

Interviewee: Isabelle Jenkins
Interviewers: Marisa Butler and Bridget Coakley
Date: February 17, 2017
Place: Worcester, Massachusetts
Transcribers: Marisa Butler and Bridget Coakley



Overseen by: Prof. Carl Robert Keyes, Assumption College

Abstract: Isabelle Amy Jenkins was born in 1988. She grew up in both Gill, Massachusetts, and New Milford, Connecticut. Her childhood was slightly different from others, since her neighborhood was the boarding school where her mother worked. In her predominately white, middle class town, the boarding school brought diversity to New Milford. She attended the College of Holy Cross for her undergraduate degree and Harvard's Divinity School for her graduate degree to become a chaplain. It was not until an internship at United Way during her junior year that she realized she loved service work. Isabelle currently works at the College of the Holy Cross as the Associate Director of Community Based Learning. This program engages students in hands-on work to deepen their understanding of what they are learning in the classroom. Her passions lie with making students encounter difference in the community of Worcester. Each day, she deals with various social justice issues and tries to fix as many as she can. She believes that women should never stop trying to advance and believes each should "Surround yourself with your people because being a woman is really hard and you're going to need people to let you persist."

MB: Okay. So we are completing a city wide oral history of the lives of Worcester women aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester. We're focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics, and community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences and thank you for your help with this important project.

IJ: You're welcome.

MB: So Isabelle Jenkins, do we have your permission to record your oral history on February 17th, 2017.

IJ: Yes.

MB: Okay. So what is your full name including both your maiden name and your married name?

IJ: Isabelle Amy Jenkins.

MB: Okay.

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BC: When were you born?

IJ: []1988.

MB: Do you have any children?

IJ: No.

MB: Any grandchildren?

IJ: No.

[all laugh]

MB: What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with and what's your family background?

IJ: I'm white and I identify as a Unitarian Universalist. So my religious background I—my family is Irish and English and Austrian and...

BC: What part of Austria?

IJ: I'm not sure, actually. My family has been here for several generations so both my great grandparents or my great great grandparents came to the United States. But I'm actually not quite sure like when we came to the states, but I would say generally I don't really identify very closely with those cultures. I would say American culture is what I identify with the most.

BC: And about your religion what is that again?

IJ: Unitarian Universalist.

BC: What's that?

IJ: So well my family grew up Catholic. You know, Irish Catholic, but Unitarian Universalist is, it's a form of Christianity, but they believe in one God so Unitarian and then universal salvation. So I switched when I was in graduate school. My family's not very Catholic, all my siblings don't belong to the church or anything like that, but my mom still goes, but I sort of found my own faith community when I was in graduate school.

BC: That's really cool.

IJ: It resonated more with me.

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MB: Yeah that is cool.

BC: So can you tell us a little about your parents.

IJ: Sure! So my parents are divorced, they have been ever since I was two so 25, 26 years. They both work in education, my dad and my step mom—and they both worked in private schools, high schools. So I grew up at boarding school because my parents worked there. But my dad was an English teacher for a very long time and my step-mom was a math teacher and now my dad runs the college counseling program at Northfield Mount Hermon School which is in Western Massachusetts in a little, small town called Gill. And my mom, she was the Dean of students at Canterbury School in Connecticut, so I grew up in Connecticut and Massachusetts. And then, she did that for many, many years so she was a school administrator. And then now she works, she's sort of in her final career right now, but she works at Harvard University now doing administrative work for the center for African Studies. But I think because of their jobs I grew up around education, I grew up at a school that looks very similar to a college because it was a boarding school so education was just always part of my life.

MB: Where have you lived during your life and you didn't grow up in Worcester so what neighborhood did you grow up in?

IJ: So I grew up in, until I was five, I grew up in Gill, Massachusetts which is right near Greenfield, Massachusetts which is near Northampton, Massachusetts [all laugh] near Northampton, that's like the closest landmark people know so until I was five. And then I grew up in New Milford, Connecticut which is Southwest Connecticut, most of the time with my mom from when I was five 'til when I was 18. And then my mom started moving around a little bit, until she ended up in Cambridge, but then I moved to Worcester cause I went to college at Holy Cross so I lived on campus, but I lived in Worcester for four years. And then after that I moved to Boston and Cambridge and Somerville and

BC: What place-

IJ: I currently live in Cambridge, but...

BC: What place did you feel most comfortable in?

IJ: Gosh, I think, I think I feel most comfortable, I mean, in Worcester and in Cambridge, but it's because I also feel pretty uncomfortable and that's because I'm—both of them are very diverse settings and I like that; it's that it's not comfortable for me. I mean I think growing up, probably looking—I never would've said that I'm looking to be uncomfortable, but I want to live in a place where I'm not constantly encountering difference and in Worcester I do that all the time with my job because I work with community partners and community members. And then

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in Cambridge, I mean, living in a city, I mean Boston is kind of segregated, but living in a city, you're just surrounded by all sorts of people all the time and I would never want to live in a place where I didn't see that.

BC: Yeah.

IJ: So, yeah I would say I guess where I live now or where I work now is where I'm most comfortable, but because it's because I'm a little bit uncomfortable all the time because you know you never know what you're gonna see out there.

BC: Yeah. What was the neighborhood like that you grew up in, generally?

IJ: So it was just basically a predominately white, middle class, upper-middle class town in Connecticut. It sort of, sort of, it was close enough to New York City that a few people would commute and work there, but not really.

BC: Mhm.

IJ: And then I grew up, my neighborhood I grew up at a boarding school. [laughs] So and my mom always says that actually the boarding school was what brought diversity to New Milford Connecticut, so I kind of grew up in a diverse environment because it attracted international students, students of color, whereas at the high school—both my siblings went to the public school and I went to the boarding school—they, most of their, was like basically all white. So I got to encounter a little bit of difference just by being on the campus, but predominately white, middle, upper class town.

MB: So you said you came to Holy Cross for college....

IJ: Mhm.

MB: What made you make that decision?

IJ: Because I didn't get in other places. [laughs] So, I mean, I think when I was looking at colleges, I went to a really small high school that was a Catholic school and I sort of ended up looking, at small Catholic colleges, not because I was looking to go to a Catholic or a Jesuit school, but just because that's kind of what people did. So I ended up looking at schools that were all pretty similar in makeup so I looked at Georgetown was my dream school. Georgetown, Boston College, Holy Cross, Boston University, Fairfield and Tufts were the schools I applied to. And I got waitlisted at Georgetown and that was my dream school and I was really bummed, but I got into Holy Cross and I got a great scholarship and I said well that's where I'm gonna go, it's the best school I got into and I'm really glad it happened obviously. I went here and now I work here, but it definitely—I wasn't necessarily attracted to Holy Cross because it was in Worcester

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or anything like that it just was the school itself was sort of something I was looking for based on the smallness of the student body, access to professors, that sort of thing. So that's what brought me here originally.

MB: Did Worcester - like being in the city of Worcester - influence your decision at all?

IJ: No, and I would say that's probably the case for a lot of Holy Cross students which is such a bummer because Worcester is such a cool city. And I would say I didn't really push myself to interact with Worcester for a couple of years, it's easy not to at Holy Cross. And then I think I had an internship at the United Way, when I was a junior at Holy Cross and that was the first time I really started meeting people of Worcester. People who work here, people who live here, people who love the city and I realized then that it was such an attraction, but it wasn't— originally I wasn't like, "I want to go to a college in the city and that's why I'm at Holy Cross."

MB: Mhm.

IJ: But now I realize how wonderful Worcester is. But it certainly wasn't a draw, it wasn't like a negative thing, but it definitely wasn't what attracted me to Holy Cross originally.

BC: Where do you live in the city now?

IJ: So I live in Cambridge.

BC: Yeah.

IJ: I don't live in Worcester. Mhm.

MB: Do you have any family members that live in Worcester?

IJ: No.

MB: So what challenges do you think that this city still faces and if you could change something what do you think you would change?

IJ: Well I think kind of precisely what I was just describing about like Holy Cross's interaction. I think people have a lot of false perceptions about Worcester. I have the opportunity to live in Cambridge and work in Worcester so I'm often with people who never come to Worcester and they, especially in Boston, which isn't very far away, I drive every day. You know, it seems really far away, it seems really behind the times, it seems inaccessible, and so I think it just has a branding challenge basically and because I know and love Worcester very deeply I think it's a really unique place, I think it's, I think it's a place where all are welcome, I think it's full of people who love the city so much and want to see it thrive, I think there's some really cool

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history here and I just think people don't know that about Worcester. I mean I have to explain so many things to people about Worcester who live in Cambridge for instance, which is where I am when I'm not here.

BC: Mhm.

IJ: So I think that's the biggest challenge it faces in the sense there's just so negative perceptions about it. And it is a college town, I mean there's tons of colleges here and a lot of students are coming here who don't live in Worcester and I think a lot of them have that same negative perception. Maybe not at schools like Clark which is like right downtown, but I think the luxury of being, you know, at Holy Cross for some students is that they don't have to interact with the city. And so I think there's a negative perception that persists a little bit. But I think it's just like a hidden gem and I wish there was a way to share its greatness with others who don't know much about it. So I guess what I would change is to, in a way make it a more accessible place. I mean I know they're trying to with the high speed train to Boston, but I was just listening to the radio this morning and they were talking about how the times just don't really work well for people who live in Worcester because you get into South Station at, past 9 a.m and then you don't get back to Worcester until after 7, so it doesn't work for people who have 9 to 5 jobs. So I think it could be easier to get to because it's so close to Cambridge and Providence, Boston and Providence, but there's just not a fast way to get here, or a cheap way. I mean, the commuter rail is also expensive too I mean it's like twelve dollars each way or something, which is a lot of money when you think about it. So I would definitely change how accessible it is to people who like want to do a day trip or people who could live here and work in a bigger city or what have you. And the other thing I would love to see change is having the college students across the city interact more because I think Worcester is full, like I said before is full of students, but it's not really a college town like you know there's not many opportunities for college students to come together and that's such a huge population of this city. And I think it's really under targeted for things and I think students would really benefit from learning about the history of Worcester, about how wonderful it is, about the resources here and they just don't, so I would love to see that change too because then you would also increase the likelihood that people would stay in Worcester after they graduate. I don't know there's so many things I could see change, but [laughs] I'd say those two things are pretty big ones.

MB: Mhm.

BC: So since you've been here have you noticed any changes, like over time about Worcester?

IJ: Let's see. So I always kind of divide it from like when I was a student to when I was a professional in Worcester, and I think the things that have changed—I mean there's a lot of construction happening just like visually. I think they're putting a lot of money in building infrastructure especially right downtown around Union Station, they're building all these hotels

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and these apartment buildings. I've seen a huge influx of restaurants, really good, unique, foodie places.

BC: Yeah

IJ: I mean it's such a foodie city now and people don't really know that, but there's all these new places that aren't like Via and Soul.

BC: Yeah.

IJ: I mean they're like smaller places and like Boston chefs are coming out here so I've seen that change so much from when I graduated in 2010 and now it's 2017 so it hasn't been that long. I think those are what I would say are the two biggest things that changed. And then I would say obviously from the Holy Cross perspective I think we're attracting more students who live in Worcester to come to Holy Cross so I think students are getting to know Worcester better. And then I know there's been a new city manager, Ed Augustus, who used to work at Holy Cross, so I think he's a part of those changes that are happening. Yeah, but just visually a lot's changed since I've been here.

MB: What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

IJ: I would say the people are what makes Worcester so distinct. I think it's a city filled with people who are really passionate about bridging difference. I spend a lot of time working with organizations that work with refugees and immigrants and that's where I see Worcester shine the most. I think it is such a welcoming city in that sense and I think people are really great about opening their arms and minds to that. I feel like anybody who I know who's lived in Worcester and has lived here for a long time, I just have never really seen in other places people have that much love for a place. Just really, there's some sort of intimate connection people have with the physical you know place of Worcester that I think is really, really wonderful and inspiring and makes me want to engage with the city even more. And I'm just so lucky because I get to see so many different sides of the city with my job. You know I work with 35 community partners, I work a lot with Worcester public schools and a lot with like I was saying refugees and immigrants. I just see a lot of people who are really passionate about seeing this city—not only seeing this city becoming great, but believe that it's already wonderful and great and, because it is. I mean it doesn't necessarily look like, it's not gentrified, it's not it doesn't look like downtown Boston, but I there's so many great things about it already that it doesn't need to be something different. I mean I do think all the influx of restaurants and the new construction's great too, but I think, I just think it's such a shining gem of a place and it's wonderful to work with so many people who care very deeply about their neighbors. You know neighbors physically, but also just the people in their own community, so I think that's what makes Worcester really special.

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BC: What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

IJ: Well I can really only speak to the student experience. That's the one I know the best. I think, Worcester's a really cool place, you know, like birth control was invented here so I think it's a, it's a place that has embraced women's rights for a very long time and sort of been at the forefront of those. And I think for female students and for my female students who identify as female, I don't think they necessarily know that about Worcester unless they learned it, but I do think Worcester does a lot to address women's and gender issues. I'm on the board of the Day Break shelter YWCA Day Break shelter and I think there's a lot of really strong women here working to protect and empower other women. So I think that experience, because it's a smaller city, I think that experience is more pronounced. But I think for the student, well female students, you know some of them are really able to connect very deeply to that and then others aren't. They don't want to or they can't for some reason 'cause there's a barrier. But I think just like any place I think women continue - have experienced - and continue to experience marginalization because of their gender identity. And I don't think that's particularly worse in Worcester, but I don't think, I do think it's still present just because of the way the world is. But as I've said, because it's such a welcoming place I think women are able to be more so at the forefront of things.

MB: Where did - what were the names of the schools that you attended previous to Holy Cross?

IJ: My high school was Canterbury School and then I went to public school for elementary school and middle school, but it was John Petty Glen School and Skyhook, those were all in Connecticut.

BC: So what programs were like you involved in during your experience at Holy Cross?

IJ: What Worcester programs?

BC: Yeah. Or like education programs?

IJ: So when I was a student I volunteered at Friendly House, which is after school programs for city kids. And then I worked at the United Way and I was a summer intern and I ran a youth leadership program for 25 kids so it was like a 10-week internship and seven weeks was prepping for the internship and for the program and two weeks was the program and the last week was, was like reflecting on the program and evaluating it. And so I worked with—those kids were middle schoolers from the city and, but I think that was the first time I encountered education in Worcester you know working pretty closely with middle school kids and then the program was we had them doing all different sorts of like leadership building skills and we had them sort of in different places in the city. And I mean United Way is a great job with engaging the youth with Worcester and providing a lot of opportunities for them. And then, let's see, and now I mean I work with lots of different programs. The Worcester public schools my students

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work with are Claremont Academy, Woodland Academy, Worcester East Middle School, Soth High, Burncoat Middle, we do a lot with Nativity School of Worcester. Holy Cross and Nativity have a very strong connection and a bunch of my students volunteer there. And we work with Saint Mary Health Care Center pretty closely, we work with Ascentria Care Alliance which works with refugees and immigrants. Yeah, so, I would say my students are involved with those, what I'm directly involved in is I'm on the Daybreak Shelter, I'm on the board or the advisory committee whatever they call it. So we do—so I work a lot with domestic violence issues and women's and gender issues in Worcester. So that's my like direct volunteering.

BC: Mhm.

IJ: But otherwise I connect with all different programs because my students are there.

MB: What were your challenges in education?

IJ: Oh my goodness. I think, just for my own education, I think there was always a challenge to you know prove myself as a student. I don't know if that's because of my gender or because I had lots of older siblings who are very smart or because I grow up at school and I was supposed to do well. So I think there was always the challenge of proving myself and when I was in college and graduate school I mean the same thing. I think it's hard to be in an environment that's predominantly male. Holy Cross used to be an all men's college and I think that culture still persists a little bit. And then I went to Harvard for graduate school and you know there were lots of situations where I was one of the only women in the space, so that was always hard I think. And I also think as my learning style is I'm a hands-on learner and a lot of classes don't provide experiential components. It's a lot of lecturing at you and I think that doesn't work for a lot of people even though it's the traditional way things are taught. So that was always a challenge, how to do well in an environment where my learning preference isn't prioritized. And I think for a long time I was pre-med and I was really forcing myself to do well on that and to become a doctor not because I wanted to be one, because I thought I should be one. So I, for a long time I was pushing against, I was forcing myself to try on this experience that didn't really fit with me, so that was a challenge and just cultivating my own identity and what I wanted to do professionally and realizing that there was so many other avenues where I would succeed, but it was hard to know that when so often it's like become a doctor or a lawyer or a business person and that's it. And for a long time I forced that identity onto myself. And then it was actually my internship at the United Way that sort of turned things around and I realized there was a lot of other good that could be done that matched what I wanted to do way more than science, and pre-med and all that other stuff.

BC: Was that late into college that you figured that out?

IJ: When I was a junior, the end of my junior year was when I started at United Way and then realized I really liked doing community engagement work.

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BC: Mhm.

IJ: And so then basically I just spent—then after I graduated I did community organizing work for a year before I went to graduate school and so I just totally shifted gears which was the best decision I've ever made, but it took a long time to get to that.

BC: Yeah. So like by like the time you finished you kind of knew what you wanted to do?

IJ: Hmm. Sort of. I went to divinity school, so I'm a trained chaplain even though that's not what I do. I mean I do it all the time, but it's not—that's not my official title. But I think I was way more aware of the kinds of things I wanted to be doing, I didn't—you know, I never would have said I want to run a community based learning program...

BC: Yeah.

IJ: ...but I knew that I wanted to do more social justice work, that I wanted to do more academic work, and I wanted to do more community building work I think. So it was sort of like I knew sort of the type of thing I wanted to be doing, but not necessarily that I definitely wanted to be in education. Now I know that I definitely love education and will stay in education, but it took some time in graduate school to figure that out too.

MB: What support networks and mentoring have been important to you?

IJ: Oh my God. Everything.

BC: [laughs]

IJ: But, I would say I think there's been some really important women in my life who have guided me to where I am now. When I was a senior I developed a really close relationship with a chaplain, Kim McElaney, and she was the most incredible person I've ever known, and I only knew her for six months and she died of cancer right before I graduated from college. It was May 3rd and I graduated a couple weeks later. And it was really devastating to lose her, but her death kind of changed my whole path. It felt like I was answering a call to basically become her—I'm not her...

BC: [laughs]

IJ: ... but I think it caused me to want to go to divinity school, it caused me to really rethink some of my priorities. And she was a mentor to me because she was the kind of person that was able to ask you questions that you actually heard, you know. She would ask me simple things like, "What makes you happy," or "How do you like spending your time." And those are simple

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questions that people ask you all the time, but she had this way about her that made me really hear that, and think very deeply about those things. I always see mentors as people who are able to see the things in you that you can't see in yourself. And she did that for me, and I think the reason why I'm at Holy Cross and still in Worcester. So she was a really important person to me and then my mom. She raised five kids on her own, she's been through a lot in her life. She had a really rough childhood and she—you know that quote that's going around now that Mitch McConnell said about Elizabeth Warren, "Nevertheless, she persisted."

BC: Mhm.

IJ: And my mom has persisted through so much and that has shown me that I think nothing is too much to overcome when you're able to adjust your mindset and dig really deep. So Kim I think has taught me how to really ask questions and my mom I think has taught me to I guess not let those questions weigh you down. Because you get stuck in asking yourself questions too so there's those, I think those would be the two people that have inspired me the most.

BC: What was your first job? Like right after...

IJ: My first job. So I did a year of service through the Episcopal Service Corps in Boston. So I was a community organizer with a church in Watertown, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of Boston. I built community gardens, well I organized people to build community gardens.

BC: [laughs]

MB: What other jobs have you had?

IJ: So, then I went to divinity school and when I was in divinity school I had a couple of different jobs. I actually worked at Holy Cross for two years as an assistant, as an intern chaplain. So, a chaplain does all sorts of things, but planning retreats, doing individual counseling with students, doing like interfaith events, that sort of thing. And then, I also, in graduate school I worked at the Harvard College Women's Center for a year and then I also worked in career development and student life. And then when I graduated from Divinity School, I came back here to do this job.

MB: So...

IJ: So this is my third year doing this.

MB: Sorry. [laughs]

IJ: Yeah.

MB: What does your job now entail?

IJ: So, I'm the associate director of community based learning at Holy Cross. And what community based learning is, it's the same thing as service learning we just call it community based learning here. But what it is is a pedagogy that engages students in hands on work in the Worcester, in the Worcester community that is related, somewhat related to the theory of what they're learning in the classroom. So it's a reciprocal process where the students are learning more deeply, whatever it is they're learning in the classroom by being out in the real world. And then community partners are receiving service in all sorts of ways. But so, I oversee that program so I place the students in, with community partners that are relevant to what they're learning. So they might, they might be in Spanish 301 and they work with organizations where they're speaking Spanish or doing English language tutoring. Or they might be taking intro to gender sexuality women's studies so I place them with community partners that are addressing those issues. But I do lots of other stuff at Holy Cross. The students that were in here before, I advise the social justice coalition. I do, still do some work with the chaplain's office on retreats, we're doing a women's retreat, social justice retreat. And then my office also runs a couple of different conferences that I coordinate, so we have a non-profit career's conference that's a week where we actually work with community partners to do case studies, so I run that conference. This summer we're doing a humanitarianism conference at Holy Cross on refugees and immigrants. And then another big part of my job is I advise our student leadership program the CBL Intern Program, so there are 12 students who are deeply engaged in Worcester and then they also assist us with a variety of things. So I train them on leadership and I'm sort of just their mentor. They come in here all the time and yeah. So I do all sorts of things, but my main, my main job, well, so many different things, but I do a lot with the community and a lot with our, educating our students about community engagement and social justice.

BC: What part of the job do you think you are most passionate about?

IJ: God. [pauses] I think the part of my job I'm the most passionate about is [pauses] getting students to [pauses] feel uncomfortable [laughs] in a way where in the sense, kind of what I was talking before that so many of our students have not yet encountered difference and community based learning is a way that they do that and it changes things for them. It opens their eyes to the world and to a variety of social justice issues like socioeconomic gap, women and gender issue, that sort of thing, but I think it just makes them realize that the world is full of different people and what will, what's best for the world and for them is to open up to others and so the best part of my job is helping to have that learning occur and also to help build relationships because that is where the learning does occur. So they might be going out into Worcester to tutor a kid who can't speak English, but in that process of building their relationship so much happens for both people in the relationship. So that's the part I am most passionate about is just really seeing the learning and growth that comes out of the relationships that my students are able to build with the people in Worcester.

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MB: How have you balanced your different priorities, responsibilities, roles and interests throughout your life?

IJ: [pause] Gosh I don't even know how I balance it.. I try to, I work a lot. My job is very important to me.. but I also have four siblings and six nieces and nephews so they are very important to me too. I think how I balance it is.. And then I'm also a student, I'm in—well I was taking some classes and now I'm about to start a PhD program. So I have a lot going on! [laughs] But I think how I balance it is, I want to do anything I do that's really important to me.. I do it because it enables me to form and deepen a relationship in some way and it also enables me to learn more about how to bridge some of the gaps that are in the world. So I think how I prioritize things, are the things that I do going to enable me to build relationships and are the things that I do , going to teach me to be more about the world and about what's going on out there and what's out there to be addressed. I think that if those things aren't happening then I won't do them. But also as a chaplain in me, I think that self care is really, really important and so I do a lot of—I run a lot. I'm a long distance runner. But I don't know, I think it's really hard to balance especially as a woman. I don't have children or partner so I'm lucky in that I don't have to worry about those things. There is also the expectation that i should have those things. So balancing that too, I think community is really helpful and balancing too. Being able to work in really great relationships with people i surround myself with.

BC: What do you think the pros and cons of like your job is ?

IJ: There's so many pros. I mean I get to see students grow up, which is incredible. I get to see them become more certain of themselves and more certain of their role in the world, and then I get to experience Worcester in so many different ways because I have all these different connections. So those are definitely the pros, just really witnessing and accompanying people on a journey of growth. I think the cons are, it's really hard to know when to stop. I mean there's so much to be done, there's so many students and there's so many community partners and in order to have valuable meaningful experience, you need to set boundaries because I don't want to be a little bit for a lot, I want to be a lot for a little, and it's hard to figure out where that is and you know especially being at a college. There are so many events! I can stay here until 10 pm every single night. That would really burn me out. I think that's the con, the sense that it's hard to know when to, where to set the boundary. Another con is that you can't reach everybody. There are a lot of students who really want community engagement, that are really open to it, and then there are some who aren't and it's really sad not being able to reach everybody, but you also have to know that you can't. The third thing is, I basically have to sit with social injustice all day, every day because that is what I'm educating my students about and that's what I see in the community we live in. You know its hard stuff to think about. My friends aren't thinking about that all the time. I'm constantly thinking about racial injustice, socioeconomic injustice, about my own privilege and living with that as a white person who has a good income, and an educated person. It's really, it's uncomfortable a lot, because I just can't turn it off [laughs]. You know I'm sort of ruined, in a good way. [laughs] But it's like everything, every little thing has a

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consequence and I know about those consequences because that's how I educate students. So I'm helping these—we're preparing this conference to educate people on refugees and immigrants, but I'm printing out hundreds of flyers for it and I'm like ruining the environment, I'm not being environmental about that or I think about how I work at Holy Cross which is full of resources and there is a lot of underfunded Worcester Public Schools out there and it doesn't sit well with me, so I have to sit with a lot of stuff and it, you know one of my sisters will always say there is a soap box you don't stand on, because there is always something that needs to be addressed and I kind of can't turn that off, but so—yeah, that's hard. [laughs]

MB: Do you have any regrets with the choices that you made in your life

IJ: No. I don't. Definitely not. [Pauses I really don't, I mean I think I probably could have listened to myself more earlier on about sort of the things that I wanted out of my own professional life, and I think you could always do things better. But I guess my biggest regret is I didn't go abroad when I was a student and I don't know if I'll have that opportunity really, I mean I might because I have a lot of life left here hopefully. But I think because I was so limited in how I was thinking about my career, I really limited myself for several years when I was in college. I think all the choices I made have led me to this moment, to this job and I wouldn't regret—I don't regret being here, I love my job.

BC: So through all your community involvement, is there any stories that resonated with you, like stayed with you?

IJ: Oh my gosh, so many, [pauses] I think, thinking about Worcester, I think the big moment that stays with me, this was just a couple, like a month ago, I went to the rally, the solidarity rally for the City Hall, that was just three weeks ago. I remember being there and feeling like this is Worcester. It felt like because I was surrounded by all different types of people. I was running into people I knew and didn't know, a lot of my community partners, my students and it just felt like, I'm in a community that really cares and I think that I always knew that, but that was a moment that really resonated and sat and really hit me that this community is going to protect and support those on the margin and I felt really proud to be there and be a part of the community. That's definitely one thing that stuck with me. And another thing that been wonderful this year is one of my students, he's a first year student and he volunteers at St. Mary's Healthcare Center, so he meets with a resident one on one each year and he is in ROTC here so he's training to be in the Navy. The resident he volunteered with was a veteran and in December, he brought like three of his friends, ROTC friends and they did this like flag raising ceremony to commemorate Pearl Harbor Day and I got an email and picture from the community department, you know this is one of the greatest days at St. Marys. It's such a special relationship that they are forming. You know stories like that are so wonderful to hear, that my students are able to experience that and the community is able to make those connections. That's something else really special. I don't know, so many things.

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BC: Do you consider yourself active politically?

IJ: Yes. I could be more , I wish I was more. I'm very progressive and liberal and extremely depressed about the current state of things and I feel like I'm living with a broken heart all the time. I loved Hilary Clinton, I think the world destroyed her. I think she did not win because she is a woman. Hands down, that's what happened. And I think now more than ever, I need to be even more political. But it's hard with my job. I want to reach all my students, I don't want to ostracize anybody.

BC: Mmh.

IJ: But you know it's a dire situation in here, I have to be a little bit careful, I work really hard to stay informed. I've been going to all the rallies. I did phone calls for Hillary Clinton on her campaign and...

BC: Did you go to the protest?

IJ: The Women's March? [worldwide protest on January 21, 2017]

BC: Yup.

IJ: Yep. I went to the Women's March , the one in Boston. So yeah, I'm certainly an activist but I could do more.

MB: What is some of the community work you're involved in right now

IJ: [laughs] Everything. I mean the biggest thing that I do, myself, is I serve on the Daybreak Board, the YWCA, otherwise my job.

MB: [laughs] What do you think is one of the Daybreak Board's major accomplishments?

IJ: I think one of their major accomplishments, is trying to educate Worcester about what the shelter and what Daybreak can offer the community in terms of resources. They do a breakfast every year and it's really wonderful. They bring speakers in, do a lot of education, they do a flag raising ceremony for domestic violence survivor day or whatever it is. So I think they do a lot of good community engagement work. I wouldn't say there is one thing I'm most proud of.

BC: How big of a role do you think religion played in your life?

IJ: A lot, a little, a lot. So I have a divinity degree, I studied religion in college, that was my major plus pre-med. So I think religion and learning about religion has really given me a lens to analyze the world around me and analyze the systems in place that are creating social injustice. I

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think for my own sense, I grew up Catholic, but that doesn't really mean anything to me anymore, but I think I've had some really wonderful spiritual mentors like I mentioned Kim and I think there's something really spiritual and divine going on that went on during that relationship and her presence is still in my life and then in graduate school, I was really active. I discovered Unitarian Universalism and I was really active in that community. It showed me that there's more ways to be religious than Catholic. I knew of course there were, but I just didn't, I never tied on before. I just think it played an important role like scholarly and I think in just shaping my own profession, but I wouldn't say a particular religious tradition, but more of a sense of spirituality and the importance of understanding your own identity and understanding the things that ground you, break your heart, that sort of thing. But I certainly think it's important, I studied it, you know so..

MB: How have health issues impacted in your life and those in your family?

IJ: Not really at all, I'm very lucky. I always been very healthy. My mom had breast cancer when I was in kindergarten but she got through it, survived it. It was pretty bad, but she survived it, I don't remember it, I was very young. Yeah, I mean, I've been really lucky.

BC: What are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable, healthcare?

IJ: I'm lucky, I got it through my job, through my parents, lovely [President Barack] Obama. He was able to give me health care until I was 26, and then I got this job so I've never lacked access to really great health care.

BC: Mhm.

MB: Are you responsible for anyone else's health care besides your own?

IJ: No.

BC: So how do you get through tough times?

IJ: Definitely the people around me. I mean just my community of friends and family around me. I think they are really important to sort of bounce ideas off of, you know? But I've been pretty lucky. I think things have been emotionally tough sometimes, but you know I've had a really strong community around me.

BC: Because you were like talking about how it's hard like you're never doing enough, and what do you tell yourself when you're having those thoughts?

IJ: I definitely tell myself I am doing enough. I think I have to check myself. My job is to witness my students growth, not to over perform so I think in those moments, I really try to step

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back and see what my students are doing, and allow them to reach me instead of me reaching them. So that always helps, stepping back and witnessing because there is so much logistical stuff that goes into my work, you know, I could just let that deplete me but instead I try and turn it around a little bit.

MB: How do you define success and has that definition changed for you over time?

IJ: I definitely think, I think that for a long time, success meant that success is getting a college degree, making money, not a lot of money, but enough money. I think because I have the luxury of not having to worry about really not having a good enough salary, I don't really think about that as much. I think for me success is doing what you love and if that thing is something that is going to benefit the world and I do think I'm successful in that. I think for a long time I thought success was going to be becoming a doctor. That's certainly not the case anymore.

BC: So based on your life experience, and like what's going on now, what advice would you give to women today and future generations?

IJ: I think the advice I would give to women, especially, you know my female students, I think woman have the tendency not to take credit for the things that they do. I think women are like, "Oh, it's nothing." you know, "Oh this person actually did it." That's just not true. I think men take the credit that their given and more than their given. So I think that my advice would be to take credit where it's due and really bask in being successful and owning it. It doesn't do anybody any good diminishing yourself, it just doesn't. So that would be a piece of advice. Another is always be, you know, get your people and surround yourself with your people because being a woman is really hard and you're going to need people to let you persist. So I would say, get educated and really prioritize education, those would be my things.

MB: So we're working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that's been recorded in the past, so what do you think we should be sure to include?

IJ: Gosh, everybody! I certainly think you should be sure to include women of all generations, as many as possible. Maybe, definitely women who are voiceless. I have a voice, which is great but there is so many women who live in Worcester who don't. I mean there might be an immigrant who has seven children who don't speak English or they might have to work three jobs or they might be in a relationship that really diminishes their voices and I think it's really important to figure out how you can reach those woman and have their stories be heard. I'm glad to share mine too, but I think that would be what I sure would be to include, who isn't included in the conversation and how can we get them in the conversation.

MB: During your time in Worcester, was there any or were there any major historical events that personally impacted you?

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IJ: I think in '08 Obama won for the first time, it was the first president I voted for and that was awesome. Obviously now, [President Donald] Trump was elected president. Those were the two big things that I can think of, like the major events. I was not physically in Worcester, the day that [Osama] Bin Laden was shot and captured and killed, but I do remember seeing like videos of Holy Cross students celebrating in the library and that really bothered me. Not because, I don't think Bin Laden is a terrible person, but I don't think you should be celebrating anybody's death like that. I think Hillary Clinton's campaign was such a huge thing for me. It was great to be with some women in Worcester through that and having my community be here to support me.

BC: So how old were you when you were allowed to date?

IJ: Oh God, it doesn't matter. I don't think I was never really interested in it until college. So it never really came up but I think my sisters dated in like middle school [laughs]. It never really was like a big priority for me. My sister went on dates in high school, I can remember. Yeah, it never was really a big thing though.

MB: What was considered fashionable during high school and middle school, I guess too.

IJ: Oh my God. I don't know, it was like early 2000s, those butterfly clips in your hair and you wore them like this, short overalls, like shorts that were overalls. For a while what was fashionable was like anything that said Abercrombie, the names of stores, that was fashionable, in middle school. In high school, we had to wear dress codes, I don't even really know.

BC: What was the dress code?

IJ: It was like pants and a blazer or a skirt. But I went to one of those high schools that wore Vineyard Vines, that sort of stuff, preppy stupid stuff.

BC: What was your favorite musical group or song?

IJ: N'Sync all the way. I really liked Bye, Bye, Bye. [laughs], they were my favorite.

MB: How were girls typically treated when you were in school?

IJ: I don't know. My high school was sort of a boy's school, I just remember it was a big ice hockey school and there were all women who dated hockey guys who were called the hockey wives so that was terrible, so not great but fine. I always felt like it didn't diminish my capacity to learn or anything like that. I think okay.

MB: What did your parents education consist of?

IJ: Both are college educated and my dad has a master's degree.

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BC: Do you have any significant historical events that took place when you were growing up?

IJ: 9/11. I was in 8th grade. That was a really big one, the biggest, I think.

MB: Thank you!

IJ: Oh, you're welcome! Thank you, so much!