandel's academic project, which is what happens with faculty and their research projects. I wanted it to be an institution that would continue. Debbie Walsh has been the director for years now and has taken it forward. Debbie has done an incredible job, franchising some programs to states around the country. I now feel it is the strongest center within Eagleton. It has roots and stability. There are several faculty associated with it now.

In the spirit of you don't know where you're going to end up or what you're going to do, I couldn't have predicted that I would become the director. I never had the ambition or the desire to be the director of Eagleton. I ended up applying and being appointed. When I took over Eagleton, it was a well-known, successful place. We had a women and politics center, and an Eagleton poll, and so forth. But, in other ways, it was kind of shaky. I threw myself into what I call institution building—strengthening, stabilizing, and expanding this institute. I kept in mind the mission that emerged from the quest that Florence Peshine Eagleton, a suffrage activist, left to Rutgers University: develop a program to educate young women in building democracy and participation. Men were added later. If we do research, we use the findings in our education programs and in our public programs. So, one function feeds the other. Our programs and resources are all interrelated. I don't

want one to be isolated from another. But the common mission is really back to Florence Peshine's vision and to my view at the beginning of our conversation about what democracy is.

Rutgers University believes that American politics and government are worth studying, are worth participating in, and are worth building. While we're a pretty small place, I try to have as many opportunities as possible to attract students, to attract the public off campus, and to attract political leaders. It's in our mission statement to link the study to the practice, to link the scholars to the practitioners, so that they can learn from one another. We're not like a department that is working as a discipline or in an interdisciplinary way. We are an institute of applied politics that uses and develops scholarship and education, always in conjunction with application and with the off-campus world, linked to the on-campus world.

Eagleton used to be a pretty closed off place. People would be invited here for off the record discussions. Since I've been the director, I wanted to open it up. I didn't want students to walk past this building and then graduate, saying: "what do they do there? I never knew what went on there?" I wanted Eagleton to be a place for students, who are interested in politics, and, for students, who are just interested in registering to vote. A place that serves the university as a resource in lots of different ways, research, education, public information, and as a resource for politics and government.

We had our 60th anniversary at the institute. Our theme is make it better. Because our political community and our political world is in a bad moment—it's pretty problematic. I have people coming and saying, "Well, how can you be promoting politics?" But we need to keep building the good. I am devoted to the mission of this place, and I see the building of the Center for American Women and Politics as part of building the good. I want to keep including women in leadership, in partnership with men, to run and build our world.

I think our immigration program and our youth program is about that. It's about bringing people in, including them in something fundamental. The experiment of this country is the building of a representative democracy—a vision of participation, a respect for the citizenry, and a belief that the citizenry is intelligent and committed. These programs are resources to keep building a place for themselves and future generations.

I'm in despair everyday now, when I hear about certain individuals saying they can be president, who give me and everyone I know fantasies of packing our bags. But that's not the thing to do. The thing to do is to find a way to counter that and to meet it.

Something else I forgot to mention earlier! I am also proud of getting involved with the Holocaust Memorial Museum. I read an article in *The New York Times* about a new Holocaust Museum. They were going to have a section about the voyage of the St. Louis. I had photographs and documents from my family, so I got in touch with them. One thing led to another, and they are now in the permanent exhibition. I later received a presidential appointment to the governing board of the museum, and then I was appointed vice chair of the museum from 1993 to 2005.

A lot of people didn't believe the museum would happen, that an institution like that could happen on the Mall in Washington. There was a lot of skepticism—who's going to be interested in this in

the future, and it's just for American Jews and no one else will come, and so forth. Now, it's a worldwide institution and a couple of million people visit every year.

When I was vice chair of the museum, I was involved with establishing something called the Committee on Conscience. This committee is concerned with contemporary genocide. Whether it's Rwanda, Cambodia, or Sudan, the museum has become a resource and is working with different places. It is just an enormously effective, fabulous institution that is supporting education, direct work with countries and with protection services, and training people who are supposed to offer protection.

Everything is linked. What I've done throughout my career, it has all been about institution building—it's the museum, Eagleton, and the Center for American Women and Politics.

MKS & NYP: What do you consider to be feminist leadership?

RM: I'm not a person you would describe as ideologically driven. There's an ideology embedded in my view of democracy and so forth. But I'm not very comfortable with hard ideology because I'm more comfortable with the concept of politics. People say, "Oh, it's a dirty word." And I say, "no, it's not. It's everywhere and in everything we do."

When your families, your friends, or your community are faced with sharing space or resources, it's politics. You need to come to agreement, to negotiate, and you need to see what the other person wants. You need to express what you want. You need to see if there is a way to make it happen, so that you get some of what you want, and the other person does too. And politics is the process that we engage in at all levels. I'm contrasting that to the people, on the far right and in the Congress, who are ideologically driven—it's my way or the highway. It's only this way, and, if it's not, then we don't move the country forward and don't pass the bill.

How does that relate to your question about feminism? It needs to be broad and flexible. It always has been for me. It's about recognizing choices, options, and opportunities, opening the world to women's participation at all levels. Hillary Clinton has said over and over again that "we all deserve to fulfill our God given potential." If you look at women's lives around the world, they are, in so many ways, not given any real opportunity to even find out what their potential is, much less express it, educate themselves, participate, or get involved.

The world is more complicated. Here is a metaphor I use to explain this: I open the cupboard when I get home, at the end of a long day, and there are only two cans of soup, then I know what I'm having for dinner. If the place is full of different things, I have to choose, and it's more confusing. Well, it may be a more confusing world, but it's a healthier world and a freer world because the world uses the human being's potential talents, energy, willingness to participate, resources, whatever their physical, mental, and emotional resources are. We can create societies where men and women can live with an understanding that we should support choice. That is a feminist world, right? And it cannot be a narrow set of choices. I am not someone who says you are not a feminist if you want to stay home, raise your kids, and be a housewife. As long as you've got choices.

For me, feminist leadership is about promoting a world for full expression of human potential, not limited by gender. We've been fighting against sexist discrimination and the patriarchy, which is often used to keep women in a secondary position, to suppress women, or to limit their opportunities. This should be resisted. You should not be limited by race, by ethnicity, or by sexual orientation—the litany. But it started for women as a gender issue, and it expanded, which is a good thing.

I think feminist leadership has had a big influence on opening the world to all of these categories. As a result of feminist leadership, we talk now about people living up to their full human potential. We are not restricted by gender, but we are also not restricted by other categories of identity that traditionally has restricted people.

MKS & NYP: Can you offer one piece of advice to us, as growing leaders, who are setting out to pursue our goals?

RM: Stay open to wherever your curiosity, your passions, and your interests lead you, especially when you're young. It's not too late to turn another corner or to explore. There's nothing, in some ways, richer than curiosity, right? Human beings have eyes, ears, consciousness, and intelligence to explore.

If you were to ask me the classic question: "Do you regret anything?" I regret that I don't have six lives. I've got a lot that I'd love to do. A lot that would be fun. And yet I stayed in one place. If I have a regret, the first thing that always comes to my mind is that I should have taken more risks. Now, I don't even know what the risks were. But there were moments in my life when what got in the way was, "oh, I don't know if I'm good enough, or smart enough, or if it's the right moment." I'm not talking about jumping off mountain tops—I would not take those risks.

In terms of opportunities presenting themselves, trying things, and finding ways to explore an interest, it's generally not so decisive when you're young because you can turn another corner if you want to and see where it takes you. And that's true with people too—get to know people and stay open.