

Transcript – Class of 1992, 25th Reunion

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Interviewer: Mary Murphy

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Track 1

Mary Murphy: [00:00] Okay, I think we'll call to order here. So I'm just going to kick things off with an introduction. Just quickly. So today we have to set the stage with date and time. Today is Saturday, May 27th, 2017. My name is Mary Murphy and I'll be interviewing the group members of the class of 1992 for their twenty-fifth college reunion interview. I want to thank all of you for taking the time out of your day and celebrations here to join us to speak about your memories of your time at Brown. So I think what I'd just like to do, and I think the best way to begin, is to go around and ask that you each introduce yourself, and with whatever you're comfortable sharing if you could tell us a little bit about where you're from originally, maybe where you grew up, where you live now, if you'd like to tell us what you are doing professionally, and then also [01:00] what brought you to Brown University is the first major question I'd like to ask.

Resa Lewiss: I'll begin. My name is Resa Lewiss. And I'm a Rhode Islander. I grew up in Westerly, Rhode Island, and I went to Westerly High School. And what brought me to Brown when I was applying to colleges, and I'll just briefly say that most of my classmates, about 50%, did not go to college, and of those 50% that did, 50% go to the University of Rhode Island, so Brown was not on a lot of people's radars. And in fact I was encouraged to go to Providence College because I had done well in high school. So Brown just in general wasn't on Rhode Island public school in Westerly specifically radar. But I applied, and when I walked on the campus it was very new to me, because I hadn't grown up seeing a lot of Providence, Rhode Island. Brown felt right. And I came despite the fact it was 45 minutes away.

At Brown I studied [02:00] sociology, racial/ethnic studies, and I was premed. So after Brown I went to University of Pennsylvania for med school. And I'm a practicing emergency physician right now in Denver, Colorado.

Deborah Pearlman: I'm Debbie Osofsky. I grew up in Potomac, Maryland. I was Debbie Perlman when I was here at Brown. But I met my husband in our freshman unit, so it's been a long, long time. I came to Brown. I'm part of a Brown family. My dad went to Brown, my older sister was at Brown, my two siblings after me went to Brown. But I went to a public high school, Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, and all my siblings went to private school in the district. And I came to Brown sort of resisting when I first visited wanting to be here, because it was such a family thing. But when I arrived I just felt so comfortable. I was particularly drawn to the way that students interacted with each other and it didn't feel competitive, where a lot of [03:00] other places felt very competitive to me, and I'd had enough of that in high school. I was here as a history concentrator in Russian history and Eastern Europe. I also did a lot of coursework in education. I ended up studying under Ted Sizer, who had a profound impact on me professionally. I lived abroad in Moscow, Russia after I graduated. Ended up teaching in schools in Minnesota, and then came back for graduate school at Harvard and reconnected with Ted Sizer. And now the last 20 years I've worked at an Essential School, at Parker Charter Essential School in Devens, Mass, which Ted actually founded based on the Ten Common Principles. So that's me.

Jessika Sorrosa: Hi. My name is Jessika Wellisch. I went to Brown as Jessika Sorrosa. I'm originally from – I was born in Costa Rica, raised in Ecuador. And I currently live in Washington, DC. [04:00] I'm working as a life and leadership coach. And it's taken me many years to arrive at this place that feels right professionally. I always say I've worn a lot of different hats along the way.

And my "why Brown" is an interesting story. My husband and I went to high school together in Ecuador and we graduated, class of 18 people, he came straight to Brown, I went to Providence College. But we stayed very much in touch. And I was not happy in the context of Providence, and so we kept talking about it, and he said, "Well, you should really consider Brown, it's so diverse, people are from so many different parts of the world." And I did. And I

got in, and I came, and it was an amazing experience, although I always say I didn't get enough of it, I just had two years, because I came here as a junior. So that sort of longing of if I only had had four years is always there for me. But really never looked back. I knew what it was like to go to school here [05:00] in a much more homogeneous environment, and being an international student, I also knew that I wanted to expand my perspectives, and it's exactly what I found here, which I still come back here and feel that expansiveness, and I love it.

Rhonda Boyd: Hello. I'm Rhonda Boyd. I'm from Philadelphia originally. And I'm actually back in Philadelphia, been back for probably about 15 years. Okay, I wanted to just say I came from a Philadelphia public high school that was all-girls. That was unusual at that time and probably still is unusual for it to be an all-girls public school. I ended up coming to Brown, one of the things that attracted me to [06:00] Brown was that actually there were students that graduated from our high school who actually came back and they were helping Brown with recruitment to go to Brown. And so I met admissions officers as well as students who explained to me about going to Brown that went to my high school. And so that actually was a motivating factor for me to come.

Actually didn't visit before I went, which is another unusual piece. My mother worked at Temple University and it was expected that I would go to Temple for free. So Brown was the only other school I actually applied to go to. And so when I got in, I didn't think I was going, because my parents didn't save for me to go to college, and so I got in, and I actually got into the – there's a program for liberal medical education. So at that point my goal was to become a psychiatrist. I [07:00] wanted to major in psychology and be premed. And so once I got in program my family was like, "We'll figure it out," and I just came. So it was a weird story of how I ended up there.

I studied psychology and I was premed. I dropped out of the premed program in my junior year, which was pretty late. I didn't like the medical courses. So I ended up focusing on psychology. I went straight to graduate school after Brown, University of Iowa. I got my master's and PhD and then I eventually came back to Philadelphia. I'm a child psychologist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. I'm a faculty at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. I'm associate professor. So that's my story.

Karen Young: Hi. My name is Karen Young. I grew up in the Bronx. And right now I live in Westchester, probably about an hour from where I grew up. I am the [08:00] first person on both sides of my family, my mother's side and my father's side, to go to college. So Brown was not really – college was on the radar but Brown specifically wasn't on the radar. I chose to come to Brown because I visited and it felt right. It was just kind of like this is where I need to be. I had a free ride somewhere else. And so it was a discussion about coming to Brown where I did not have a free ride. But I felt that this was the right place for me. And I was going to pay for my education and figure it out. And that's what happened.

I majored in poli. sci. when I was here and went to law school at UVA Law right after. I've been practicing law longer than I'd like to admit. [09:00] Started out as a litigator, doing a lot of defense, in a corporate setting, and then decided that I really liked resolving issues as opposed to fighting all the time, and was recruited by IBM. And so I've been an IBM attorney for the last 16 and a half years. And it's been an amazing experience. So that's my story.

Aelish Joyce: My name is Aelish Baig. I was Aelish Joyce when I was here. I grew up a little bit all over. I was born in Cleveland and we lived in Ireland and we lived in Los Angeles and then Cape Cod for high school. When I applied to Brown it was recommended that I apply by my guidance counselor really, and he was a Brown grad, and he just thought it would be a good fit. And I'll tell you that when I came to look at Brown it was pouring rain, like Campus Dance last night. And I just remember it was dark and dreary and [10:00] pouring, and I didn't really get a great sense of what it was going to be like. But I did have a feeling that I wanted to be here, without a full appreciation of how really transformative it was going to be for me and wound up being for me. So I came to Brown. After Brown I graduated, worked for a few years, and went to law school, so I'm a lawyer as well, a litigator, on the other side, plaintiff side, and I sue corporations for fraud. So consumer fraud, securities fraud. And yeah, I get tremendous enjoyment out of my work. It's fun. I like going after the big guys. So I like bringing the fight, and that's where I'm at.

Cristina Lopez: My name is Cristina Lopez. And I grew up in Minnesota. And [11:00] interestingly I have something in common with both Rhonda and Jessika in that Rhonda and I were freshman year roommates, and we in some ways have very similar backgrounds. And also

with Jessika, in that my father is from the same country that she's from, so we also have a lot in common. And I think those two things speak to who I was before I came to Brown as well as who I continue to be after Brown. Growing up in the Midwest I remember visiting Ecuador where my father was from throughout my childhood. Not a lot, because we didn't have a ton of money. And I remember just being struck by the poverty that I would see there and feeling so fortunate that I had grown up in this country and not in Ecuador in different circumstances. Obviously not everybody lives in those circumstances. And that just made a huge impact on me in terms of what I really wanted to do in the world I thought.

At the same time when I was in middle school, my parents divorced, and that was a really devastating event financially [12:00] for our family, and particularly for my mother, who hadn't finished college. And watching her struggle through my middle school years and my high school years really gave me this hardness if you will to say that I felt like education was the way that I could change my circumstances and also the circumstances of other people in this world. And so my goal was just to get into the best college that I possibly could, and I really wanted to study international relations for the reasons that I just said.

And like Rhonda, kids from my public high school, inner city high school, in Minneapolis, the brightest kids went to Brown. And so that's how I knew about Brown. I never visited either because I didn't go on a college trip. And I got in, and I was just thrilled. And I was so also grateful that Brown made it possible for me to come with the financial aid package that I had. And likewise Brown was just a transformative place for me in terms of [13:00] just being on the east coast, I'd never lived here before, all the concepts, and the people I met, and all the things that really opened up for me in this world.

And leaving here, I went through the very corporate interviewing process. Given the loans that I had I felt like I needed to do that. And I remember the saddest day, one of the saddest days of my life at the time I thought, I'm not really a person who cries, and we were crying because I realized I'd gotten this offer from a consulting firm in Boston, which is obviously a beautiful thing to get, but I really wanted to go into the World Bank, or do something socially oriented, and I realized I had to take this job because of my loans. And realizing I was going to make more money in my first job out of college than my mother made at that time in her life. And I just couldn't give that up.

But at the same time I say that, it was a wonderful privileged thing to have. And it's also been – I'm grateful to Brown for putting me on that trajectory because it was an amazing learning experience. [14:00] I ended up going to Harvard Business School and the Kennedy School at Harvard. And now I work in public education reform working with cities on large public education reform projects. So I'm very grateful to Brown in terms of the trajectory that it set for me and the change that it created in my life.

Samantha Schreiber: So my name is Samantha Schreiber, and I came to Brown because my parents went to Brown. And my parents met at Brown. My dad was the class of '66, my mom was the class of '65, and Pembroke was separate from Brown at the time. It was the sister school of Brown. And it was no other choice for me in terms of where I was going to go to school. All my siblings but one went to Brown. One of my sisters went to Barnard and she was the odd person out because she ended up going to Barnard.

But I just understood from an early age. [15:00] I had no idea what Brown represented when I was younger. And I don't think I really fully appreciated it until I arrived here. And I'll never forget, I arrived here and I met one of my best friends in life, Linda Siegel, who lived next door to me, and we lived in Emery-Woolley. And Brown, just as others have said, it was a transformative experience.

I became aware of social justice, I became aware of poverty. I grew up in an affluent community in Connecticut and so I had not had a lot of experience and interactions with people that had different backgrounds. And the diversity of Brown was really eye-opening. I came in playing sports. I was an athlete. And after two years of playing lacrosse I decided I wanted to pursue other things. I took a semester off. I did a NOLS program, National Outdoor Leadership School program. I became an environmental [16:00] studies major. I wanted to save the planet. And then I went on to go to law school. And after law school I ended up working at the US Attorney's Office in Brooklyn and I was in the US Attorney's Office on September 11th and that was a really really intense time to be working for the federal government. And I was in the group that did antiterrorism work. And so my life was then changed again.

And then now I left the US Attorney's Office. I work in house, I'm at Morgan Stanley. So I work at a financial institution and I am a lawyer there, I work in our litigation group. And I

have a really good, I think healthy, balance of work and family in what I do. And so I feel blessed. So it's nice to be back.

Linda Siegel: So I'm Linda Siegel. And Samantha and I met I think our first day here, just a lot of years ago, more than we all care to admit, right? [17:00] My father actually went here as well. So I grew up remembering when he would take us to football games and he had a sweatshirt. But I think when I was choosing schools, at first my mother likes to tell the story that I came and looked at Brown, and had a little interview and walked out, and I was like well I'm never getting in, I'm not going to be able to. But I liked the flexibility of the curriculum and you walk around and you just fall in love with the place. That opportunity, that openness, it just – and in fact my daughter is applying to schools. I ended up marrying someone who went to Brown. And so it comes up, right? If your parents went then you have to consider it. I think she had the same experience when we brought her here a couple weeks ago to look around (inaudible) but after Brown [18:00] I moved out to San Francisco for a year. I also went to law school back in New York. And then I left and went to social work school because I also felt like law school for me was just a didn't quite know what I wanted to do thing. And getting a social work degree I think probably a step in the direction of just doing some work that was just a little more socially valuable and significant and meaningful. Then I did end up having – I have three girls now and that took – it just takes a lot of time. Anyway, long story short, I ended up, I now work at the Vera Institute, which does criminal justice research and policy work. And I'm in the legal department in-house over there so – (inaudible).

MM: Well, thank you so much for sharing that to open this conversation. So what I do hope now is that this is a conversation. [19:00] And I'd just like to pitch out to anyone who'd like to answer. Could you tell us about a fond, one of your fondest, memories from your time at Brown? And maybe another memory that might be more challenging of your time on campus? I'll throw that to the group, anyone who might like to answer.

AJ: I'll pick a fond one. It's easier, because there are so many. But I do remember that when I moved into my dorm I had just a wonderful roommate from Bermuda who is still a very fast friend. But one of the things that I loved most about Brown was that first year experience,

because it was a coed dorm, and in that particular wing we had two boys from Egypt, we had a woman from Saudi Arabia, we had a woman from the Bronx, we had [20:00] a woman who was French, a man who was Italian. It was this wonderful collection of people from all over the world. And at that point in my life I was coming from Cape Cod, so I don't know how they put me in that dorm. I'm so grateful that they did, because I feel like just a tremendous amount of my education at Brown I got from the student body. Obviously the professors are outstanding, but I learned so much from my peers and from those late night conversations where people were talking about politics, and they're talking about what's going on in their country socially. And on Cape Cod that's not what the high school kids were really talking about. They were talking about the soccer games or – and so it was such an eye-opening experience. I'll always be grateful to Brown. [21:00] I went on, married somebody from Pakistan, had two children who are half Pakistani half American. And I just think that in that way the diversity of Brown really shaped my entire life. And I'm so grateful for that.

RB: We were talking about a memory that we had. Saw Karen a couple weeks ago. But we both belonged to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority which is a historically black sorority. And our senior year we were allowed to get a part of Andrews for all of us who were seniors to house together. And that was not done because all the other fraternities, sororities are in Wriston. But the historically black fraternities, sororities didn't have a place on campus. So we were the first ones to get a piece of a dorm. And us all living together increased our bond and increased our [22:00] sisterhood, and that was something special that we had in our senior year. So that was one of my fondest memories.

KY: Yeah, and I think it's the reason that we're all really really close today, because we lived together as a sisterhood basically for a year. I have a positive one and a challenging one. So one of my positive memories in addition to that, because there are a lot of positive ones, is actually one that was in class. I think the class that really shaped me and my viewpoints going forward was ethics and public policy. And I remember taking that class as a junior. And it was the first time I had been exposed to the Socratic method, which was good, because I went to law school. And I remember there were a lot of seniors in the class, and I remember grappling with public policy questions about [23:00] who gets the kidney, who gets the transplant, who gets the health

care. And for the first time thinking about these types of issues. And it was one of the classes that after class there would always be an argument after the class. There would be the class and then there'd be a group of us after the class that would debate after the class.

And for me I really look at things through an ethical lens. So many times in my career when things have happened, when you work for a corporation, when you defend a client, when you whatever, what's legal and what's ethical are not, very often are not the same thing. And I very often remember different snippets from that course and different arguments I had with people after that course that really shaped how I read things, how I look at things. And I think if I had to pick one course that really just modified my thinking or just [24:00] put my thinking on a specific trajectory, it was ethics and public policy. And they're so interwoven and it opened me up. That and econ 101, which I hated econ. But it also is another class that for me was like oh, so this is how things work, okay. But really shaping my thinking in something that I thought I knew. I'm an ethical person, I'm a good person. Really what does that mean? So that's a very fond memory because we all deal with challenging things from an academic perspective. Brown was very rigorous in that way. But there's certain things that make you think beyond academia, and I think that course was one.

One of the challenging memories for me was freshman year because there was a lot of racial tension on campus. And coming into – I was in Hope. And seeing a racial epithet in where I was living was a very horrifying scary thing for me. And it was scary enough that I didn't feel safe in my dorm. [25:00] And called my mother, and she said, "Come home. There's no reason for you to risk your life to be at school." And I remember thinking no, I deserve to be here as much as anybody else. And I worked really hard to get here. But I didn't feel safe. So I stayed with a sorority sister, Janice, across campus for like two or three nights and slept in her room because I was scared. And after that we ended up having a dorm meeting and having a conversation and I ended up having conversations with a number of people who lived in my dorm, actually one of the people who actually used a racial epithet, and really had a long conversation with him about why that word was offensive, and why it was offensive to me, and I remember having the conversation with him of we brush our [26:00] teeth next to each other every morning, how can you use that word, and actually having that conversation. It actually turned into a very good experience, because he didn't know anyone like me, he didn't know any black people. I was really one of the first. It was something that we both had a learning

experience in that conversation. And having that conversation with him I think was something for me that was like you have to teach people, you have to have the conversation, you can't just be upset. You have to have the conversation with people so they understand.

But for me being afraid, I grew up in the Bronx, I'm not afraid of much, there's very few. I took the subway to school every day for junior high and high school by myself. What am I afraid of? But to feel unsafe, I think it was the first time that I really felt unsafe. And to be in this idyllic environment and to feel unsafe was a very very [27:00] disheartening thing. And having a community – and the Brown community of color is very strong, and having that community enfold you as a freshman and say, “Nothing is going to happen to you, we're going to protect you,” was a very powerful thing for me, and was the reason that I stayed and ended up having a wonderful experience.

RL: Kind of dovetail off that. So Debbie and I were unitmates and became friends freshman year. We were in West Andrews where there was very similar activity our freshman year. And our unit decided to do some interventions, actions, etc. But along the low note piece, I was bummed to see that now 20 years later, following what's going on, and what happened at Brown on campus, parties, etc. The Brown community, the student body really challenging Chris Paxson. And some of the same exact challenges that [28:00] we had 1988 and '89 during our freshman year, 20 years later, same stuff, same conversation, which is disappointing, that we hadn't seemingly gone much further. Although I think Chris Paxson at least took on challenges, wrote some statements, etc. that I've read and followed. But things don't often change. And so that would be a low point of our own time at Brown but also seeing 20 years later how much has changed.

I want to say my high point that I just – so my world began when I had come from this small town and all of a sudden I was only 45 minutes away, but it was a whole nother world for the reasons you guys stated. I was so energized by being on this campus that I really didn't sleep much during my four years aside from (inaudible) and I didn't want to take a semester off, because I did not want to miss one event that was going on. So any time anybody came to speak, I made sure I went. [29:00] So Spike Lee was on campus. Kurt Vonnegut was on campus. Desmond Tutu was on campus. Elie Wiesel was speaking about hunger on campus and getting a Hunger Award with Audrey Hepburn. Angela Davis spoke. The president of Ireland. I could not

believe all these people that were on campus during our time here. And I tried to make sure I saw all of them, because it was almost like being in New York City and having a star sighting. It was like star sightings.

And a personal highlight to me. Growing up in Westerly there was no cable initially in the '70s, then cable television became – we would watch ABC, NBC, CBS, or PBS. And PBS came out of Boston, and every Saturday we'd watch Julia Child. And so Julia Child was coming to speak. I'm like, "I must go see Julia Child." She was like our first cook show cook chef on TV. It was a Meiklejohn Society small talk. And at the end of the talk I saw her go to the bathroom. And so I sped walked to the bathroom and I made sure I washed my [30:00] hands right beside Julia Child. And she was six-one, six-two. She was huge. And she was like, "Oh, hello." And so that was like I had died and gone to heaven because I had washed my hands next to Julia Child.

Then after med school in Philly I did my training in Boston. And I won't reveal patient inappropriate information but I found myself in a treatment room situation with Julia Child. And so she said, "Oh, I don't know how you people do what you do." And of course that was my moment. I said, "Actually what we do is a lot like what you do. You follow recipes and we follow protocols." She's like, "Oh, but you must never forget to be creative." Life had come full circle, it was perfect.

But the opportunities to hear the people that I just named speak. Unbelievable. Like I can get a ticket and just go? And they're coming to Providence? I was just blown away by the education and the [31:00] exposure.

JS: I have to piggyback on that as well, Resa. For me it's very hard to think of Brown without separating the fact that my husband and I, we went to high school together, I came to Brown because he thought it would be a great place for me too, we started dating here, and now 24 years later we're still together. Our daughter is actually coming to school here in the fall, which is very exciting.

So it's hard to separate our relationship and the whole Brown experience. Very emotional. So that's definitely my high point, just having that unfold. As I'm discovering all these aspects about myself, I got very interested in my Jewish ancestry while I was here, and I took that after I graduated from Brown, fascinated with education and growth, and got a master's

degree in education, got a master's degree in communications. I felt like I had started this whole intellectual process that I just [32:00] didn't have enough time to really completely germinate while I was here. Which leads me to my challenge.

When I was here, same thing, I was awestruck. What? All these people are here and I can just go watch? And the classes. How do you even pick from this catalog? At that point it was a printed catalog, right? How do you even pick a class? It was so many things I'm interested in. When I had been at Providence College I had enough time to – I really dove into studying and I would read and reread books. It was crazy how much I could do over and over again to really be ready for the classes. And then I get here and the challenge. David would laugh. My husband David would laugh. He's like, "You know you can't read all those books." And I'm like, "Oh, but I have to, because that's how I did it before." And just really coming to terms with wait a second, this is not just the book stuff, it's also the people and the stories and how everything connects with the bigger questions in life. That was [33:00] really challenging for me. Now what do I do? I need to hit the ground running. I have two years to figure this out. But I love everything I'm learning. How do I piece that together?

For the first time ever I dropped – I started in thinking I was going to be political science and econ. I had to drop econ because I failed a finance class. For the first time ever it's oh my gosh, I'm going to fail out of Brown, now what do I do. So it was this adjustment period of embracing the whole experience, really savoring every moment of it, and at the same time understanding I need to use this to move forward. And I feel that I just didn't have enough time. So now with my daughter, I have to say that. You've got two perfect examples of Brown as an experience, and then my husband who was very focused on all right, it's going to be this, and then I'm going to do that. He had in his mind a very set path of what he wanted to do. I'm like, "So you can blend the two. [34:00] And then we're going to be good." But yeah, I think the challenge was how do you find a path and almost order, when there's just so much incredible stuff to take advantage of.

DP: I would say my fondest memory – and I'm thinking of three things that connect to this have to do with the fact that I was in Brown classrooms but I was also in the Providence community. So a lot of the education, two of them in particular that I'm thinking about right now, I worked at Central High School for a semester in a classroom with a history teacher going and helping him

teach that class twice a week every week for a semester. When I took my class with Ted Sizer, it's affectionately called – it's called ed 178 school design, but we called it travels with Ted because literally we got into our cars and we drove all around New England. And so it wasn't just talking about stuff in the classroom but it was going out into the real world.

Another similar one like that, [35:00] I took a history class with Tom Simons, who was a visiting professor at the time. He had been the ambassador to Poland. And the Berlin Wall fell right during our time in college. So literally I'm taking a class on postwar Eastern Europe and here's a guy who was ambassador to Poland, he was a visiting professor at Brown for the semester, and literally he's on the phone with his colleagues and coming into class the next day and talking about what was happening as all these countries are unraveling. I was like, "Where else could you experience that?" Be able to go out to the community, not just talk about it in the classroom, and be able to see how things are playing out in the real world. That was important for me.

MM: Other highlights, lowlights? I'd like to then ask about equality. Clearly we are here from the [36:00] Pembroke Center. And our history resides with Pembroke College and the women at Pembroke. So as you came through in 1989 through 1992, I would really love to hear your thoughts on what it was like as a woman on campus around issues of women's equality on campus during your time at Brown. Did you feel a politicism around equality while you were here? Did you feel discrimination because you were a woman on campus? Thoughts.

SS: Having played sports, we had a roommate who brought a Title IX lawsuit against Brown. It's *Cohen versus Brown*. Amy Cohen was our roommate our senior year. And she was the captain of the gymnastics team at the time. And they cut the gymnastics team [37:00] as a varsity sport and made it a club sport. It was something that was profoundly disturbing because of all of the money that goes into sports that are boys' sports, male sports, like football and hockey and basketball. And the view was well, those sports are big because they're the ones that bring in the alumni money and the donations. And a little sport like women's gymnastics wasn't a big breadwinner for the university.

And I remember just sitting around our kitchen and talking about just that feeling of why this little gymnastics team that doesn't cost the university a lot of money, why are they cutting that team. I think they also cut –

LS: Men's golf.

SS: They cut men's golf too. That was like so they're not being discriminatory here, because they cut a men's team too. [38:00] And after many many years of litigation they ultimately prevailed. But it was a big deal at that time for her. And she was incredibly brave. I wish she was here to tell that story. But I think that also answers the question that you had before About a low point and feeling not so great about the university at that point in time.

JS: What comes up for me when you talk about that is also just how – and back to your point, Resa. Just sometimes realizing how much things haven't changed when we look back. And what specifically came up for me is the rape, the list of names. Because that happened when we were here as well in the bathrooms. And I mean culturally –

MM: Can you explain that? What happened?

JS: There was a list of guys who had raped girls at Brown and [39:00] the *New York Times* picked up on it and it was a big deal when we were here. What's going on? What is it? Defining it. And it was interesting to experience that as a Latin American student. Just what I loved about the environment was that people really had strong positions. And it's something that was at the time very taboo in Latin America. I don't think it was even discussed in the same way. And I definitely felt emboldened by the fact that the environment allowed for even the conversation. But at the same time I look at where we are now and what needed to be uncovered. And it's pretty remarkable. I talked to my daughter about this. I'm like, "Gosh, sure, the conversation is now out there again. But really this has been going on for a long time." So that sort of awareness, now looking back, of wow, at the time it was a big deal, and kind of fizzled out, and now it's a big deal again is interesting from a historical perspective. [40:00] But then also just what happens, what's possible from this point forward? I just find that really interesting. In relation to

the women's perspective. And also just the complexity of it. I think with that boldness that I had when I was here I can make change happen and it's all about me, and how I'm going to change the system, and just have the right perspective and the right attitude, and I have the education. And then you live life, and you go through things. And you realize that wow, it's the whole system. It's not just me and my ideals. It's also just how the entire world operates. So just really highlighting the challenges of that.

My daughter is taking a gender studies class this year. And I love the energy that she brings. It's like wow, did you know that – I'm like, "I do know." So it's just [41:00] fascinating, because I remember that energy, like remind me. Because sometimes you just get into this lull. Yeah, I want that passion, because I know I have it. But it's a funny story. She babysits for this family where the mom is a super successful woman. Ivy League-educated, HBS, investment banker for private equity. And her husband is a professional too. So they both work. And she comes home one night and she says, "It's not an equal marriage." And I'm like, "What do you mean?" She goes, "She's doing everything. I need to come in to help her because she's putting the kids to bed, she's singing to them, she's reading them books, and then go pick up the other daughter. Where's the husband?" And so it's just fascinating now, that perspective too. So also I think the complexity.

So on the one hand I'm holding this passionate me, who is here, and have this like yeah, I'm going to change Latin America and how women are perceived and women's role in the home and it's going to be equal, and then me now [42:00] saying, "Well, yeah, it's great to have that, but it's a lot of work. It's not that simple."

LS: Historically where we fell, right? Because some of our mothers were first generation feminists, and they raised us, you could do anything. You're going to work. And I remember being – and I had that feeling at Brown. And I took great women's studies classes. And we marched. And it felt like – what wave were we at the time? But we were aware of being feminists, and that was talked about in the discourse. Hillary Clinton was the first lady. She wasn't going to be baking cookies. We were coming up with that.

And then I had my first kid, and I remember watching my friends with their jobs. I'm like, "What are you doing? We don't do that anymore, do we?" Come out against the realities of somebody's got to do all those things, and how is it going to go in your marriage. Even if I have

a Brown-educated husband who took a lot of women's studies classes – probably to meet girls I think. [43:00] How does that play out? So that's going far afield from your question, but, I mean

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MM: No, I think to hear about your relationship to feminism, to the movement, to women's equality. I'd love to hear that. If any of you –

RL: I don't mind sharing. I remember when I was put at West Andrews on Pembroke campus, I was really glad. I was glad that I was there because of the history of it being the women's college, and for me, I actually felt a bit of safety and quiet that truly – because it's a little set off, and is quieter on this side of campus. I liked that. I had actually come from a very traditional upbringing. My parents were educated but they weren't progressive I would say in terms of gender roles. So there was no expectation that I was going to become a physician and no one is a physician in my family. So I remember when I was applying to med school my parents were like, “Are women doing that? Are women doing that?” And [44:00] this isn't that long ago. And I was like, “Yeah.” They're like, “So you're going to go to med school.” I'm like, “I'm going to go to med school.”

And ironically on one side of the family I have an aunt that came here, and she graduated class of '59. And I didn't know she was quasi famous because when she graduated in the class of '59 she was one of I think like two engineers that were women. But that piece of history had never been told to me, or that vein of the family because I had grown up in actually a very traditional setting, with traditional expectations. So I think this circles back to we think things are changing but they're not changing everywhere, they haven't changed everywhere.

AJ: They're changing just very very slowly. I'm so grateful that while we were at Brown we just got that perspective. And it continued perhaps with what a lot of our mothers taught us, which was that yes, you can go out and you can do anything. You get to Brown and that's reinforced, and [45:00] then you get out in the real world and you're working. And you see I think particularly as your careers advance that there's still a lot of work that needs to be done and you see the upper echelon, in my experience, at law firms.

There's a lot of law firms. And it might be better on the defense side, I don't know. But on the plaintiff side, there's a lot of law firms where the upper echelon, there's no women up there. Not at the managing partner level. And so there's a lot of just advancement that still needs to come. And I feel like at Brown we had all these women's studies courses. Everyone was discussing it. We're all talking about it. Then you get out there, and there are a lot of people that didn't ever have that experience. So you're working with a lot of men, and they're like, "Yeah, we can hire her, but she's probably just going to quit in a few years." I'm like, "Wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, no." And you have to [46:00] reset.

To one of your points earlier, you're sort of educating people who did not get the same. And it's not that they're – they just didn't really have that. I feel like we just got that education here. And we learned about equality. We learned about social justice. And there are a lot of people that we still need to educate and work on. But it's a very slow process.

CL: I was just going to say one thing. It's about this but also goes back to a little bit about challenges, etc. at Brown. But thinking about what kind of assumptions do you make about people. I'm going to enlarge this a little bit back to some of the racial issues that we were talking about before too. I remember thinking. When I first got to campus, I was asked to go into a dean's office. Dean of minority affairs or something like that. And [47:00] I think I went to his office, and I remember him looking at me as like a US Hispanic who's white, and he looks at me and he says, "Oh, you don't need my help, you're white." And I looked at him, and this is like my second or third week on campus. I probably didn't even tell –

RB: No, I remember you telling me. That's something I can remember. It stayed with me.

CL: Do you remember me telling you that? That's so funny that you remember that. And I remember this.

RB: It affected you so much.

CL: It affected me so much. I remember thinking – I had a black roommate. So I walk in. I'm like, "Well, I'm not black. I totally get that. Black people get treated differently than white

people do. I get that. Of course.” But I remember thinking like wow. I don’t know anything about being here. I didn’t go to a school that prepared me for this. I’ve never seen this campus before. There are people here who may have black skin but understand how to study better than I do. That made me feel really isolated and not supported here in a way that – and I come back to that as a feminist experience too because [48:00] all of a sudden I’m like, “Wow, how does that make me feel both as a – not racial minority but class minority woman here at Brown? And would he have said that to a man?”

It was a very very disconcerting experience. I totally agree with what everyone said in terms of all of the great support and just feelings of emboldenedness that Brown also gave me as a woman. But that was something that happened to me very early on that was such a very confusing experience I continue to wrestle with today. Both for myself but also frankly as we think about whether it’s assumptions we make about people in general, about how we think about race in the United States and race and class. So I just think it was a really fascinating thing that happened to me that I think [49:00] as a woman and as a minority woman in a different way that was a really fascinating experience.

RB: Cristina, one of the things that’s recently come to light, and I think Brown has it, is focus on the first generation college student. Because when I was reading up about it I was like – I think it was more an adjustment issue. I assumed it was because I was African American. And that wasn’t – I was like, “That’s it.” And so I was like, “No one talked about it.” So we were kind of in the same boat, we were the first generation. We were both on work-study, financial aid, and we were struggling through things and trying to make it. Those supports could have been what we needed in that sense. But now they have all that. And I’m glad they have that now, because no one talked about those issues about economics as well as being first generation, and not knowing resources or where to go. So I think [50:00] that’s a part of it as well as things are complex. Intersectionality of race, gender, and economic status and all of that.

SS: We were also here, I think it was our senior year, when there was the need-blind admissions. That’s when a number of students led a campaign. They took over University Hall for a day in support of need-blind admissions because it was something that the university didn’t have at the time. And the view was that has a very significant impact on the diversity here, in particular the

socioeconomic diversity that was represented by the incoming classes in the student body. But I remember that vividly. And I remember walking around University Hall. I was not in the forefront of that. I was not so bold to [51:00] be involved in that movement. But just in awe of the students who could do that. And they took over the university. A friend of mine, I remember, she said, “You need to bring us snacks.” It was like – was it Store24? I brought like those –

DP: I just also remember though. As much as I felt emboldened to do new things and having a level of awareness that I didn’t have coming out of high school, we went to Brown during the time of political correctness. And I remember backlash. I remember an undercurrent. Maybe in public people would say one thing, but I remember hearing things completely counter to that. If the person didn’t think others were listening kind of thing. I’m thinking about [52:00] where our country is politically right now. The lack of civil discourse and the lack of tolerance. And so I sometimes think about knowing when we were at Brown this very quiet but present backlash against political correctness and all that that term meant at the time. But how sometimes when real conversations aren’t had, when surface level conversation is given to it, but those things fester. In some ways I feel like some of the stuff we face right now is because those deeper conversations across diverse communities in whatever way you want to define that diversity hasn’t happened. Whether it’s we got education at Brown and we didn’t go home and talk to all the people that we then had jobs with or lived with. I don’t know.

CL: I want to just react to this. Thinking about things that you guys said. When I got to campus yesterday and I was walking through [53:00] Wriston Quad and seeing all the fraternity houses, I remember thinking. I just said to myself, “I cannot believe that they’re still here.” Structure. How to structure and reinforce or enable things. I’ll just leave it there. It really struck me. Why in this day and age does Brown still allow this?

JS: I tried to explain that to my daughter. I just say, “Just stay away from there.”

RL: I wanted to say something about first gen. Debbie and I had a unitmate who transferred second year back to the west coast to the LA area. And I’m still good friends with her. And she ended up going to a state college in California. And we’ve had many conversations over the

years. And she says that one of her biggest regrets was transferring out of Brown. Like oh, I thought you were so unhappy here. I thought. And she said no. She said number one, [54:00] she thinks if the first gen support awareness was in place when we were here, she said, “I don’t think I would have needed to or felt to have a lack of support.” And she also said still to this day some of the most profound dynamic smart inspiring people were the people she met during that year and a half here. And I was blown away. But not completely surprised.

KY: In terms of the women’s issues I think I have a different perspective because I went to an all-girls school for junior high and high school. So I was already like, “Girl power, women can do everything.” Used to tossing tampons across the hall and that type of thing. When I came here the great thing was that it seemed like men felt the same way. At least most men. Because at least the men that I encountered, both students and professors, I heard in talking to some of my other classmates who went to schools that were not Brown, they would have to really assert themselves in the classroom and really – [55:00] and I didn’t feel that here. I felt that women were heard in and outside of the classroom here. And I’ve also been pleasantly surprised that throughout my professional and personal life after Brown, every so often you meet someone who’s especially cool or open or whatever. And a lot of times they went to Brown. And you don’t know that at the time. You don’t know that. And it hasn’t just been like our generation. Like older people, younger people. And someone that you’re having an especially good interaction with professionally or personally. And then you find out somehow that they’re from Brown. You’re like, “Oh yeah, that makes sense.”

I do feel that while the world is far from perfect and we have a lot of work to do, and we have a lot of educating to do continually, and so all the generations younger than us do, but I do feel that there is an impact from these four years in terms of [56:00] diversity, equality, feminism. Even if it isn’t in people’s forefront that they’re thinking about it constantly, I think it does shape your perspective of it in terms of how you approach situations, how you approach people, how you listen.

Something that always stuck with me. One of my friends who I met at Brown first year, he said that when he went home after his first semester at Brown he was calling six-year-olds women, because he was so indoctrinated. These are not girls, these are women. So he was addressing every female as a woman. And had to stop himself. And to me that means it was

working. And even in his professional life, and I see this with other men that I knew at Brown. You can tell how they interact with women and just the openness.

I went to UVA Law right after this, and that was night and day. [57:00] Here I would say that I was a middle-of-the-road political person. Not overly liberal. Not overly – sort of in the middle. There I was a radical hippie person. Because the group of people who went to that law school were very different. Confederate flags, and people had guns in their trucks, and you were just like, “Oh, okay.”

Here I think people are – even if you don’t want to learn it, even if you want to stay in your bubble, it’s by osmosis. You’re just going to pick it up sitting in the Ratty, sitting in class, going to hear these wonderful speakers. The arts here are fantastic. Rivals anything anywhere in the world. I just remember seeing some of the most wonderful performances. Student performances when I was here that just spoiled me for anything else I think. And like for free, or near free.

But I think for the feminism piece [58:00] I think it shaped us. I think it shaped us but I think it shaped everybody. And I think the world is probably a little better because people have that openness and don’t make assumptions about a woman working for a couple years or a woman’s ability to do a challenging job. If they went here. I mean I’m sure there’s crazy people who went here too. But I think just the atmosphere is such that it stays with you.

MM: I think that brings us up to our hour. I don’t want to keep you too long today on a Saturday. But I want to thank each of you so much for joining me and for sharing your personal experiences about your time at Brown. So I thank you. And really hope that you will come back and visit the Pembroke Center archive when you’re back on campus. Thank you. [58:56]

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