

Transcript – Class of 1999, 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion

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Interview Date: March 28, 2024  
Interview Time: 11:00 a.m. EST  
Location: Zoom  
Length: 1 video file; 48:10

Amanda Knox: Good morning. My name is Amanda Knox. I'm the Assistant Archivist at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women here at Brown University. It is March 28, 11 am eastern time, and I am here recording our 25<sup>th</sup> reunion interview this year with members of the class of 1999. Thank you all so much for being here. I would just like for you to each introduce yourselves, and I'll kind of just go around my zoom room and call on you as I see you, Jaclyn, if you'd like to start.

Jaclyn Mason: Sure. Thank you so much. My name is Jacqueline Mason. I was a biology concentrator at Brown, and I currently live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

AK: Perfect, welcome. Sarah?

Sarah Pierson: I am Sarah Pierson. I was a women's studies concentration at Brown and currently live in Boston.

AK: Perfect, welcome. Ninian?

Ninian Stein: Ninian Stein. I was a [1:00] double concentrator in environmental studies and anthropology, and I live in Cambridge.

AK: Amazing. Well, thank you all again for taking the time to be here to record this as we near your 25<sup>th</sup> reunion. And as that kind of momentous occasion comes up, I'm wondering if any of you, feel free to jump in as you would like, if you would like to share a little bit about why you decided to attend Brown.

JM: I decided to attend Brown because it didn't have a core curriculum. That was definitely one of my, one of my biggest considerations. And I joke about it now with my daughter. She's about to start looking at schools, and you know, taking it very seriously. And I said to her, "That's wonderful. But I just also need to be very honest with you. Part of the reason I was interested in Brown was that I never had to take a history class again for the rest of my life." So, but you know just to, you know, just to be completely [2:00] transparent. That was definitely. One of the main factors was the lack of a core curriculum. And also, the grading system. I felt like not having to worry about getting precisely amazing grades in every class, and also having the S/NC option if you wanted it was just really attractive to me, and I felt as though I would be able to get an education on my own terms without having that hanging over me in terms of the, the outside grading. So those were two of the main considerations for me.

SP: Mine was very similar, because, when college acceptances came back my dad told me that if I had been accepted to an Ivy League that I needed to go to an Ivy League school, and I had gotten into Brown and Columbia. And Columbia, as you may know, is literally the opposite of Brown, where every single class you take together. And I, I went to both of the, you know it was the, where you come on the train, [3:00] the you know, the Day on College Hill.

JM: Yeah.

SP: Which was also a great like, I met all of these people, and then I went, you know I, I lived in New Jersey at the time with my, with my family. And so, I visited Columbia, and they're just like, "The best thing about Columbia is like everyone's taking the same classes," and that sounded terrible to me. And so instead, wanted to go to Brown. Also, I didn't want my mom to like show up at my dorm for brunch like from New Jersey, or something like that, so.

NS: And I would echo the same things you guys have already said. For me growing up in Cambridge, I really did, I applied to Brown early action because I really didn't want to go to Harvard, but I did also apply to Harvard. I got into both Brown and Harvard, and it was really easy for me to say, I just want to go to Brown. Harvard is too restricted be able to do what I want at Brown, I'll have more creative freedom. Also, I was very aware that the process at Harvard

meant that they were winnowing out faculty members. Something I dealt with later in graduate school, and my dissertation advisor got, had to leave because they [4:00] weren't tenuring women in a lot of cases into that department in that time period, it was a challenge. And I was like, I don't want to deal with this as an undergraduate. I want to go somewhere where they prioritize teaching and they really care about the students and they really care about their teachers and they're giving them tenure so that we don't have to worry about people leaving randomly because of strict standards. I'm so thankful went to Brown.

AK: So, what are some of your earliest memories of being on campus?

JM: My first memory of being on campus was the day that we moved in. It was extremely hot which is funny, because then it sort of was echoed on the day that we graduated, which I think was one of the hottest days ever recorded in history, the day, you know, on the day of our graduation. But it was really hot the day that we moved in, and I was very nervous. I'm an only child. I never lived with anyone else. I was nervous to have [5:00] a roommate, and I had spoken to my roommate once on the phone before we got there. And when we, I was with my mother and my father, and it was so hot moving my stuff in that my father took his shirt off in the room because he was sweating, and just at that moment my roommate walked in with her brother and her mother to find my dad like shirtless in the middle of the room. And I have to say it was definitely a very funny memory, and also probably a very strong bonding moment for us to move, to move forward from that point. But yeah, that was, that's definitely my earliest memory of being on campus.

SP: I have two. I have, I mean, I think, one, I remember getting to campus and immediately taking a cigarette out of my purse and lighting it in front of my mother. So there was that. And then I had this memory kind of [6:00] early on is, you know. I think my, my roommate had gone to a large public school in Brooklyn, and I had gone to a public school in New Jersey, and it was this moment of like, we're both sitting on our beds, and neither of us knew that boarding school was like an actual thing that still happened. And so, we had met all of these students who had gone to boarding school, and we were just having this conversation about like, "I read about it in like books that I read in my English class, but didn't think that like that was a thing that was still

happening.” So, but it was. It's very, I just, it was just like such that moment of like a, and again, I think, glad that we had that similar background where you could just sort of like unpack what you were being introduced to on campus for the first time. Those are a couple of my first memories.

NS: Those are all wonderful memories. Also, I do remember a lot about orientation early days, but the thing that really stands out to me is that first fact that it was called the LGBT, the Lesbian Gay, Bisexual Transgender Alliance. I think it's now called the Queer Alliance, or maybe another name [7:00] past that. And I remember that first meeting where I met a lot of people who are going to be very influential in my life, including our class President Jasmine Waddell, and D. Ryan Lynch, who goes by Ryan now and uses male pronouns, and a whole bunch of other classmates who just were people who were, who were important in that first meeting, was really, stands out in my mind as sort of one of the moments of building community on campus.

AK: How about, why don't we talk a little bit more and build on that, building your communities on campus. What did, how did that take shape for each of you?

JM: For me, I was very bonded with the people who were in my freshman dorm. We were in Wayland well, first year we were in Wayland, and we just instantly connected. I'm not sure if it was luck, or if it was proximity, or you know [8:00] it was some grand plan behind the scenes from, from Brown for how they put people together. But that was really my first very strong community at Brown. And then branched out, you know, branched out from there. But always came back to that core group who we all met and bonded in, in our freshman dorm.

SP: You want to go, Ninian?

NS: Sure. I would say also, the Women's Center was very influential for me, and I think I can remember some of those very early Women's Center's meetings, and kind of just sticking my head in for the first time and seeing people, older students sitting at the desk and writing in journals and being like, Oh, my gosh! What's this all about? And kind of those early sort of organizing meetings of various things.

And also, just the orientation, the activities fair in the gymnasium with there being just so many possibilities and being like, [9:00] you could do almost anything. This is amazing.

SP: My, when I came to Brown one of my high school best friends had had a boyfriend for a while who was also attending Brown, and he and I, yeah, when my mom was leaving, she said to him, “Take care of my girl,” and he apparently like took, literally, like took that dead serious because he just left my house with his wife and daughter, who was actually looking at Brown yesterday. And we have now been best friends for 25 years, so he was really sort of like my kind of instant community, and, you know, kind of has been a sort of like best friend. Sort of that, you know, I, I think we've like really grown into our friendship in a lot of ways. And so, you know, I think he was really my anchor, for all of, of what I went through at Brown was a time where I sort of had to do a lot of healing work for myself personally. And so, you know, that was kind of the most important thing that I needed to do while in those four years of my life. [10:00] And he was a huge part of that.

But I think I, I also made a lot of connections through being a women's peer counselor. And so that was kind of coming into the summer before sophomore year. We did sort of a really intensive training together, and that, you know, with Jasmine. I also connected with Jasmine during that and, and some of the other friends that I had kind of throughout the, the rest of my time at Brown has come through that community. And Hope coll – I was in Hope College, and so another, like smaller freshmen dorm experience as well.

AK: I don't know if this is too specific, but this is a topic that's been coming up, that I'd like to hear a little bit more about is the peer counseling program. How, how did that impact each of your experiences on campus, if at all?

NS: It was something I was very excited about when I remember applying to Brown, was the idea that there were multiple types of peer counselors, and they were situated in the dorm. It wasn't just a residence counselor. There was the women's peer counselor program and the minority, I think it was? [11:00]

SP: Minority. Yeah, minority counselor.

NS: And then I participated my junior year, the following year in, in the program rather than my sophomore year. So, I missed, I missed your cohort, although I knew a lot of you.

SP: Yes, yeah, yeah. No. I mean, it was the same. So, so I know Xochitl, who was, was potentially joining. She was the minority peer counselor in the same dorm that I was a woman's peer counselor in, and so you know, I think that was quite, I mean, it was quite the experience. I mean, it was a great experience, and also like really challenging. I mean, we dealt with some really challenging kind of people dynamics. I think that probably makes me good at HR issues today. But the, you know, the, the guy that kept coming out of the bathroom without a towel around him, you know, you know, in, in my, you know, in my dorm is like we had to have a whole conversation about, you know a about coed bathrooms and that like sort of how did we want to navigate bathroom space, you know, [12:00] when there was only one bathroom on each floor? And so, if you sort of think about the kinds of, of conversations that you have to have in order to like, live in a world with people that are different, and have different points of view on things. Which I think is, you know, perhaps a skill that has, has, we are losing in society as we go. But I, you know. But I think that there were some really great opportunities to like think about that through that program, and to have that be facilitated by your peers, rather than to be facilitated by sort of administration, I think, mattered a lot.

JM: I have to confess I don't, I don't recall being involved in peer counseling. I think it was not something that I availed myself of. I knew that it was a resource, but I have had a very different experience than Sarah and Ninian, and that it wasn't, yeah, I don't, I don't recall that really, being a part of my college years.

AK: Did you feel like there were other support or counsel mechanisms, either, you know, like [13:00] mentally, physically, career wise, academically. Did you, were there other resources in that way that were also helpful? Or were you really relying on each other to navigate the experience?

JM: I mean for me, I was definitely relying on my friends and my peers, and also my professors. I had one professor who was very, very influential in my life, Michael Lysaght. He's since passed away. And he really, he shaped my whole career path and my life once I left Brown, and he was just, he was just a, a wonderful, wonderful person. I came back to Brown a couple of times and spoke to some of his classes when I was in law school. I mean, this was, it was quite a long time ago now, but I kept a very strong bond with him, as did some of my other classmates. And I did find that with a couple of other professors, but really he was the most instrumental for me.

[14:00] I feel like my support at Brown was very, it grew very organically, and I think that that is something that is also very unique to Brown. Again, I was aware that there were peer counselors, there were career counselors, and that there were formal resources available to me. But it was, it, it definitely was a path that I think I took on my own and was able to find support from people in the community, which was pretty cool.

SP: Yeah, I mean, I think the mental health resources on campus were pretty abysmal. And you know, I think what I recall is that, you know you get sort of three 30-minute sessions with, you know, over, you know, sort of overworked counselor. I ended up, you know, I ended up finding somebody in private practice while, while I was there. The one, yeah, there, there was a group. And so, the, [15:00] there was a group for, it was a disclosure group for people who had experienced sexual abuse or assault, and that that was actually a really sort of powerful group that I was able to participate in you know, kind of when, when I was, I think it was a freshman or a sophomore. When I was a women's peer counselor, you know, I think you know, we, we supported a lot of mental health. I mean, I, I had a student in my unit that was like actively suicidal. I had, you know, we, there was a, another peer of ours who was dealing with a freshman who had been raped at a party and trying to kind of navigate both, you know, this sort of justice system, but also kind of getting, getting outside support for that student. And so, but you know it, it wasn't sort of a time where there was easily accessible kind of telehealth services or websites, or sort of like places that you could kind of go to like find those communities. It was like, you know, sort of you had to, you know, like you really like, we really had to kind of help each other in that way. [16:00]

NS: I think that the advisors for the LGBT community and for the Women's Center were really aware of the sort of need for greater mental health resources. I felt like they were really trying to support their communities. I think Dean Brennan, who was also the Dean, both for LGBT things and also for the women's peer counseling program, really did a great job of trying very actively to support students and connect them to resources. And I think she gets a lot of credit for being a support for, for a lot of people during, who I knew during the time at Brown. Also, the director, various directors in the Women's Center, I felt, were really going out of their way at various moments in time for students. And I also felt very supported by my faculty. I kept in touch with many of them, Martha Joukowsky and Richard Gould, both of whom recently passed away, and Robert Matheson, who, I think he's still growing strong in Providence, although has retired.

AK: What were some of your kind of high points and/or kind of low point memories, these like [17:00] snapshot polaroid images when you think of your time at Brown? High points and low points that you had here. If you're comfortable sharing any of them, I can also move on to another question.

SP: What was the, which, were, were we in the, was it the Forest Gander poetry seminar, that we were in together?

JM: Yeah. Yes.

SP: That was a good class.

JM: That was the best. I still talk about it. Do you remember when we went to his house?

SP: Yes!

JM: Yeah. And he, he lived on this orchard like, somewhere outside of Providence, and like he and [CD?] were poets. And I, I thought to myself – this reminds me, Sarah, when you said the thing about boarding school, right? I'm like people can be poets? You know? Right, like? I came



from this background that was like, you have to be a lawyer, or a doctor, [18:00] or this, or that, and I'm like –

SP: They're just like living their happy life out as poets in the countryside.

JM: I know.

SP: No, I think that was –

JM: Yeah, I agree.

SP: Yeah, that was a really good class. I did, I did an independent study. So, I was, I was also a religious studies, major and, and so you know, I think I spent my senior year, I wrote, I wrote a thesis which, which was a really rewarding, rewarding experience that kind of taught me that I could take on big writing projects. And, and I also I did this project that was called, it was like with Anne Dill, who's in sociology. But it was on women, trauma, and spirituality, and so kind of like, brought together a number of different themes that were important for me during my time at Brown, and like I still have that. I mean it was, it was essentially the project was a collage book of different, you know, and a paper that went along with it about like why I had made the collage book the way that I made it, and kind of pulled in themes from [19:00] health and religious studies and gender studies and it's like as only you could sort of get, get a grade for at Brown, so.

NS: Were either of you in Robert Emlin's Gravestones as Evidence of American Material Culture class?

SP: No.

JM: No, but I just, I was in a class. I was in a class, did you take Best Human Love According to Men and Women of the Modern West? Did either of you take that class?

SP: But I took a different class called Love that was Mill Haven in religious studies.

JM: I mean, when I like, I tell people that I took that class and they're like, what? It was one of the best classes I ever, it was one of the best classes I ever took. I, I wonder if it still exists. So yeah.

NS: I think of classes that got us out of the classroom like, did you take Amy Schmidt's plant ecology class, which shared –

JM: You know, I think I did. I, I took [20:00] an ecology class because I had to, but I'm not quite sure if I took that class, but I, I think I had friends who did, because it does sound familiar.

NS: The classes that got you out of the classroom. So, Robert Emlin and Gravestones took us to all sorts of cemeteries around Rhode Island. And the plant course, you went to different sort of plant, nature areas, and it was just those sorts of moments of being able to say, go to City Hall and look at inventories and realize you could learn so much. Those sorts of out of the classroom moments were really influential for me.

JM: Yeah, yeah, that reminds me, I did take an education class where we, where a part of it was we had to go and observe a local high school. So that was pretty, that was pretty eye opening. But yeah, I mean just thinking, too, of, of low points at Brown for me. I chose the wrong concentration and I didn't realize it until much later in, in life, but like there were signs when I was at Brown that I was [21:00] doing the wrong thing, you know, like, and, and I think that maybe, maybe low point isn't the right way to describe it. But had there been maybe a little bit more structure, I may have realized it sooner, because, as it was like, I could still finish all of my classes for my biology major, but like take poetry, you know poetry and advanced poetry writing. Take an education class, and you know Best Human Love and all of these other classes. And then, you know, my grades are coming back. And again, just, you know, to have a little bit of objective measure, you know, all of the classes that were outside of my major were the classes that I was excelling in, and then the classes that were in my major were the classes where I was struggling, and I just thought it was because the classes were harder. But it wasn't until later on in my life that I was like, oh, like ding, ding, ding! This wasn't necessarily what you were supposed

to, you know, supposed to be doing. I don't regret it. I, you know, obviously I love Brown. I wouldn't be, you know, on this call if, if I didn't have such a strong affinity for it. But [22:00] you know, I think that like, I said, had there been maybe a little bit more guidance, maybe, you know, I would have been able to switch paths at, at some point, and, you know, been able to like, actually be a poet, you know, or whatever. But yeah, so that, that was just as everyone was talking that just sort of popped into my mind.

AK: Any other thoughts here before I move on with my next question?

SP: I can't really think of any like low, I mean, it's like low like, were there highs and lows like during my college years, like, yes, but I think, do I attribute any of them to Brown? You know, not really, you know. I think you know in in some ways I wonder sometimes I wonder, similar to what Jacqueline is saying, is, is kind of, had there been a little bit more structure and support, more around kind of like, what am I going to do next? And so, like [23:00] I look back now, and I think to myself, you know, is, if I had known that you know, business or consulting was like also a way to have impact in the world like I might have thought about it differently, sort of thought about it again. I know there's the Nelson Center for Entrepreneurship now, and it's like, but that just wasn't a frame that I understood, like I didn't understand. And I ended up learning it on my own, and I think to some extent what I learned at Brown, which is how to just absorb lots and lots of information, and make sense of it for myself, is like what sort of like made me good in my career. And like, you know, and I, I don't think that I would have learned that at a place where there had been more structure because I would have resisted it. But, but I think in a lot of ways it was like Brown made me entrepreneurial, but it didn't teach me anything about being an entrepreneur.

JM: That's well, said I, I hear you on that, too.

AK: So you had mentioned Xochitl, [24:00] and I was able to interview her earlier this week and – fantastic interview. When it goes up online I encourage all of you and our listeners right now to take a look at that interview. But she had shared about the Adam Lack case – and this was the first time I had heard of it in my years of doing these interviews – and that that was really

influential on her time. And I'm curious if, if that was similar for any of you, if that impacted your time at Brown you know, personally, generally. Thoughts?

SP: It certainly did for, did for me. I don't know Jacqueline and Ninian, if you, if it had the same impact on you?

JM: I was aware of the case, but I cannot say that it had a huge impact on my time at Brown. It wasn't until after that I really became [25:00] aware of the details and the impact that it did have on campus when we were there. I also, you know, in thinking about that since then, I feel like it was just a very different time. And people, I don't think, my impression was people were not talking as much about these issues as they are, as they do now. So many of those things, so many things that I found out about that happened during our time at Brown, I thought to myself, I, this, I kind of knew this was going on, but I did not really have as much of an understanding of, of all of the details, and who was involved, and what was being done on campus to address, to address these issues. I don't, I don't want to say I was like blissfully ignorant, but it, it just. It was a very, very different time in terms of, [26:00] and especially talking about issues and things that impact women. You know. I just think that we, we live in a, we live in a very different time now, and so, you know I don't, I, I don't want to take up any more time. I know, Sarah said, you know, it really impacted her, and obviously, you know, I had, I had a little bit of a different experience when we were there.

NS: And I was very, I was aware of it, and I would say it made me very sad at the time. But I think if I, if you'd asked me that question during my time at Brown, I would have had a lot of thoughts on how it impacted. But I don't have as many thoughts now.

SP: Yeah, I mean, I, I, I became, you know, sort of a, an advocate and author like all around sexual violence prevention response. And so, I think, to some extent it was, you know, both to have the space to do my own personal healing, which is kind of one part of becoming part of a larger social issue, but really being able to learn about, about, like advocacy and thoughtful advocacy. And advocacy [27:00] that creates a world that we all want to live in. I think sort of when I think back, you know, today, thinking back to you know that case in particular, like I am

the mother of a son, and so, you know, I, and even I mean, even at that time, you know the, it wasn't really, it wasn't, I think this was to come after the Adam Lack case, kind of it sort of like really picked up, but there was another incident of sexual assault that had taken place at a frat party, and you know, I was friends with people on fraternities, and I was part of the women's peer counselor, and they started going head to head, right. Like it was, you know, sort of just a polarizing like blame game throw down and I ended up organizing a, you know it was a candlelight, candle, I negotiated, this is, you know, I do a lot of negotiation now, but it's like I negotiated a candlelight vigil where the presidents of the fraternities were going to come and do readings about sexual assault. And I went to the Rockefeller Library and I [28:00] spent hours in the basement making photocopies of passages from this book called *Men on Rape*. And I gave them a flashlight and a microphone and I made them read things that they had not seen in advance. And I think again, it's like, it's that to be able to understand that, that sexual violence hurts everybody, and also that we don't teach young people how to navigate relationships in healthy ways. And we don't create communities that like support each other in those moments. And so, it's like, just you know, I, you know I think about, you know, I mean, I think about you, Jacqueline, right where it's kind of like, if you had had more awareness or skills like to think about kind of all of the energy and like support that you would have been able to sort of bring to, you know, sort of bring to the, the community, you know, sort of like had we just sort of set the table differently is like, that's kind of, you know a lot of what I think about and, and have done sort of since, since that time.

JM: Yeah, I think you make a really good point, too, Sarah, about the support [29:00] for, for students. I remember one of the first days in Wayland in our first year Dorm and our, our RA's coming out and being like, "Here are condoms and dental dams. They're hanging on the door," and you know, we're all like, "Woo," you know. "Yeah!" But nobody talking really about sex, sexual responsibility, consent. And you know, maybe I should feel like maybe there was a little bit about like, you know, talk about consent. But it was like it, you know that, now that you've just said that, I can see much more clearly, you know, here it's like, you know, here you go, you're free, and here's what here's all the resources you need to, you know, to, to pursue your, you know, your, your sexual self. But without then, the countervailing you know education of, of

what that really does mean, and what that does look like. So again, just a very also like a very different time. Right? I mean, yeah.

NS: Yeah, we see the influence of the HIV/AIDS [30:00] sort of epidemic on the presence of condoms and the presence of dental dams and things like that. But do we, did we see the sort of what, what came later? I think, I think the Oberlin Rules might have come out while we're in college, I, or shortly thereafter, I mean, I remember talking about sort of the consent, the sort of the stages of asking for consent, and people sort of being like, Oh, my, gosh! Oberlin's doing this really radical thing. And I remember thinking, okay, they're having conversations that are way more than what we're having here.

JM: Yeah, I don't, I don't remember that I, so, but go ahead, Sarah.

SP: No, I mean I, I, I might have different perspectives on the Oberlin Rules, but I do, I do remember them and know what they are, you know, which was basically, I mean, I think it's like a version of it's consent is something you get versus sort of consent as a language that you need to learn with a partner, and it's really hard to learn a language when you're drunk, is one thing, right? And so, so, and if, if neither of you speak the language, how do you assess that when you first meet somebody? [31:00] And so I, you know, so I think that there's been a lot of evolution just in terms of kind of like how we think about. But yes, I think that there was sort of this initial like, well, if we could just like get permission for every single sort of move that you make with somebody, then we're like good. And there's versions of that now where it's, you know, like, I'm not going to, I'm not going to engage in sexual relations with you unless you, you know, sign this, you know, consent form on my phone before we do it. And that actually doesn't, you know, I, I don't think it necessarily sort of like gets at, the answer gets it all that. But yes, I think that there were in some pockets of Brown some very intense conversations about those kinds of things. But then I think part of the challenge, too, is like if, you know, if, if it's a bunch of women's peer counselors like only talking to each other about it and not to anybody else, right, then it's like –

NS: Right.

SP: It's not really changing very much.

NS: And I think there was as much derision and sort of public jokes about the Oberlin Rules –

SP: Yes.

NS: Unfortunately. I remember at the time being very frustrated. I was like these people are trying to do something, stop [32:00] making jokes about it. And I think you're highlighting the, the things that that needed to come, that were, it was, it was the mo – It was of the era kind of. It was trying to take a step in the right direction, but not getting there.

SP: Right. Well, what, it just wasn't, it was like a consent conversation that wasn't like marketed to the audience that needed to hear it.

NS: Yup. Yeah. Exactly. And it wasn't as you're saying, it wasn't the right conversation. It was the start of having conversations to get to the right types of learning language.

SP: For sure.

NS: But it's interesting how that moment of history was a moment.

SP: Yeah.

Ak: So, I'm kind of curious of some of the other ways that these larger topics that kind of affect people globally manifested on campus. I know there are oftentimes protests and rallies for all various kinds of topics, perhaps not always as serious. Do you remember any kind of student [33:00] involvement happening on campus like that during your time?

NS: Well, certainly coming out of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and sort of the radical ACT UP movements and things like that which had a long tradition at Brown when I started as a first year and sophomore, the LGBTA had many groups, including a group that was kind of an ACT UP

descendant that was trying to do radical acts. And that kind of existed all the way through my time at Brown, but was a little, I think, was a little less active.

SP: What was that group called? I remember that group.

NS: I'm, I'm blanking on the name offhand.

SP: All the coolest queer people were part of it.

NS: Yep.

SP: I'm trying to remember. I mean, I'm even trying to just think about like is, because the OJ Simpson case, does that happen before or during? Was that during?

JM: During. Yes. Yeah. The verdict. So yeah, the verdict. [34:00] So the verdict, yeah, the verdict came down during college. So that's funny you brought that up. I, that's, I remember that really well. I remember sitting on the floor in our dorm room and watching it on like our little 8 inch Sony, you know tube TV, when the when the verdict came back. But I don't, do, you guys, I, I don't recall there being a very strong reaction on campus. Am I misremembering? I mean I, I don't, I don't remember there being a, like a student, any like any major student reaction to the verdict on campus. But I, I could be, I could be misremembering now.

NS: I don't remember either, unfortunately.

SP: Yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm aware, I'm aware that we're sort of like three white women not remembering that, too.

JM: Exactly, right. Exactly. That doesn't mean that there wasn't a reaction right? But, and as far as the, as far as the, [35:00] the, as AIDS goes. I do remember volunteering for the AIDS Hotline at the local support, I don't. I don't remember what it was called. I just remember it was downtown, you know. I remember walking down the hill and, and getting the training, and then I



would have to man the AIDS Hotline. It was a 24 hour volunteer position. So, I, you know there would be some times when my shift was, you know, overnight, and I'm not quite sure anything like that exists today. I, I don't, I don't really know if that's even a resource, you know, that's, that's, that's offered at this point. But, yeah, I do remember that the AIDS epidemic really coloring our, our college experience quite a bit.

SP: Yeah, that's, that's what I wrote my women studies thesis was, lesbian invisibility in the HIV epidemic.

JM: Right.

NS: I do want to mention environmental activism [36:00] definitely happening around us as well. I remember volunteering for the Sierra Club my freshman year, and they're having a pretty active chapter and going to various environmental protests over, over time as well as women's protests and GLBT protests, and certainly things related to continuing to support the HIV/AIDS epidemic work that was going on. I also – did any of you guys take classes in the Alan Sean Feinstein World Hunger Program?

JM: I did not.

NS: That was something that kind of sadly closed during our time at Brown and Ellen Messer left, who was a professor at Brown, who was doing, I took the intro course and the advanced course with her. And she sadly, when the program closed, hadn't taken tenure in another department and ended up leaving Brown. And I felt that program has definitely influenced how I teach environmental studies today. And I'm really very sad in some ways that it's not, wasn't able to continue because I think it's an important piece of understanding environmental [37:00] issues in a lot of ways.

SP: So far you've only mentioned classes that I've never heard of.

NS: One of the wonderful things about Brown.

SP: I did take geology, and that was the, that was the time when I realized that there were actually men and boys that went to Brown because all of my classes were mostly women. And they had very much more comfortable seating than most of the religious studies and the women's studies classes. They were in a brand new geology building.

JM: Right.

SP: Class affectionately known as Rocks for Jocks.

JM: I was going to ask you, I was going to ask you if that was what it was.

SP: That was what it was. My brother was, I took it senior year because my brother was a freshman that year, and so it was like a class I could take with my brother and with Russ, my best friend, and I just thought it was the most, I was like, this is what a – like, and again, because it's Brown. So, I was [38:00] like, this is what a science class is like?

JM: Yeah. I know. And I've had the opposite, like I again, you know, my friends who were not, you know, science concentrators like not only did I have the science class, but then I had the 5 hour lab, and I had tests, and this and that. And then I had my friends who were like, "I just wrote a paragraph," you know. So, but I did get a chance again to be exposed to, to those types of classes, too. But you know, it's just interesting, just even just with three of us on the call, seeing what different experiences we had. You know, I feel like Brown, that is also one of the things that is so unique and wonderful about it. You could probably get every single person, even if you were in the same concentration and get them on a call, and everybody's Brown is different, which is pretty cool.

NS: It's so true.

AK: That's a beautiful way of saying it. And [39:00] as we're coming up on our time here, I guess I want to start closing by asking if, how your time at Brown compared to what your expectation was going into Brown.

NS: I think my time at Brown was a wonderful fit with a lot of my expectations. I think I really found supportive communities. I really found teachers who cared about their students. Martha Joukowsky used to have us, her students, over for dinner at least once a semester. She had a classroom in her basement and students would go study there, and her husband would say, come down and say, "Keep studying, but I'm tucking you in, it's too late goodnight," and things like, crazy things like, wonderful things like that. And kind of those moments of seeing over and over that the university was supporting teachers. And I think that's something that shifted a little bit in later years and that I would love to see Brown getting sort of knowing that it was a core value for many, many years is that [40:00] if they took someone as a tenure, faculty member as a tenure track, they would try to support them and not do that Harvard model of trying to kick, kind of be really hard on them and kick them out, which I think Harvard is trying to go away from, and I thought Brown was going towards for a while, and I hope we'll go away from. Kind of supporting teachers to support students.

SP: I don't think I –

JM: I – go ahead, Sarah.

SP: I just don't think I had expectations. And so it's like to say whether or not Brown met them, I don't know. I think, you know, I stayed in Providence for another four years or so after I graduated, and both my brother was there finishing up and I was working at Brown. And so, I think that also kind of shaped my Brown experiences, that I was there as both a student and then as a staff member. And I worked with the fiftieth reunion fundraising campaign, and so I kind of got to know a very different generation. And so I think that gave me just a different, deeper appreciation for like the role, and the lifelong role that a [41:00] college experience can have in your life.

JM: Yeah, my expectations definitely matched the Brown experience just in the sense that I wanted freedom and I just – in, in all different ways. You know, I wanted to be away from home. I wanted to be able to make my own choices about things. I, I wanted to be able to go and do you know anything that I, you know, wanted to do. And Brown definitely gives the students that, that opportunity. And it worked out really well for me. I think that I had an amazing experience, but I also know, like that level of freedom for 17 and 18 year olds also isn't necessarily for, for everyone. But that was, that was my main, that was my main goal getting to, getting to Brown was just, to, you know, be able to do, you know, do what I wanted [42:00] when I wanted. And again, that just tied in with the, you know, lack of a core curriculum, and you know everything we sort of talked about at the at the top of the call.

NS: And just to say how important it is that universities support the teachers and be able to support students. I also went back to Brown and finished my PhD there after getting two other masters en route, and just sort of seeing the amount of resources that are directed to teachers and directed to, to supporting the students through their time. Just how important that is. So, for example, there were majors where there was less, much less support for student experience both when I was there as an undergrad and when I was there as a grad student. And seeing the difference between students' experiences in majors where they got less support versus more support. I feel very lucky to be in two majors, environmental studies and anthropology at the time were really, really doing very well in, in supporting students, and really had many layers of undergraduates involved in supporting undergraduates so it wasn't all resting on the faculty. And how [43:00] often in department meetings to this day, I try to say, we need to get the, we need to find more ways for our students to support, support each other and inform each other and for, just to make sure that everyone's getting all the information and the advice they need, both from faculty and staff and students. So I really want to celebrate that, that when Brown does that well, it does it really, has that ability to support, to be, be supportive very well, and but it requires resources being given to the programs and departments.

AK: Any other thoughts or memories you'd like to share before we wrap up for today?

JM: Is there still Spring Weekends? Does that still happen? That was, that I just remember being such a huge deal, you know, with Dave Binder coming, and The Who was going to be the headliner for Spring Weekend, like that really stands out in my mind as a you know, a really uniting event on campus. I felt like [44:00] everybody got excited for Spring Weekends. But, but again, I'll defer to Sarah and Ninian for that. Yeah.

SP: I remember, yeah, I mean, I feel like Spring Weekend was, you know, sort of the time that Brown pretended like it was a different kind of school. And that was, that was fun. Dave Binder, I think, was at least at our twentieth, was still coming back to headline.

JM: Really?

SP: Yes, headline reunions.

JM: Good for him.

SP: He has aged with all of us.

NS: I, do you guys remember that April snowstorm, too? There was, I think.

SP: Yeah.

NS: There was a snowstorm –

JM: It was on April Fool's Day, right?

NS: Yes. Yup.

JM: And then there was this group of people who didn't believe that classes were really cancelled, and they still, they thought it was an April Fool's Day joke, and they still went to class, and we were like, I like, had a beer at like 10 o'clock in the morning, you know I'm like – [45:00]

NS: A bunch of us went to study in Martha Joukowsky's basement, and I just remember it being a snowy day and all of us stamping off our snow and coming into the, coming into the basement and having, just watching the snowfall out the windows as we studied.

JM: Yeah, there was a woman in my dorm who was from Hawaii and had never seen snow before. And so that was really fun. That was just added an extra layer of excitement to the whole thing, too. It was pretty cool.

SP: Now I still go back to East Side Pockets, which was one of my favorite places to eat.

JM: Is it still in the same spot?

SP: Still in exactly the same spot, and depending on what day you go like, they, they still will recognize me because it's like, that's how long I've been going there.

JM: Really?

Sp: Yes.

JM: Is, is, is the Silver Truck still around?

SP: I don't know if Silver Truck is still around. Bagel Gourmet is still around. And that like, I worked at Bagel Gourmet.

JM: Okay.

SP: That was my weekend gig, so I could see everybody.

JM: Yeah.

SP: In the morning. 6 AM.

JM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NS: I found a videotape the other day [46:00] with the [Estes Two?] label. Do you guys remember Estes Two, the video rental service? I, when they closed –

JM: No.

NS: – And I, it was like one of the video, there were a couple of video like places where you could go to rent VHS tapes to watch with your friends the way you might watch a streaming surface now. And I still, still remember going there. And then when they went out of business, I made sure to get some of the videos I was afraid wouldn't be collected in university archives. I was like, I got to donate these someday.

JM: Yeah.

NS: We just found one of them the other day.

SP: I do remember going to buy Ani de Franco's "Little Pasta Castle" at the midnight sale at the Record Store.

JM: Yep. Or the, going to, I saw, I remember I saw "Taxi Driver," the re-release at the, at the theater on Thayer Street, which I guess is probably not there.

SP: The Avon? I think it's like, I think the Avon is still there.

JM: Is it still there? Oh, great! That's good. I feel like, you know, movie theaters have sort of fallen by the wayside, [47:00] too.

NS: And there was that theater down by RISD that had the couches.

SP: Oh, Yup! That's, what was that place called?

JM: Sidecar. I used to go there and smoke cigarettes and drink coffee until I thought I was like so wired I was going to just like run, you know, run back up the hill. I feel like that's a huge difference now, too, like smoking like, remember, there was a smoking section in the Ratty.

SP: The Ratty, the cave, that was where I had made, made many friends in the Cave.

JM: Same. Yes, yup. Me too. With American Spirits. I can't even believe it now.

SP: Parliament lights and Cloves on occasion.

JM: Yup. And you're both, you're obviously, you're coming back. You're both going to be there for a reunion, yes? Okay, good.

AK: Well, thank you all so much for taking the time to share these great [48:00] memories and to get these experiences into the historical record. I really appreciate all of your time today.

JM: Thank you so much. It was great seeing both of you.

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