

Leandra P. Barrett '15
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

OLACHEA: Hello, this is an interview for SpeakOut, Dartmouth College's project recording queer oral history at Dartmouth. Today is October 24th, 2018. I am Barbara Olachea [pronounced oh-lah-CHAY-uh], the interviewer. I'm currently in Dartmouth's Rauner Special Collections Library in Hanover, New Hampshire, and it is 9:02 a.m.

If you could go ahead and introduce yourself?

BARRETT: Yes. My name is Leandra Pilar Barrett. I am a Dartmouth 2015, and I'm speaking to you from the East Village in New York City.

OLACHEA: Great. If you could start off by talking about—just to get a better idea of your background—about your childhood and your early upbringing?

BARRETT: Yeah. I—where to start? I grew up in south Texas. I'm actually from a town called Alice, Texas, which is about an hour—it's about an hour west of Corpus Christi, and two hours south of San Antonio, Texas. It's a pretty rural part of the state but also predominantly Mexican-American, so it's—it is and isn't what people picture when they imagine Texas, right? I say *is* in that it was predominantly a farming and ranching community. Everyone wears cowboy hats. Like, hunting is a big thing. It's—it's a lot, right? It's like what people ima- —like, it's very—like, I wouldn't say "redneck," but it's very western in that way. But, at the same time, my hometown was 95 or 97 percent Mexican-American, most of whom are fourth and fifth generation Tejano.

And so for me, growing up, my mother is Mexican-American. I guess I would be fourth- or fifth-generation American. It's, like, complicated because my family's lived in that part of Texas since it was Mexico, but it's not the same, like, assimilation and integration that happened for other, you know, multi-generational immigrant families in the U.S. I'm the first generation of—of—I'm among the first generation of

young people in my family who didn't learn Spanish as a first language. My mom spoke Spanish until she was, you know, twelve or fifteen. So I grew up heavily influenced by Mexicans, north Mexican and Tex-Mex culture.

But then also my dad is Anglo. He's from Louisiana. He moved to Texas to live with my mom. And so it was a really big part of my life, but, at the same time, I also had influence from my Cajun background, and then—Louisiana is a weird place. I visit it a few times a year. I really think of Texas as my home, but, at the same time, I was one of—you know, my dad was one of maybe, you know, a hundred white folks in our whole town. [Chuckles.]

And so—and also, I was known as, like, the daughter of [Graciela] “Gracie” Garcia Barrett, and people, like—everyone knows each other because it's such a small town. And so that—both of those forces—like, being their child and—and coming up in this community were really foundational experiences for me.

I—I went to—before Dartmouth, I—I went to the public school in my hometown. It was rather under-resourced compared to many of the schools that most Dartmouth students come from.

[Coughs.] Excuse me, my throat is really scratchy this morning.

OLACHEA: No worries.

BARRETT: I'm going to take a sip of water. [Coughs and clears her throat.]

So my high school, like, wasn't—[Chuckles.] It's, like, an exaggeration even to say that it wasn't a feeder school for—for an institution like Dartmouth. I mean, for—for a lot of kids that I went to high school with, it wasn't a question of which college they were going to go to but what college they were going to go to at all. And I—I felt really privileged that my mother had gone to college. She went to a local Hispanic-serving institution, which is Texas A&M University-Kingsville. And she was a teacher in our community. She taught fifth grade at, you know, the intermediate school that I attended.

And so she instilled education as a—as a value for me from a very young age.

And my dad did, too. My dad, like, barely finished high school, and so he, I think in not having access to a university education, really felt compelled that I go to college, but that, like, wasn't—it just, like, wasn't the same conversation I was having with my peers. And—and for those of my friends who did go to high school—I mean, who did go on to college, most of them went to regional public institutions, like Texas A&M-Kingsville where my mom had gone or to the University of Texas at Austin.

And so I grew up, like, thinking I was going to go to UT-Austin, and that was that. It wasn't until I participated—I participated in this super-nerdy program, which is, like—it's fine that it's nerdy. I love being a nerd. I'm now a professional nerd as a—as an academic. But I participated in this program, and my coach for academic decathlon shared with me, like, “You—you really should be looking on the East Coast.” There was a lot of value placed on going to—I mean, there is in American culture, right? Everyone wants to go to this like—a prestigious, small liberal arts college, probably on East—you know, on the East Coast.

And so he was the first one that even, like, planted the seed for me to maybe go to school out of state, much less to a private university. And [chuckles], you know, I, like, didn't really—didn't really take that seriously until—until I actually applied.

OLACHEA: So in terms of your identity and your development of your awareness of your different identities, how would you say how cognizant you were during high school as compared to when you came to Dartmouth?

BARRETT: That's a good question. And I think it verified, like, social identity, right? For me. I—I identify most often as Chicana or Texana. That was something that in high school was a given. It wasn't ever questioned, even though, you know, I had a white father, I had an English surname—I think because my, you know, entire extended family—like, everyone that lived—my entire extended family lived in the area. And anywhere I went, people would ask me, you know,

who's your mom and who's your grandparents? That process of, like, self-identifying and saying, like, "Oh, I'm Prieto's [archivist note: spelling uncertain] granddaughter." You know, the one from Prio [archivist note: spelling uncertain].

That—I felt like claimed, and that Mexican-American identity felt really, like, challenged at Dartmouth—like, Dartmouth being such a white school And then also because so many Latinx students came from immigrant backgrounds or came from, like, the West Coast Mexican-American community or from East Coast, like, Caribbean community.

And so for me, as someone who, like, didn't speak Spanish and was, like, ethnically ambiguous but didn't have a Spanish surname, that felt really—challenged. And it wasn't something that I, like, always felt validated in at Dartmouth and being Mexican-American.

At the same time, I felt like I had the opposite experience in terms of being queer. I most often these days identify as a lesbian, though in most of college I identified as pansexual. And I'd go between the two. I could never really pick one. Both are true, I think. But anyway—

OLACHEA: Yeah. So you were—

BARRETT: Sorry, I was just taking—

OLACHEA: No worries.

BARRETT: —a sip of water.

OLACHEA: You could continue—

BARRETT: I'll go ahead and finish that—

OLACHEA: —your thought.

BARRETT: —thought. Yeah. Basically, in high school I, like,—I felt—well, it—I'll talk about it in reverse. In college, I felt so sure of my identity. I came out—I didn't even really, like, come out to peers in college; I just kind of like started going to gay events. And I think for many people I went to school with,

they thought I had been out for a lot longer than I came off as, because I just, like, started telling everyone I was gay. [Chuckles.] And it didn't have this whole, like,—it wasn't like a tortured process. I didn't wait to tell anyone. I, like, immediately went to, like, Rainbow—what was it at the time?—the Rainbow Room and the, like, queer community about it. I joined the rugby team. Like, it was just so asserted in—in college, like, from the get-go, from my first freshman fall, which wasn't at all the case in high school.

In high school, I—woof—I, like,—I think at some point in my sophomore year, I thought, like, the girl that sat next to me in English was queer, and I remember turning to her and being like, “Hey, Savannah.” So like, “How did you know?” Like, what—like—not that I—and I, like, remember being really defensive about it. “But, like, I'm just really curious. Like, what's going on?”

And I sort of dated—like, I—I had a really good—[Chuckles.] It's, like, comical to look back on now, because I clearly had a crush on this person. But I first became really close friends with—and then, like, clearly was, like, kind of dating, but, like, couldn't call it that. And that—with a girl in high school and then when—you know, I feel really bad in retrospect—when she, you know, wanted to name things. I was, like, “Oh, no, no, no. Like, that's not what this is.”

But I clearly, like, was drawn to her because she was queer and because I wanted to be out, but I felt like I couldn't be because of the risk that would come with that—like, the physical—like, the—the very material risk of being thrown out of my house or being—you know, sent to conversion therapy, which is not, like, a hyperbolic scenario for the like, part of Texas that I came from, it's like quite conservative politically, but also, like, Catholic and—yeah, it would have been too much.

So I waited until college to come out to peers. And—and—you know, yeah.

OLACHEA:

So I want to touch base on—it's interesting the spaces you mentioned that you started entering at Dartmouth. So you said the Rainbow Room, and then you also mentioned—as a side note—joining rugby.

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: So I'm curious as to how these different spaces made you feel welcome and—and sort of the—I guess just, like, the vibe you got going in.

BARRETT: That's a good question. I'm gonna think about it for a moment. [Pause.] I think—the way that I ended up on the rugby team was kind of an accident. My next-door neighbor on my freshman floor was going to rugby practice, and I imagined, like,—I just imagined, like, all of the sports that white people played at private high schools, and so I was, like, “Oh, yeah, let's go play rugby!” But in my head, it was definitely imagining what I now know as lacrosse. But I, like, really wanted to go. So I went, and it was fun, and—and so ending up there was kind of an accident.

But then when I got there—at the time, the team had—there were just, like, older women of color on the team. Like, so in my first year, the—the junior and senior class had several Latinx students and black students, and in the, like, culture shock of moving to rural New Hampshire and being at Dartmouth, these were just the first faces that I had seen that were, like, not, you know, Jan from [Phillips] Exeter [Academy]. Jans don't go to Exeter, now that I think about it.

But, like, it was, like, people who I like, could identify with. I got this vibe of, like, they saw me and I saw myself in them, and they were also super queer, which totally helped. And in a way that—you know, whether they had short haircuts or, like,—also just felt so physically strong. Like, I—I think of sort of—my sense of self and identity at that point in time was, like, like, feeling physically fulfilled and physically capable, and not really caring, like, what gender norms are typically associated with being, like, able to, like, hit someone [chuckles] or to lift something really heavy, with force.

And so I became fast friends with—who's now one of my closest friends, named SK Amaro [Class of 2013]. “SK” uses they pronouns. And they were two years ahead of me on the rugby team, and, like, I think that the reason that we first became friends is, like, because—and it's one of those

things that—I don't know if this is, like, a common experience among students of color, but, like, people kept getting us confused and/or thinking we were related. And I was, like, *What is this?!* Like, we're not even of the same, like, ethnic backgrounds within the Latinx community. Like, we're both Latinx. But SK is Puerto Rican and Cuban, and I'm Mexican-American.

But I guess we both, like, had short hair. Yeah, I cut my hair my freshman year. And so it—it all felt kind of a bit by chance,—you know, I don't think I would have chosen anyone to, like, mix us up or for me to have, you know,—I didn't mean to enter the space of the rugby team, but once I got there, it was, like, so fulfilling and warm, and I found experiences that were—

There were also a number of first-gen[eration] students on the team at the time. By the time that I was a senior, there were fewer first-gen students. And even though my mom went to college, I sometimes identify with that first-gen experience in terms of having attended an under resourced high school and also since a lot of the direction that I got in terms of college didn't come from my parents. My mom works so many jobs that, you know, she didn't have space for that.

And so that was the—that was the sense that I got on the rugby team, is just—and Beneson Macado [archivist note: spelling uncertain] was another person who I, like,—I didn't actually get to know very well. I think she's a '12. But just seeing her being, like, super gay and super Mexican and also playing this sport traditionally associated with, like, white boys—for me at the time, that was so empowering. And that's what I wanted. And so—and it helped that I, like—I'd played soccer in high school and really wanted to continue playing sports.

But the Rainbow Room—what's funny is, like, I don't think I was ever a firm member of, like, an LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] organization at Dartmouth. I never participated in, like,—like, I can't even think of the name right now, because I wasn't part of it, right? But I spent a lot of time in the Rainbow Room, and I think that—it was partly, like, I didn't have time. I was really busy in that first year,

like, trying to get my shit together. And also I was—I'm realizing now that I was really nerv—like when I think back on it, because I also wasn't very involved with the Latinx community at Dartmouth in terms of formal organization.

And I think—you know, I wasn't really involved in any clubs outside of rugby, and then eventually Mellon [Mays Undergraduate Fellowships]. And I'm realizing, like, it's partly, like, I had my own attitudes about, like,—I don't know. I've been thinking about this in terms of graduate school, so I don't want to get bogged down in it, but I basically—I wasn't an organization joining kind of person. I like being in—in—in sports spaces, but I didn't want to organize around social identity.

And so I wasn't part of LGBT student groups, but I did spend a lot of time in the Rainbow Room, partly because I felt like—you know, it was—it was a place to go between classes, because I lived in the River [Cluster] my freshman year. It was a place where, like, I didn't have to walk all the way home between classes or, like, after classes if I wasn't really ready to go home. I could go and hang out and see familiar faces there.

And oftentimes I didn't, like, become best buddies with those people, now that I'm, like, trying to think about it. You know, I—I didn't know other people that—there were other people who hung out in the Rainbow Room, but I didn't become close friends with them.

It was more a way to, like, hide a little bit? [Chuckles.] And it wasn't like I was hiding from anyone, but in the total cacophony, the total, like, hitting a wall, like,—like, the first few years at Dartmouth were really challenging for me academically and emotionally. And so when I didn't want to be in my room but didn't want to be out in public, I could go to the Rainbow Room.

I think that space was eventually filled by my Greek organization, but in that first year, when I didn't have that and also I didn't really want to party all the time, it felt like a space I could go to and just, like, chill and, like, read or watch TV or take a nap. I took a lot of naps in the Rainbow Room.

OLACHEA: Yeah. So circling back to when you said you made sort of—I don't know if you'd call it a physical transformation freshman year, but could you talk a bit more about how people sort of present themselves—and this is not generalizable to everyone, but I guess presenting as queer at Dartmouth, if there is such a thing, like physically?

BARRETT: Yeah. It's totally a thing. Woof. And it's something that I, like, thought about a lot as an undergrad, was if I wanted to be read as queer by people other than queers—because I think—I mean, everyone jokes—like, there's, like, a longstanding, like, joke in the queer community, of, like, “gaydar,” like being able to tell—which is, like, such trash. I'd say it's—I think it's a really fraught thing, and it also reinforces this idea that there's one way to be queer, which is—when I say that's trash, I mean to say that that's a belief that I don't hold. Like, there are so many different ways to be queer, so many ways to be legible and it shouldn't confine to this one type of way.

At the same time, like, as a student at Dartmouth, I felt like I had this impulse to, like, want people to know that I liked girls. [Laughs.] Based on, like, how they looked at me, which was funny because I'm super fem now and was super fem in high school. I mean, I was, like, miss—I mean, I was involved in pageants as a high school student, I was a cheerleader, I wore a lot of makeup, and then I got to college and, like, cut all my hair off, right?

And I think part of that—it was, like, layers upon layers. It was a way of—for me, when I first shaved my head, it was something I'd been thinking about because a good friend of mine, Michaela [K.] Conway [Class of 2015], had recently cut her hair. From below—you know, at the time, the length of her hair was almost to her hips—to a queer cut—you know, just like a standard—what would be called a pixie cut or a queer cut.

The person I was dating in college had a queer cut. I dated [Matthew E.] “Matt” Sturm [Class of 2013] through most of my freshman year and into my sophomore year. And not all the queer people I knew, you know, had these short haircuts. And I was, like, *Damn, that's dope*. And a lot of them

presented as masc or gender queer, whether that was wearing button-downs—I think Michaela would identify as gender queer. Like, often wore, like, the clothes from the boys' section at American Eagle. Like, boxers and stuff. And Matt did too throughout that time.

And that was something that I thought was, like, so cool. The reason they did so and the reasons that I think other people did are, like, highly complex, right? I think for some people—they didn't elect to present themselves as queer. They were being representative as, like, who they are as a person.

And, you know, part of that—Matt transitioned while we were dating—Matt's trans[gender]. I think that's safe to say he's, like, out publicly, and it's a really big part of his public artwork. So he transitioned while we were dating, and that's—so—I don't see, you know, like man's clothes are man's clothes for him because he's a man, then and now.

For me, like, it—it was a way of being legible, to feel like I wasn't, like, hedging around being queer anymore, and I felt like I hedged a lot in high school, and I didn't want to do that anymore. It was, like, a big fuck you to my parents—because my freshman spring, someone outed me to my parents. I didn't out myself to them. And they—[sighs]—they cut me off financially, and I didn't really speak to them or go home for a while.

And so it was also a way of being, like, *I'm gonna do what I want*. Like, I'm ti- —I think I had a cousin who felt weird about me joining the rugby team and was, like,—at some point, said something along the lines of, like, “What happened to, like, my girlie cousin?” And in a very, you know, eighteen- to twenty-year-old kind of way, I was, like, “Your girlie cousin is gone now.” [Laughs.] “And so is her hair.”

And so that was a way for me to—to, like, act out a little bit, but also to be legible. And I'm realizing now, my hair's long again. I had short hair throughout college, and I started growing it out again after I graduated—I guess, like, a year after I graduated. And it's now halfway down my back. And it's, like, so annoying, right? I think about cutting it all the

time. It was also a practical thing. In a very concrete way, I hated having hair in my face when I worked out, and I worked out all the time in college.

So it was all of those things. How—I think something else that merits saying, after going through, like, you know, why I chose to present myself as queer, why someone else doesn't really choose but has to, like,—you know, it's a way of living their life—is that—that came with, like, concrete, material risks in Hanover and in the Upper [Connecticut River] Valley community—especially, I think, for people who were gender transgressive, gender nonconforming—whether that was, you know, a cis person who presents as either masc or fem in—in one direction or another, or trans folks who, you know, dress to be their full selves.

That was not a decision one took on lightly, and it would have been easier to live a full life without risk in Hanover if you were gender conforming. You know, my—while we were dating, Matt Sturm—someone, like, almost hit him with a car and then yelled these, like, super transphobic things at him, in Hanover. This isn't, like, in Upper Valley or in Boston [Massachusetts] but, like, in—on the Dartmouth campus.

Or another time, you know, my friends and I were walking from Sigma Delt[a]—this was, like, my senior year at this point. No, you know what? I'm lying. Okay, so I heard this from a friend, who—I wasn't there. But I, like, other shit totally happened that I was there. But a friend of mine, Allison [R.] Brouckman [Class of 2015], who was best friends with Michaela Conway—they lived together, they did everything together, they're on the rugby team together—and they often would walk from Sigma Delt to, like, FoCo [food court], to the Class of 1953 Commons, or Collis [Center for Student Involvement].

And at one point, Allison told me that when she was, you know, leaving midday to go from Sigma Delt to, like, I don't know, somewhere on campus, these, like, dudes were on the roof or, like, the little, like, porch, the second-floor porch, I guess, at—what is that? It's Psi U [Psi Upsilon], so it's right there on the corner, across from Sigma Delt.

And they yelled all this, like, anti-gay shit at her, like, “Where’s your girlfriend? Ha-ha-ha.” Like, “Who wears the pants in *your* family?” And just, like, on and on and on, in a way that, like, kept her from functioning for a few days.

Or, like, I—yeah, like being in frats and stuff with my short hair. Like, I usually had to be ready to, like, want to—like I felt this impulse to constantly need to defend myself or define myself, and that was tied to my gender presentation and was tied to my loved one’s gender presentation. And that was limiting, and it—I don’t know. Like, Dartmouth has, like,—has never reckoned with how homophobic it is sometimes. And I think that for me most concretely manifests in the ways that gender nonconforming folks who I knew during my time between 2011 and 2015—so not that long ago—who—people who were presented or read as queer, people who either presented as queer or, you know, in being themselves read as gender nonconforming or queer faced, like, real consequences, often, like, material threat to their well-being. And it’s super shitty.

OLACHEA: So out of these instances that were reported that you know of, were there any, like, resources or reactions from campus? And when I say “campus,” I mean—

BARRETT: None of these were actually—yeah, none of them were actually reported. Like, I don’t actually know what Matt did, after it happened, but something told me he did not go tell Dartmouth about it, and I don’t think Allie ever told Dartmouth about it. And I feel—I feel very conflicted about that because now that I’m an educator—you know—I’m in graduate school. I’m training to be a professor. I hope to be a professor. If a student were to come to me with something like this, that’s what I would say. Like, “You need to report this. You know, the campus can’t do anything if they don’t know.”

But that didn’t feel like an option. You know, when I think about anti-queer things that I experienced in my time, whether it was like,—the most concrete thing that I can think of it, like, I was in—I guess it was a Spanish class technically. It was offered through the Spanish department [Department of Spanish and Portuguese]. It was in English,

though. Oh, I don't remember the professor's name. I adore him. Great professor.

It was about obscene imagery and what we consider obscene and what are things that produce, like, the affects of obscenity in material culture and, like, why does that matter. And at one point, we watched—I think it's, like, a—it's definitely South American. I think it's a Chilean film. It's, like, *XXY* or *X*—I think it's *XXY*, about an intersex person. It's a film, not a documentary, about their life, right?

And then in the classroom this dude bro from AD [Alpha Delta], because where else?—was, like, “You know, like, I just don't think that it's possible for some- —like, you know, this person—you know, like,”—and just—just said all the transphobic things in the world. And just was denying the, like, reality that there are other genetic [chuckles] compositions, of like how someone can exist as a gender-variant person, not just, like, biologically, right?

There's more than XX and XY, whatever. And the professor, who I adored and is otherwise, like, one of the few Latinx, Latin-American faculty on campus, didn't handle it well, just didn't handle it well and, like, didn't really mitigate the like, harm this person caused in their words. And, you know, there was a—a student who I later found out was queer, who was in the class and just, like, wept. You know, I didn't know her at the time. I don't know her name now, but, you know, with time, learned that she was queer, and it's just, like, *What the fuck?*

You know, like, this was an opportunity for the professor to handle it. They didn't. And I think that moment was representative of a lot of, like, distrust that I had in Dartmouth as an institution, in terms of mitigating, handling, rectifying anti-queer violence, which is a shame. But I—I—I can say genuinely that I don't know if they would have handled it well, that Dartmouth would have handled it well.

OLACHEA:

So in terms of inclusivity and exclusivity, you've talked about it, to some extent, with the greater Dartmouth community. Would you say there were any stratifications within the LGBT+ community?

BARRETT: That's a really good question. [Pause and sighs.] I mean, I think class was a huge—like, class and grade—as in life—were the two things that shaped different ways that LGBT folks were and were not incorporated into a broader community. What comes to mind for me is someone who I knew. I prefer not to name them, if that's possible.

OLACHEA: Yeah, that's fine.

BARRETT: I'm not going to go into great detail about them. But it was someone who I knew, I took classes with. We were—you know, friend of a friend, who was in a fraternity, which has a reputation for being not feminist and anti-queer. He was a gay man, a white gay man from a wealthy background, who, like, totally fit in there and was—you know, did the things that they did. He was in Psi U, right? And they do the uniforms, the uniform being—I don't—I don't think they still do it, but it might have been in the last cohorts of undergrads that this was a thing for.

But the Psi U pledges in my sophomore year had to wear, like, a working-class costume in order to pledge Psi U. So this would be, like, Wranglers or Carhart jeans but, like, working man's denim, Timberland shoes and a gray—plain gray, like, sweatshirt, and some kind of working-class coded cap, baseball cap for the duration of the time of their pledge. So it was, like, the second half of the fall semester.

The joke being— or like, the irony being that, you know, now that they're in this fraternity, they'll never have to wear that outfit again because they'll have access to so many opportunities as a member of that organization.

And he did it. Like, he—he wore that working-class uniform. And there were, like, black students who were part of Psi U, who—who were part of that working-class uniform. And Latinx students—like, it wasn't—fraternities—in elite universities I think are really fascinating spaces in how they confound traditional assumptions about social identity and demonstrate that, like, anyone [chuckles] from any background can buy into, like, a white supremacist capitalist dream, if they want to, and feel that power that comes with it.

But I'm, like, putting all my cards on the table in, like, how I feel about those things. And it's not to say that I was never tempted doing so myself, right? I like got the financial security that would come with all of that.

In any case, there's this student who was part of the organization, that openly mocked working-class people and was also a gay man, was representative of, like, class—just like class differences in the LGBT community at Dartmouth and in—in much smaller and microscopic ways—you know, the various ways that people were able to come out with ease or experienced being disowned by their families, often mapped onto class, not always, but often mapped onto class.

And for queer people of color, whether it was black or Latinx students—I think—often when I say people of color, I'm usually thinking of—when I say people of color on a college campus, I'm usually referring to underrepresented minority students: the black, Latinx and Native [American] students. Like, that was particularly risky because of the various, you know, axes of—of—of power and oppression that they experience in their everyday life, how that mapped onto them, most likely coming from a working-class background, or that mapped onto them not having the resources to support themselves if someone *did* commit an act of violence against them, right?

And so it was a bit more precarious and—and—yeah, so—I also felt like the Greek system contributed to inclusivity and exclusivity broadly at Dartmouth, in ways that shaped the LGBT community. While it wasn't primarily—wasn't a way that LGBT students—let me step back. So that the Greek system was the primary hinge by which people felt included and excluded. On a campus like Dartmouth, for a community as small as the queer community, it made a big difference. And I think, a lot of queer students I know ended up rushing because they wanted to find some sense of community.

I know a lot of queer women involved in local sororities, and when I try and think about people I knew, I can think of one person, Jamie [J.] Mercado [Class of 2015], who often identifies as gender nonconforming, who wasn't in a Greek organization and also was super queer on campus. Like, it

was kind of hard to do that. It was kind of hard to—like, if you already were experiencing feelings of exclusion around sexuality, those students sought out spaces where they could feel included.

And it's a shame that that space is the Greek space because the Greek system is toxic as fuck. But I found that being in a space like Sigma Delt and I could be, like—I—I don't know. I have a fraught relationship with Sigma Delt in that I think their feminism is grounded in the sense that, like, we're going to do what men do only better, which is not liberatory. Even if it felt right for where I was at in my like—development as a—as an undergrad, as a young queer person, as a young person, it fit. It was what I needed at the time.

But now I think about, like, you know, how that fostered poor habits [chuckles] among members of that organization, to put it lightly. At the same time, when I could go to Sigma Delt and, like, be, like, “Man, I'm crushing over this girl, and I don't know what to do!” or, you know, “When I was home, my parents were super fucked up.” If I—I could come to them with those problems, and it was a place where I knew people and I knew they were going to be good about it. I didn't have to worry if, like, they were going to compound the—the feeling of—of disenchantment, of pain that I'd been experiencing in other spaces.

I will say I think as an addendum to—to what I was saying earlier about class and race, there was this big moment my senior year of—of college that showed that people with, like, minoritarian social identities may not be, like, minoritarian in the way that they wield power. And I say that to mean that there was—his name was Frank [M. Cunningham III, Class of 2016]. I don't remember his last name. But he was president of the student body, right? So whoever was president of the student body in 2014, 2015, who might also be named Frank, was this black, gay man, who in the spring of 2015 was really disrespectful to some students who were at a protest.

There was a protest outside the Derby party at KDE [Kappa Delta Epsilon]. And he, like,—there's, like, a video of him—but not, like—it's not like this was, like, [unintelligible], right?

Like, there's this video of him that was publicly circulated of him, like, screaming at protesters, mostly women of color that are, like, mocking them. I think it was a die-in, and he laid down too like—in a way that was, like, mocking.

And so—yeah, Dartmouth confounded—in—in—in the particular way that, like, elite, fraternal, wealthy—in the ways that those dynamics shaped the student body, the stratification within that LGBT community was, like,—that was, like—it was confounded by the dynamics of, like, hyper wealth, status and eliteness that make the Ivies, like, kind of a different kind of place.

That's not to say, like, there are—that's not to say—I don't know. I hesitate from making the Ivies be—like reify their exclusivity. But there's something about, like, that student body just being so wealthy—so wealthy that, like, it—it makes the social dynamic that more complex, because a student who you anticipate something from doesn't do that. And in some ways that can be really beautiful, and in some ways it can be really tragic. Yeah.

So that's like an addendum that I would have like—class and race mostly shaped stratification in the LGBT community, but also the particular wealth composition at Dartmouth meant that, like, that too—there were sometime people who were, like, queer people of color, who were violent in ways that showed that they were really aligned with, like,—like, the—the—with their class status rather than their racial or gender, sexual minority status.

OLACHEA: So looping back to Sigma Delt, you mentioned—you used the phrase, “poor habits.” You might have already covered this, but I was curious, if you don't mind me asking, what did you mean by that?

BARRETT: You're a really good interviewer, Barbara.

OLACHEA: Thank you.

BARRETT: I do interviews for my—my job, and I have to say you're a really good interviewer. “Poor habits.” Well—[sighs]. It's tough. Sigma Delt was such a space. I mean, I, like, remember being a first-year at Dartmouth and visiting Sigma

Delt for the first time and being, like, *This is where I want to spend my life*. Like, they had these, like,—there was a moment in time. It wasn't their—no, yeah, there was this—so the way that I entered Sigma Delt the first year, they didn't have, like, the ban yet on—on first-year students entering Greek organizations.

And so that's where the rugby team went for their weekly meetings, and even though I wouldn't name it that at the time, that's where I was hazed [chuckles]—as a young rugby player. And so that's where we would get together to sing, like, these raucous songs, which are not unique to Dartmouth. It's, like, a—an aspect of rugby culture.

And get really drunk. And, like, people would, like, encourage me to imbibe, and, like, it was funny to see the first-years super drunk. And for me, I felt super cool in being really drunk and being part of this club. What I now know—like, that's—that's all, like—like—like the bread and butter of, like, hazing. But that's not what I was characterizing it as. And I felt really cool doing it.

But so I have this memory of being in Sigma Delt and, like, being, like, almost sick drunk and going to the bathroom. And they had this, like, poem that I now know is, like, a feminist revision of some powerful poem. I don't know. But it was on the back of the door of the bathroom, and I was, like, *Damn! This is who I want to be!* [Chuckles.]

And I think that moment is just so representative of—of—of—the rugby team and then also Sigma Delt, in that they embodied these, like, feminist—they carried and embodied—like, their definition of feminist goals. That was women, many of whom were queer, some of whom were just, like, allies but, like,—did employ some level of, like, gender trans- —like, by virtue of being a person who lifted weights and hit people, like, confounded traditional perceptions of femininity, even if that didn't mean that they, like, slept with women or, you know, wore boxers.

The rugby team, I think, and—and Sigma Delt—well, I would say the rugby team was that kind of a space. That also was, like, an alcoholic space and a space where people drank way too much. And when I eventually rushed and joined

Sigma Delt, that was the case there, too, where people—like, they have this motto of, like, strong women—like Sigma Delt, strong women, or they had—we had, like, a bunch of sports bras with, like,—it was a super woman symbol that had an SD, the Sigma and the Delta, instead of super woman. There was a super woman pong table.

People wanted to be a strong woman. And it was a place where they *could* be a strong woman. Like, I took so much joy—I, like, kicked boys out of our basement, right? Like, there was this guy who was peeing also—I mean, I think the dynamic that—the reason why they needed to be strong women in this way is that they couldn't take part in fraternity culture. Or they wanted to take part in fraternity culture, but they also didn't want to go to a basement, which was smelly and carried the risk of sexual assault and—whatever else, right?

But, like, I took a—like, great joy in—in—in inhabiting that basement space. I remember kicking this boy out for peeing in our sink. And I was, like, “You're gonna leave. You're gonna get the fuck outta here.” And at first people pushed back, and then other people joined me, and we kicked him out, and he never came back. And that was so empowering to be able, to, like, carry it like a territorial—like, to have a space that was our space, and we could protect that space, right? Like, I think that's what it was grounded in.

At the same time, like, that brand of feminism meant doing—doing what the boys did, only better. As I said earlier—and so everyone drank so much, right? Like, if you were—and I—this isn't true of all of Sigma Delt, but for people who are, like, quote unquote, “active in the organization,” that meant that you played pong and that you drank and that you were in the basement in the first place to, like, kick people out.

And I—like, I'm thinking about also a friend of mine, Molly—uh!—I think she might be going by Molly Spencer [archivist note: name not verified] now. But—Molly—I don't remember her last name. Molly was a good friend of mine. She was on the crew team. And we, like, joked often our senior year about, like, our ability, as athletes and as members of Sigma Delt, to be able to, like, drink a ton one night, make yourself vomit, and then go on a really long run the next morning

because that'll get all the alcohol out of your system, and then you can go back to studying.

And so—and that was normalized, right? It was, like, *Oh, my God, you're so smart!* Like, I would never think to go on a run to—to—to make my body process the alcohol faster so that I don't have a hangover. And, like, that's not normal, right? I—I now, looking back, I'm like a little abhorred at how—and Molly's queer too, right? Like, we would laugh about getting super drunk and making out with girls. And we probably got super drunk and made out with each other. And it was, like, funny and cool, and we were, like, you know, feminists and—you can't see it right now, but I just made, like, the rock hand, made, like, rock star hands and like shook them, like, feminist. [Chuckles.]

And it's just so paradoxical and abhorrent to me now, that that's what our feminism looked like. And that's what our queerness looked like. Like, our queerness looked like getting drunk and making out with people. And I just wanna like—what if we had made out with people? [Chuckles.] You know? Like, why is alcohol be such a—why is it such a—a factor?

And the last thing I would add in terms of poor habits: I think—oh, something I, like, felt was an issue while I was at Dartmouth but was never addressed, was that, like, sexual assault would happen in the queer community, often aided by alcohol. And no one talked about it. And I think that was partly out of, like, a sense of self-protection, right? Holding—like, it was a huge risk, like holding someone accountable for—for engaging in non-consensual intimacy with another person. Like, what if, like, straight people took that and was, like,—and used that as, like, all gay people are—like, this is the signal that we can shoot gay people or, like, gay people do sexual assault, or, like, in some other way, like, would use incidences [pronouncing it as if it were incidencies] of—of sexual violence in a queer community as a means of reifying a broader anti-queer narrative. That's why people today come forward with it.

But at the same time, like, at some point the same person—Molly and I had a moment where we realized that the same woman in Sigma Delt, who was older than us, had taken

advantage of both of us after, you know, having us drink a ton, under the—under the pretense that, like, we were just going to play a ton of pong or, like, we just couldn't keep up, and using these, like, binge drinking trope that eventually meant that we, like, did something we didn't want to do with them, with her.

And I don't know. Like, when—people never reckoned with that and, like, what that—like, she was the only person I had talked to—Molly was the only person I talked to about it, but I know that it happened more often than just us. And I knew that it was a problem in Sigma Delt and—and probably also in other spaces where queer people congregated, you know, to try and find themselves.

OLACHEA: So you mentioned that—this is sort of going off with a different topic, but related—

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: You weren't heavily involved in the Latinx community, but you noted that you participated in some sort of mentorship?

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: Could you talk more about that?

BARRETT: Yeah. I—I found most of my mentorship opportunities through—through the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. And so I think at some point I officially—Rodrigo [Ramirez, Class of 2006, MALS 2014], who was the—Rodrigo—oh, I don't remember his last name.

OLACHEA: Ramirez?

BARRETT: He was, like, the la- —yes, yes, Ramirez! He was the—the—the Latinx community coordinator during my time at Dartmouth. And he did have, like, an official Latinx, like, mentoring thing. And I was assigned a mentee, but then they never responded to my e-mails, and so I—I—that didn't come through.

But through Mellon—it was a way of—yeah, it was basically, like, talking to other—other students about research. And for

me—I was a Latino studies major—I was often trying to figure out what it means to do Latino studies at Dartmouth, how you forge that path, given that it's not—like, the—the LALACS [Program in Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Studies] major exists, but because it's a program rather than a department, it's often underfunded, and students—you know, you can major in it, but that doesn't mean the classes are going to happen. Like, I never took an intro to Latino Studies course because it kept not happening, because no one would sign up for it. And so I actually—I ended up taking, like, more elective classes and never having that core class.

And so in the wake of that, like, emptiness—how do you make a LALACS major? And also, like, there were just so few LALACS majors. My year, I was one of three. And the other two—it was maybe four, and two were double majors, between I think government and LALACS, and Spanish and LALACS. And I was one of the only, like, solo LALACS majors.

And so that meant I knew the younger students. They were often, you know, in Mellon or not in Mellon. So we'd talk about, like, how do you do it? Who do you talk to? You know, what classes do you take? What questions do you have? Like, where are those questions coming from?

For me, my own research in Latino studies and now broadly is deeply rooted in growing up in south Texas and then moving to New England, and both of these being, like,—you know, my hometown and Hanover are the same distance from an international border, but only one town—and you can guess which one—is, like, you know, filled with [U.S.] Border Patrol agents. [Chuckles.]

And, you know, I grew up not too far from a border patrol checkpoint. It was just a part of my everyday life that I didn't see happening in New Hampshire and Vermont. So this prompted a bunch of questions, of, like, what is citizenship? Why do borders look different in different places, even if it's part of—even if there's, like, the same nation state, right? The U.S.-Canadian versus the U.S.-Mexico border.

And so mentorship looked like talking to other people about this. It was really informal. I think now—I'm probably a better mentor now, as a graduate student, than I ever was as an undergrad because I was also trying to figure my own shit out. College wasn't easy for me. Academically it was, you know, fine. I loved school. Socially, it—for all the reasons I described it can—it was a little fraught.

So that's—that's what mentorship meant for me. It was kind of talking to other people about doing research in something like Latino studies or ethnic studies or whatever it is for them.

OLACHEA: So I want to ask you some questions about mostly postgrad reflection.

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: So I was curious—and you don't have to answer this, but you mentioned having some conflict initially with your family,—

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: —especially freshman year. How did that progress for the rest of your undergrad and postgrad?

BARRETT: Yeah. They eventually came around. They eventually came around. It came through a lot of advocacy on the part of my cousins, my older sister. I have an older—I have one brother. He's, like, my full brother. And then I have two older half-siblings, who are significantly older. They're in their forties. And so it was really my dad—I mean, my mom, like, probably didn't like that I was queer, but also she avoids conflict, and so she, like, was just like, "We're not gonna talk about it." Like, "Just don't bring it up."

And I think that's actually, like,—when I—now that I'm saying all of this, it's exactly how a lot of—when I think about how just my mom responded, it was, like, kind of representative of other friends that I have, who were raised in a Mexican Catholic homes, where it's like, initial outbursts of anger and then just don't talk about it. And, like, you just have this friend.

And my partner now, I met—we met after graduation. She went to Princeton [University]. We met while we were both admissions officer at our alma maters: me at Dartmouth, her at Princeton. We have been dating now for three years, very much in love and super happy. And for the first two years or so, I was just her, like, good friend, who she lived with. [Chuckles.] But it was, like, I would go home, and, like, “Oh, it’s your amiga.”

And we have, like, you know, even after, you know, we told her parents, and they were fine, you know? Like, they love me, and they want me to be part of their family, and so even—and—and—and still, yet, like, this August we went to our nieces Quinceañera, and I was the amiga. And that was just fine, but—anyway. But there’s something about the way that Mexican Catholic communities, like, don’t disown forever, but, like, do avoid taking about it.

On the other hand, like, my dad’s family—which is a working-class, white family from the South—it’s—it’s interesting. My mom’s family actually—my mom was raised working class, but now as a teacher is pretty solidly middle-class. And my dad’s—but my dad’s family is still pretty working-class. My aunt works at Walmart. My uncle used to work for the county, but, like,—

And so that—that difference in the way that they responded felt grounded in race and class, and, you know, my dad was— really didn’t like it for a very long time and, like, made it known, to our whole family community, and, like, eventually my sister—my older sister, who was my dad’s daughter from his first marriage, brought him around.

And I think it also helps that, you know, when I eventually did bring a partner—my—my partner—my father eventually passed away. My dad passed away in 2016. Estella [Diaz] met him—Estella, my partner—her full name is Estella Diaz—and she’s so charismatic and funny and successful—like, there is something about these schools that, you know, they just mean that this person’s a good person.

And you and I both know that going to an Ivy doesn’t inherently make you a good person, but I was able to

leverage this impression to, like, make my family like my partner. [Chuckles.] And she's a super funny and charismatic, like, on her own. And—and I think that helped—like, when my dad actually met someone who was, like, nice and funny and smart and listened to him, who also happened to be masculine of center and a gay woman, or a lesbian woman, he was, like, "Oh, this isn't that bad." Like, "I guess we can handle this."

But it's notable that I never actually told him Estella was my partner. We were just good friends. They met twice, and we were just good friends at both times. And he—he had cancer for about two years. He was diagnosed my senior fall of college, so in 2016, and he passed—he was diagnosed in the—in the summer of 2014, and he passed in the fall of 2016, so a year after I graduated.

And I never told him that she was my partner. I think he knew. Like, he made this snide comment while we were visiting one day, and I was, like, *You totally know we're dating*. But we never got around to bringing it up. I regret that, quite a bit, but I'm glad that, you know, Estella and I intend on being married. And I'm really glad that, like, she met my dad. But it does—it is really hard that even now, you know, my mom still doesn't—she knows, and my whole family knows. But, like, when we went on my—we went to a wedding recently, and Estella was just my friend.

And if it's like amongst cousins, if it's amongst young people, they're like, "Oh, yeah, that's Leandra's girlfriend." But with older folks, it's always my friend. And that's, like—uch, it's so hard, because out of respect for them, I'm not going to—both out of respect for my mom, her generation, and Estella's parents as well, like, I—I empathize with where they're at, and I don't want to cause them more pain than they—you know, like, they live hard lives, like everyone in this world does, and I don't want to, like, cause any more antagonism on them.

But I'm, like—part of me also feels like it's been long enough, and they should [chuckles], like, get with the program and just be okay with, like, their—their daughter dating a woman.

OLACHEA: Thank you for sharing that. Sorry for your loss.

BARRETT: Thank you

OLACHEA: I guess just looping it back to Dartmouth, was there any moment in your undergrad that kind of stands out to you as I guess like a significant event? And this could relate to defining your identity or identities or just in general.

BARRETT: Hmm. It's a tough question. Nothing really—I mean,—mmm—I think, like, the—the—the conversation I had with my parents in the weeks after that—my freshman year, when I was outed, the way that that went is that I had been on a rugby team training trip in California. So we went to California, played a bunch of games and returned to Hanover. And when I got back, it was like—I don't know how long my parents knew, so it's not clear if they waited for me to return to Hanover or if they found out and it coincided with me returning to Hanover, but I literally, like, got off the coach.

My partner at the time, Matt Sturm, and I went back to my dorm in the French—I lived in French Hall. And I called my parents to be, like, "Hey, I arrived safely." And that turned into this horrific phone call, where they just, like, loaded all of the things that, like,—all of the worst things that a parent can possibly say upon learning that their daughter is queer.

And also just the weird—I mean, that was also just such a tough moment because at that point, Matt had transitioned and was using he pronouns, Matt. And they kept saying on the phone, like, "You're dating a woman!" And I couldn't bring my- —I—like, I knew. I knew that, like, yes, they were wrong, and, like, it was a queer relationship, but it wasn't a relationship with a woman anymore. And I couldn't tell them that.

And it felt so complex and hard, also because obviously, like, I didn't want them to know. They didn't—they weren't responding well. And so Matt, like—I didn't have a roommate. I lived in a two-room double, but my roommate had moved out, and like no one, like, wants to move to the French Hall because it's so far away. So I just had two rooms to myself.

And so I guess this is, like, late March. He's just, like, the heater is not on. It's really cold and dark. And Matt just, like, goes into the other room and is, like, crying for me. And I'm crying. It was just the worst. And I, like,—they decided they weren't going to talk to me or pay for anything anymore.

And the weeks after that were just so foundational to, like, how I moved about Dartmouth after that, because it meant that, you know, everyone I knew heard about it and would do things to try and make me feel better, but then I was in this really precarious position, where I was, like,—for me—I wasn't a— I was a financial aid recipient, but I still had the student and parent contribution, which was, like, not insignificant. It was at least a couple thousand dollars. And I had no idea how I was going to pay that, you know? Like, it was more than I could earn doing a part-time job on campus.

And so it was just so hard, and it was just, like, *What the fuck?* Like,—like, *This is-* —[Chuckles.] And I felt like—up to that point, I had felt so good about being gay. Like, I felt so good. I was so happy. I was—like, it was—if this moment hadn't have happened, I would have just, like, gone on being, like, a—living a double life and—and being totally okay with that and, like, relishing in my double life.

And this shattered that double life and kind of brought those two moments toge- —those two worlds together, queer both at school and now also at home. And that wasn't good. And so, yeah, it defined both what kind of queer person I wanted to become. I mean, I think now I'm more resolved in naming that I'm queer in Texas, when it's safe to do so, because—

I think part of it was that's the only other gay person my family knew was, like, my dad's estranged cousin (who he doesn't like; she's a lesbian). She's really great. I met her since, she's fine. But, like, her family—she's so estranged, so estranged. And she only showed up when my dad passed. Poor lady. And, like, I don't think they ever—I've never met her partner. I don't think her partner's met anyone in my dad's family.

And so, like, now that I know that, like, all of the things that he had wrong about queer people, like, all the, like, just fallacies had to do with, like, no one being out. So there are

gay people in Louisiana, and there are gay people in Texas. And so now I'm, like, far more forward in my queerness, when it's safe and respectful to do so. And sometimes when it's not—but often times when it's not—it's—it's when it's safe and respectful to do so on the part of my family. Here in New York, you know, I don't really care about anyone else's respect. But I do want to protect my family and my parents.

And it also shaped my time at Dartmouth because it meant that I took two off-terms consecutively in my freshman summer and then my sophomore fall. And not many people do that, like, two consecutive off-terms, much less that early in their college career. And it was really hard, and I got really sick. I got really, really, really sick mental health wise.

And so I don't know. It's, like,—it was defining. It wasn't good defining. I wished there was a triumphant defining moment. I guess maybe graduating on time was that. And, like, I think postgrad—like, being able to take my partner back to Dartmouth and then me going to Princeton is really—feels—it feels like it provides some resolution to this moment. But, like, there was a good six or eight months that were just fraught as fuck and not easy. And I think are inextricable from my sense of myself as a queer woman and—and for my sense of self as a queer Dartmouth alum, too.

OLACHEA: Two more questions.

BARRETT: Mm-hm.

OLACHEA: Is there any—

BARRETT: I talk a lot, so this might be going longer than—

OLACHEA: No worries.

BARRETT: [Chuckles.]

OLACHEA: I love it. I mean, it's kind of cringey, but do you think there's any way that the so-called traditions at Dartmouth can change to embrace the inclusion of marginalized communities, including the LGBT community?

BARRETT: Oh, that's a good question. That's a really good question. I mean, like, what's tough, I think definitionally—definitionally, I think the answer is no. Like, the answer is always going to be no, by virtue of who Dartmouth was built for. Afraid that—it gets thrown around a lot, and sometimes can—it can mean different things to different people. But I think the phrase that comes to mind to me here is, like, these institutions were not built for us. And that's to say that when the university as an institution was constructed, for, like, liberal—as a liberal space for, like, growth in the liberal arts and—and, like, the—the—who defi- —like, you know, so if it's, like, this liberal space for, like, growth and knowledge of the, quote unquote, “human mind.”

Like, a certain subjectivity was presumed when the university was constructed. And that was not a queer Chicana girl from south Texas. It was not Native students. It was not black students. It was not queer students. It was not women. And so, like, yeah, Dartmouth can, like, hold a bonfire, and women will come. Or Dartmouth can sing—like, can make—what's the song? It's, like, the “Dear Old Dartmouth” [“Alma Mater”]?

OLACHEA: Mm-hm.

BARRETT: [Sings.] “Dear old Dartmouth. La la la la la. The sons of old Dartmouth and the daughters of Dartmouth,” blah, blah, blah. Right? Like they can add it to the song, but, I don't know, it's still incomplete. And I don't—like, I often wonder—I don't—I don't regret going to Dartmouth. I actually, really like it. [Chuckles.] I think my critiques come from a deep place of love, right? I wouldn't have worked as an admissions officer if didn't think it was a transformative educational space.

At the same time, I often wonder what it must have been like to go to a woman's college. So even then, like, at least it was constructed for women, if they were white women. Okay, fine. For, like, women. So I think about, like,—yeah, there's something about, like, the—the Dartmouth history and, like, not wanting to be coeducational and, like, the stupid stomping that happened. Like, the—I don't know if it's, like, it's a well-known thing that when people stomp in the school song, that that was, like, because they didn't want

coeducation, right? Like, they stomp because they wanted to stomp out women.

Or learning that, like, you know, the quirky thing that Dartmouth does when it plays beer pong, was not having handles on the paddles, is because they didn't want women to play.

It's just these—so all of these are representative to me of, like, Dartmouth can include women. Colleges can be integrated, right? Like, I think about—I think the coeducation of—of black students and Latinx students at these universities—there's always going to be resistance. There's always going to be the stomping or the—the whatever it might be.

But, like, also, like, these institutions, like, functionally and structurally weren't meant for us to grow and thrive. And so I don't think for me that—the answer to that is, like, I still want the school song to say “men and women of Dartmouth.” I still want Dartmouth to be coeducational. I still want women to go there. I still want women at the bonfire or whatever else it is, right?

Sometimes, like, I wonder, like,—I don't know if I want the Greek system to go away. Like, I think it's abhorrent, and yet, like, I don't really know where else women and gender nonconforming people will be able to get away from straight, cis men. Like, where else will they go?

I don't know. I—I really hope someone does that imaginative work of establishing a new infrastructure that will eventually become our tradition and, like, fundamentally reorienting, the way that this place thinks. And so there's something—I guess, like, I think about, like, the short-term stopgap solution. It's, like, yes, Dartmouth should, like incorporate women, people of color, queer people into their tradition, but someone somewhere needs to do the hard work of, like, how to rewire that place.

It needs to be. I hope it is. What's tough is, like, so many queer people come out of Dartmouth so broken that, like, they don't want to do that work. They can't. I mean, I haven't

returned to campus since I left my job, and—and I don't know, when I will, you know?

And to think that, you know, that was based on my experience in 2015, which speaks nothing of the experience of queer—I think of—oh, what's his name? I've met so many wonderful gay men, mostly white, but a few people of color too, since living in New York, who were at Dartmouth at the same time. It was, like, in the eighties. It was the same time as Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985] and Dinesh [J.] D'Souza [Class of 1983].

And, like—God! Like, if this is *my* experience, having—like, having come out of here, like, mostly unfractured and, like, mostly happy, and *I* don't have the energy to do that work for someone, you know, like,—just the queer history of people at Dartmouth—it's like—I'm, like, *Who's gonna do that?* I really don't know, because most of us don't have the energy for it. And some people have very good reasons to shun this school and never look back.

It was so interesting is that a lot of them are actually really, really in the late eighties are some of the most active and involved folk, so maybe there's something about, like, time away that helps you reframe and—and reorient your relationship to the place that hurt you. Yeah, it's a good question.

OLACHEA: One last question: Why did you decide to—to speak up?

BARRETT: I think—well, it was—I think oral his- —I think this is, like,—in a super nerdy way, I think oral histories are, like, some of the most urgent, pressing, like,—like, one could say that oral histories are like the most important form of knowledge production. No one does them because they're like—not that you're doing them, and Dartmouth's doing them, right? But of the form of, like, qualitative—when I say “from a nerdy place”—I'm in graduate school right now, and I think a lot about, like, methodology.

Oral history isn't something people think of, right? And it's time consuming and it's hard, but it is, like, the most important thing that anyone could do, because getting down these stories and voices for posterity—at least, like—so, like,

if there is some kind of transformative change that's going to happen in the world or in the future, that—the conditions of possibility for that change is narrative, the recording of narrative, of people who lived in a moment that is—

Like, I'm not going to live in that moment of transformative change, but hopefully someone who does can, like, hear this story and, like, make sense of it and say, like,—actually, like,—like, “Here's what we know. Here's what we know about that moment.” That's undoubtedly influenced by the fact that my partner does research on oral histories. My partner is actually doing a—a paper right now about—mmm, what's it about? Black lesbian women, most of whom were sex workers in Detroit during and after the Great Migration. So women who—most of whom have passed on now, who were born between 1920 and 1950, more or less. About their lives as queer women, queer black women.

Most—I think the whole—anyways, it's, like, all queer women, but she's focusing on the black women. But, like, all of them are gone now, and it's really sad to think about. Like, either, like, of the women, many of whom have passed on, but the ones who haven't, have, like, dementia. And, like, even in the course of two interviews, like two oral history interviews, have developed early onset dementia and can't remember what happened.

And it's, like, fuck! Like, we need to know—we need to know that stuff. And so that—like, that—I think it's, like, it's political for me in that way, of, like, future knowledge production is contingent on stories being shared.

And then also I think, like, no one had ever asked me before, like, from Dartmouth, and so I'm hoping that—you know, like I said, I think someone needs to do some rewiring, some reorienting, both of, like, Dartmouth as an institution broadly but also within, like, queer women communities. And I'm hoping that these stories open the conditions of possibility—like, serve as the conditions of possibility for that eventual work to happen. And, like, that wouldn't have happened if anyone hadn't asked, right?

So that's why I spoke up. I'm really happy to. It'll be interesting to—I also think I want to see how I feel in, like,

fifty years, and I can come back and, like, listen to this interview at Rauner and see how I felt and compare them, so—

OLACHEA: Well, thank you so much for taking the time to do this and contributing to the project.

BARRETT: I very much appreciate it. Thank you for taking the time to— to work on it. It's not easy work, so thank you.

[End of interview.]