

Amanda B. Rosenblum '07  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
SpeakOut  
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[KIRBY L.]

PHARES: Hi. This is Kirby Phares. Today is Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019. It is 10 a.m. I am in the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. Today I am interviewing Amanda [B.] Rosenblum on the phone for SpeakOut.

Amanda, where are you today?

ROSENBLUM: I am in my apartment in Brooklyn [New York].

PHARES: Okay, great. So first of all, thank you so much for participating in the project. It's great to talk to you. And I also want to say that you are welcome to take a break at any time, for any reason.

So to start off, I'm going to ask some biographical questions. Where were you born? What were your parents' name? What did they do?

ROSENBLUM: I was born in Manhattan, New York [City]. My parents are both from Brooklyn, and my mom has been a legal secretary for forty-five years, but she's always wanted to be a singer. And my dad was a dentist. He just retired and is now a lifeguard.

PHARES: Oh! What would—how would you describe our family life? Do you have any siblings?

ROSENBLUM: I have an older sister, and we never got along all that well, but she is actually married to a woman now and has a kid, and we are closer. We grew up in a suburb. My dad convinced my mom to leave the city, which she and I probably never would have done if I were old enough to make that decision with her.

And I grew up Jewish, so I went to Hebrew school twice a week and led the youth service on Saturdays, and we always celebrated Shabbat. And our family friends were all the friends I had made in nursery school.

PHARES: So you were very religious. Were you throughout— throughout your childhood, till, like, col- —till—throughout high school and stuff?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah, I would say we were more involved in the temple than religious. So when my mom was growing up, women were not allowed to get Bat Mitzvahed and to be as involved as we were, and so she joined the Sisterhood in our temple and so it became more of a community for us. But my parents definitely believed in God, which I never did. And I went to Hebrew school because that was sort of the thing to do, but we were—we were Conservative, which is kind of in between Reformed and Orthodox.

But, yeah, I ended up getting a job at the—at the temple, to lead the youth service. I liked singing. I liked reading Hebrew. I liked working with kids. And so, yeah, we were definitely more religious than others in the community.

PHARES: And where exactly did you move after leaving Manhattan?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah, so it was a town called East Rockaway [New York]. I went to Lynbrook High School, which is in Long Island, on the South Shore, not too far from the city.

PHARES: Okay. And how was Lynbrook?

ROSENBLUM: Well [chuckles], I only go back there now to see my nephew. It's not very exciting. There are really good bagels. It is extremely—I found it, you know, a very safe and comforting but also boring place to grow up. It was also very white. When I came to Dartmouth, that was diverse to me, which, looking back now, is—is pretty shocking, but it does make you realize how white Lynbrook was.

PHARES: Can you talk a little bit about high school?

ROSENBLUM: I was the nerdy one in high school. I definitely wanted to be in a place where people were smart and loved to read and

were hard working. That's—I found a few people like that, and those were—those were my people. But it was a public school. It was a very well-funded public school, so we had all the—all the after-school activities, which were less funded than sports, and, you know, I was not playing sports, but the school was a great school. But it did not attract students, you know, for any particular reason, who were interested in what I was.

So I was very nerdy. I was kind of known for how large my backpack was, how much I studied, how much I tried in classes. I was very close with a lot of my teachers, and I ended up graduating valedictorian, which was my—my biggest achievement at the time.

PHARES: And did you do any activities?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah, I did. I did all the activities that were not sports. [Chuckles.] I was editor of the literary magazine for three years. I was opinions editor of the newspaper. I was on yearbook. I ran for student government all four years and was elected president my final year. I did a lot of community service. I led a community service program for students with disabilities, another one with students who had siblings who had passed away from cancer. I got a 500-hour pin from our local hospital for volunteering there. I can't even remember everything I did.

PHARES: So you were pretty busy before even getting to Dartmouth.

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yeah, I was—I was, like, *I've gotta get outta here*. [Laughs.] *So these colleges want someone who takes the most rigorous courses and does everything available to them. That's what I'm gonna do.*

PHARES: So I'm kind of interested in, like, the scene of 2003. How would you—like, what kind of music were you listening to, or, like, what were the big celebrities or stuff like that?

ROSENBLUM: Wow. My favorite bands were Guster and Dispatch. And this was right before people really got cell phones, so I think I had a cell phone that I never turned on, that I had gotten because I started driving, and I was a horrible driver. But people would meet—you know, everyone would have the

same meeting spot in town if they wanted to go out. I would always babysit. But my friends would go to the in-and-out parking lot, which was, like, a bodega parking lot, blast their music in the parking lot. I think, like, wine spritzers were—were big then.

And everyone would talk on Instant Message. So you'd get home, and you would leave your Instant Message Away Message up, and you see how many people had written to you, and so if your sister or your parents logged you out to log themselves in, everyone would get very upset because it was sort of like the modern-day text message. If you weren't able to see everyone who had written to you, they would never be your friend again, you know, sort of feeling.

PHARES: Were you out in high school, or what would you describe your identity back then as?

ROSENBLUM: No, I was not out. I did not date anybody. Was not interested in the boys in my high school, but I mostly chalked that up to them being dumb. [Chuckles.] My sister was a senior when I was a freshman in high school, and she had all of the—only gay friends in high school, even though she wasn't out. And so this gay guy best friend of ours became prom king in high school. You know, he wasn't out, but it was very clear. Everyone knew he was gay.

And so I was—I was very into, you know, LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer] rights. She went off to college, and I sort of got the sense that maybe—maybe she were gay. It was sort of like a glimmer in my mind. And then she finally came out to me when I was—when I had just started Dartmouth, maybe, like, a month or two in.

PHARES: And what was—

ROSENBLUM: So—

PHARES: —what was that like?

ROSENBLUM: She came home from college. I'm not doing the math right. I think she was—I guess she had just started her—I think she had just started her last year of college. She came home. She took me—you know, she wanted to take me on a—on a

drive to go run an errand, and she and I did not spend a lot of one-on-one time together, so that was very strange.

And she ended up telling me in the car that—that she was gay, and she didn't—she didn't like boys, and she had a crush on a girl in college. I was shocked that she was coming out to me, mostly because I knew I was finding this out before my parents, and we weren't very close. But, you know, she says I said all the right things. I said, "I love you. I don't care. Do what you want. Do whatever makes you happy. Obviously, I support gay people."

PHARES: This isn't supposed to be about me, but you just accurately described the way my sister came out to me.

ROSENBLUM: Oh, my God! [Chuckles.]

PHARES: Like, word for word.

ROSENBLUM: It's how everyone learned how to do it. [Laughs.]]

PHARES: Word for word. That's so bizarre.

ROSENBLUM: That's crazy. Maybe they read the same—the same Myspace article or something at the time. [Laughs.]

PHARES: Went for a drive, running an errand, all of that.

ROSENBLUM: [Laughs.] That's great.

PHARES: So before coming to college, do you remember what you wanted to do—like, what you wanted to be?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yes. I—I did—I was not caught up in careers. At the time, I knew that, you know, jobs were stupid. I wanted to stay in school for as long as possible, but if I had to leave school, I wanted to be a teacher. And that's part of the reason why I went to Dartmouth, was that every other Ivy League tour I went on, the tour guides were very judgmental about, you know, education. And they would kind of put down—"Oh, yeah, we might have that department. I don't think it's so good." Sort of questioning me why I would want to go there and be a teacher. And I thought—you know, my—my—my teachers were all my friends. I thought of it as

the most professional, respected career. Like, educating our nation's youth. And I would want to work in a Title I school and in an urban population.

But at Dartmouth there was never judgment about that. And, in fact, they talked about "the education department has respected professors, and they do research in the Galapagos Islands, and you're gonna love it." So that why I went to Dartmouth wanting to study.

PHARES: So moving to Dartmouth, that's why you'd say you chose Dartmouth, or was there something else that drew you in?

ROSENBLUM: Well, the other reason: I didn't have a school that I wanted to go to. I was not excited by any of them on my list. And my—my best friend from growing up—I—I—she ended up applying to Yale [University] because her dad had gone there, but all she wanted to do was go to Dartmouth. And she said, "You should really go see it." And my mom and I thought it was the most, like, *goyishe* place. Like, how—why would somebody who was Jewish want to go to New Hampshire? But if my friend is recommending it, let's go see it.

And we set foot on campus, and it was—it was the one nice spring day of Dartmouth, and I saw people hanging out on the [Dartmouth] Green, and I just thought—I looked around, and I just thought, *Everybody here must be as hardworking and take school as seriously as I do, but they seem to be having so much more fun than I am, and I could—I could make good friends here.*

Plus, my—parents hated it, and I just thought, *Oh, wow! Like, they won't come all this way to visit like they would if I—if I were closer.* And by that point, I had passed Early Decision, but I knew I only wanted to go to Dartmouth, so I applied to Middlebury [College] as, like, a safety school because it was the only other school I could find that was similar to Dartmouth. And my decision was set.

PHARES: So you talked about your friend. Did you know anyone else coming to Dartmouth? I know she didn't go, but was anyone from your high school or something like that?

ROSENBLUM: I knew nobody else either on campus or who was applying. I found out later this one guy from my high school—I didn't realize he had applied. He applied to thirty schools. And he got off the wait list very, very late, in the summer, so he ended up there with me, but we weren't friends. So I was really—it was a fresh start for me, and I was excited.

PHARES: Did you go on [the Dartmouth Outing Club First-Year] Trips?

ROSENBLUM: Did I go—oh, on Freshman Trips?

PHARES: Yeah.

ROSENBLUM: Yes. Yes. I went on the easy hiking, and it was too hard [chuckles] for me. I had not—I had not exercised a day in my life. But, yes, I did, and it was fun.

PHARES: So when—

ROSENBLUM: I also went to the—I went to the Dimensions [of Dartmouth] weekend. So at that time, we had—we had a discussion board, where everybody who was matriculating was able to meet. And I actually met a girl, and we decided to be roommates. Her name was Nicole [L. Mahr, Class of 2007]. We met at the Dimensions weekend. We fell in love—you know, as friends—and she was my freshman roommate. And so when I came to Trips, I'd already been to campus, you know, a couple of times.

PHARES: Can you tell me a little bit more about Nicole and I believe her last name, if you would possibly tell me that?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yeah, Nicole Mahr. So her last name is M-a-h-r. And she just loved herself. You know, she—she would say kind of, you know, bad things about her body or her curly hair, but it was very clear that—that she loved herself and she was a very positive person. She loved to laugh. We thought each other were very funny. And we just hit it off, chatting on the discussion board.

And when I came for Dimensions, it was actually my birthday, and she told everybody there, and so in the dance party, you know, they—they put a birthday song on, and I was, like, *Wow, like, this is a stranger who's trying to make*

*me feel special. This is awesome.* And so we—we chose to live together, and we had a three-room double in the River [Cluster]. And then I actually became a UGA [undergraduate adviser], and so by the time I had graduated college, I had never had an actual roommate—like, in my bedroom before, in life.

PHARES: So who was your third roommate?

ROSENBLUM: We had—it was just the two of us. So the River at the time had a three-room double.

PHARES: Gotcha.

ROSENBLUM: So their middle room would be, like, a social room, and we would have a lot of—yeah, we would have a lot of friends from, like, the building come in there.

PHARES: Which dorm specifically?

ROSENBLUM: Fourth floor, McLane [Hall].

PHARES: Whew! That's quite the walk.

ROSENBLUM: [Laughs.]

PHARES: So was—would you—Nicole was—you'd say was, like, your first friend?

ROSENBLUM: I also made friends in Long Island, because the Dartmouth Club of Long Island is very active, and so they had a lot of meet-ups, and so I made a friend, [Deborah E.] “Debbie” Wassel [Class of 2007], and—

PHARES: And what was her last name?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, gosh! Yeah. I'm trying to—[Chuckles.] Now I'm really going back. Deborah. I can't think of her name, but I will think of it. Wassell, W-a-s-s-e-l, Debbie Wassel. And I stayed over her house in Long Island that whole summer before we started. I met all of her friends. We would hang out with a couple of other people who were going to Dartmouth.



And when she started on campus, she lived in Gile [Hall], and I became friends with her entire floor, a couple of whom are—who were not out but who are now out as gay men—and they were kind of my—some of my first friends when I got to campus.

PHARES: So do you think that is what you describe as, like, your first community on campus?

ROSENBLUM: Maybe. I—I felt I made a lot of friends when I first got there because I'd gone for so long in a town where I had, like—like, limited quantity of people who were like me, and so I kind of threw caution to the wind, pretended to be an extrovert, and most of my good friends from Dartmouth came in that first—in the first couple weeks of being on campus.

So I felt I had a community. It might have been a lot of one-on-one friendships, but that's kind of what I like. So the group in Gile and my group on my floor—we were all very close. And that might have been, like, my first community of friends who knew each other, where we would all do things together. But I felt I had a community of mostly women and gay men within the first couple of weeks.

PHARES: And what kind of things did you do on campus with them?

ROSENBLUM: Like, what did we do for fun, or what were my activities?

PHARES: First, for fun.

ROSENBLUM: [Chuckles.] So I would love to, like, hold office hours on the Collis Porch and just stay there for six hours and hang out with anybody as they came and were off of class and had time. So I mostly hung out there.

We would do a lot of, like, coffee, short walks. Like, I typically had, like, a friend join me for any of the lectures that were happening on campus. I went to all the musical events on campus. I tried to go to, like, any film or performance at the Hop[kins Center for the Arts]. Lots of eating. Like, the fact that I could just, like,—I never liked to cook, and my family—my parents were—are horrible cooks, so we never had any good food. So as much as people complained about

the food on campus, I thought it was delicious. There was salt in it, and I could swipe. So I definitely ate a lot. And would hang out with friends over food.

And we would—yeah, we would always invite people to that, like, third room of ours in the River, to hang out, because Nicole was—she was a riot. She was a good time. She was a great storyteller. We would stay up until 3 a.m. every day, just chatting. And some people would—would often come in there for a study break.

PHARES: Can you tell me a little more about these office hours? What were those for?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, just meeting—that like, I would—I would literally perch myself at a—at a table and hang out, kind of like—people would be, like, “Oh, what are you doing today?” And I’d be, like, “I’m holding office hours at Collis. Come when you—come when you’re free.” And I would, like, you know,—I—I studied a lot of English classes, so I didn’t really need to be inside at the library or have access to—you know, I didn’t need to drag my big laptop around. I often had a book I had to read every day, so I would just sit there reading, and friends would stop by.

PHARES: And this was during your freshman year, or throughout college?

ROSENBLUM: Throughout, but mostly my freshman year because actually I didn’t—I didn’t have as many activities to do then. Like, I was just starting to get involved in things, but I wasn’t really passionate about them yet. I didn’t have leadership positions. So I mostly had free time my first year, and then not a lot the rest of the time.

PHARES: So what was the first, like, club that you joined or the first few?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yeah, the first.

PHARES: And why.

ROSENBLUM: Probably [*The*] *Stonefence* [*Review*], the literary magazine. My literary magazine from high school was called *Driftstone*.

And I thought it was, like, a natural progression. Like, *Oh, this'll be—this'll be my home here*. And, you know, so we got to write poetry and talk about poetry and photography, and it was a small enough group that they actually named me, like, the poetry editor, I think, my third term or something like that. So that was the first group I was really a part of.

PHARES: And then do you remember any others?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yeah. I was—I was super involved—so I was—in my first and second years, I—I had three jobs that were sort of communities also. I was an undergraduate adviser, mostly for first years. I became a tour guide for the admissions office and later became a senior interviewer. I planned Dimensions. And I also joined Green Key [Society], where you would call up alumni/ae for money.

I joined Mentors Against Violence, yearbook. I joined Theta (Epsilon Kappa Theta). I became the new member educator. I directed the Prison Project at the Windsor Prison [sic; Windsor Correctional Facility] about thirty minutes away. And we advocated for that to be turned into a class, which it later was, after I graduated. I was the cardinal for Phoenix senior society.

I was in both of the queer groups. I think it was Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance and the predecessor to GSX [Gender Sexuality XYZ], and I don't remember what we called it.

Yeah I—I—I'm sure I'm forgetting things. I liked to be involved because that felt like a use- —you know, for me, I knew how—how high the tuition was. I knew how much my parents were working for it. And I really didn't love all of my classes. I didn't feel like most—I didn't feel like I was—my mind was blown in a lot of them, and so I was finding ways to engage with the student body in other ways.

Like, I joined a discussion group. This professor had come up with this model of, like,—kind of like an inquiry-based discussion group at night, and you would meet in Dartmouth Hall and have conversations around certain themes, kind of like a salon. And so I would do that, and that felt—I would—I would take away so much more—so many more life lessons

and so much more self-awareness from that group than I ever did from my classes.

PHARES: So why did you choose the things that you chose to do? I know, like, Phoenix is not exactly choosing, but, like, tour guide and Dimensions and stuff. Why did you choose to do those?

ROSENBLUM: Well, tour guide to me seemed like easy money, and at the time, I was trying to I guess be more extroverted. I kind of felt like *everybody on campus is extroverted, they speak well, they're really good meeting new people. I've gotta get out of my comfort zone, so what are the jobs where I would challenge myself?*

And it was, like, calling up people and asking for money [chuckles], and then, like, meeting a random group of people and having to be friendly and lead information sessions. Most of the other groups I chose, I think I was looking for communities of women, and I was really into any group where there were women of different class years, because I felt that any time I met women, especially who were older than me, especially who were queer, I felt like they were the most mature, self-assured people, and I looked at them, and I thought, *I want to be like you.*

And that's what happened when I went to Theta, as part of rush, which I really only did because everyone was doing it, and I had no intention of joining a sorority, but I just—and I started crying when I was there because I thought, *Well, I'm not gonna—I'm definitely not gonna join this! But you all are awesome!* And the two women—one who became one of my three big sisters, Christine [J.] Kopprasch [Class of 2005]—

PHARES: Can you spell that?

ROSENBLUM: Sure. Christine with a C-h. And Kopprasch, K-o-p-p-r-a-s-c-h.

PHARES: Okay.

ROSENBLUM: And she was an '05, and I just thought the '05s were totally badass. And she became—she is now a publisher. So I knew she was an English major, which by then I knew I was

going to be. And—and she just said, you know, things like, “I didn’t know I wanted to join a sorority either, but it’s not like that. You won’t have to live here. You could just hang out with us.” And so talked me down from my, like, emotional crisis and convinced me to—to rush only Theta. And Theta pretty much accepts, like, anybody who wants to join [chuckles], so—so by then it was a done deal.

PHARES: Can you talk a little more about, like, these mature, self- — like, what you described as mature, self-assured women? Like, what exactly did you see in them?

ROSENBLUM: I felt a couple of times like—that—that there were a couple of women, at least who I can remember who I’ll tell you about, who—it felt like they saw through me. Like, they saw—they saw a deeper self or they saw me in the future and I hadn’t yet seen it yet. And I really didn’t—I really didn’t think I was queer. I mean, at the time, I just kind of thought, *Well, if I wanted to be, I would be. My sister is. My parents were fine about it.*

So there wasn’t—there wasn’t resistance, but I just—I just didn’t think that I was. And so one time, I—I went into the Rainbow—what—the Rainbow Room in Robinson Hall, which I think just got removed. And that was the place where they would watch—they would watch, like, lesbian movies there. They would watch some, like, lesbian porn some nights. And there was—there was a library books and videos and, like, a little couch.

So I think I had to go there to get a book that—for class that wasn’t at the library but some people had told me might be there. I don’t quite remember why I went there. Maybe it was just out of curiosity. But I walk in, and I think it was—this is weird, because I’m going to say her name. We were never friends, but I think it was Danielle Drunzy?—D-r-u-n-z-y—who was probably a ’4 or a ’5. And I think she was on the hockey team, and I never crossed paths with, like, the athletes my whole time there. But I knew who she was. And she was out at that point.

And I walk in, and I was sure—I was like, I couldn’t believe somebody was there, and—so she got up, and she just, like, confidently shook my hand, and I was, like, “I’m just here for

this book. I don't know. Maybe I should go." And she was so calm. And she was, like, "No, you're in the right place." I'm sure I must have gotten the book, but I just left feeling like, *Wow! Who was that?*

And it happened another time. I was taking this course with all women, because it was a course called Mothers and Daughters, and this one woman in class—I don't even remember her name; we were never close. We leave class, and she comes right up to me, and—and it was about halfway through—through the semester. And she said to me, "You have to come to this event tonight"—called, you know, like Speak—basically Speak Out or Will the Women of Dartmouth Please Stand Up?

And she said, "You have to come. You can't miss it." And I was, like,—nobody—I mean, the older classman weren't—weren't, like, telling me to go to things. The campus is small enough; you kind of just would decide what you wanted to do anyway. She was telling me I had to go.

And so I went, and during that time, one of the speakers, who as a senior—I don't remember her name, but she actually came out in her speech. She said, "I can't believe it's taken me this long. And all my friends are here. And, you know, I'm gay." And it was in—it was in Filene Auditorium basement. And the entire room just immediately stood up in a standing ovation. And I was—I was one of them.

And I just kept thinking, *Did this girl know that was going to happen, or did she just want me to come to this event where women—diverse women were talking about their experiences on campus—from sexual assault to, you know, racial discrimination—you know, whatever. Like, was it because of the—the former reason or the latter? And I never knew. But I just thought, I'm so—I'm so glad I was here. And this feels revolutionary, and wow! I can't believe she had to wait until she is graduating here. College is such an important time. I can't believe she felt like she had to wait, and that's so sad. And I think it kind of got the wheels turning in my head.*

PHARES:

So when—when did these happen, the last one and this one?

ROSENBLUM: That class was definitely my—wow. I'm going to think when I was on campus. So it must have been my sophomore winter, because I think they did that event twice, because a lot of the sophomores and juniors would go away for the spring. So I guess she was in her—that woman who was speaking was in her senior winter. I took the Mothers and Daughters class my sophomore winter. I don't know when I went to the Rainbow Room, but it was some time before then.

PHARES: Okay. And so there's a standing ovation, and I know from going to the stuff that I've gone to, it's kind of a select group. Would you—how would you describe the general climate on campus around, I don't know, women, LGBTQ issues?

ROSENBLUM: Well, I think the audience there was actually a lot of friends and friends of friends of the speakers, but I don't know how many were actually, you know, advocates for LGBTQI issues. I know that when I was in that discussion group, I talked about—we had two—we had two co-leads. Like, a guy—a man and a woman. The guy became my friend. His name is Michael [A.] Salter, '06. Salter: S-a-l-t-e-r. He lived off campus. I ended up living in his apartment. And he—he was openly bisexual.

And—and the woman, who could be queer now, I don't know but I—I remember at one point in the discussion group, I told the story about my sister coming out and why it made me, you know, an advocate for—for LGBTQI rights. And she stopped me at the end of the class, and she said, "That issue is near and dear to my heart as well." And I never knew if she was coming out to me or if she just, like anybody, was an ally. And I don't remember her name.

So—I don't—yeah, I don't know if it was that I was keeping the right role models around me, but I did think that, especially compared to when I would come, and even though I lived in a suburb, I did live, you know, in Lynbrook; I was thirty minutes from New York City, in a very Democratic community. It definitely felt more progressive on campus.

And I would say that the—the striking part, even for me today, is that there was an aura of self-identification—you

know, that—there had been that history of *The Dartmouth Review* outing people and going to gay meetings and writing down their names and publishing it. And so there was a feeling like everybody gets a chance to self-identify. There was an article in *The Dartmouth* about a woman feeling gender non-conforming, and she ended up being the first—the first girl I ever kissed or dated.

And so—and there was also this feeling of—especially the '05 women. What I liked most about them is that rather than calling themselves gay or lesbian or queer or dyke, they would—well, they would sometimes use “dykes” when talking about each other, but they would always say the words, “I’m dating women.” “I date women.” And I loved that idea of you could just use this verb for “I want to date women” or “I’m dating women,” rather than having to identify sexuality to yourself or others as any—you know, any fixed idea, and that things could shift, and that was okay, but you’re able to be honest about what you wanted or what you were doing. And that—that really spoke to me.

But, yeah, I was definitely in a bubble. I never went to the fraternities. I despised them. I think I went maybe twice in my whole time there. So I was certainly not living, like, you know, the life of every Dartmouth student.

PHARES: So what do you think moved you—I don’t really know the right way to phrase this, but what do you think moved you into your own, like, self changing—like, what you identified as? Or recognizing.

ROSENBLUM: Yeah. So, yeah, I—I first identified as bisexual, but—but then quickly as queer and only interested in women. And so I had gone abroad twice. I went to France, and I went to Scotland. And I think at the time, I thought maybe something was wrong with me, and it led me to have kind of strange hookups with men, who were from, you know, the countries I was visiting. When I went to Italy, and when I went to—when I traveled in Scotland. And I—I didn’t enjoy it, but I still wasn’t sure that I wasn’t interested in men.

And so then I came back to campus and still felt like, *Maybe something’s wrong with me*. And I got re-involved with Theta because I was—I was off. It was my junior winter. I had an



off term. I chose to stay in Hanover because I could make easy money as a UGA, and I got a publishing internship in Lyme [New Hampshire]. And it, of course, was the worst decision, to stay in Hanover for the winter, but I had all this extra time.

And because I had gone abroad twice, I actually started drinking. I hadn't—I had not drank at Dartmouth for two years, including my sorority rush exper- —and pledging experience. But I come back. I now drink. My friend sees me with, like, a Keystone Light by the—by the Pong table. And stopped the entire basement. He was, like, “What is going on?”

So I kind of came back this new, freer person and maybe picked up some bad habits. And I was hanging around the house all the time, in the basement. And I met one—one person who—who was in the house, who had not been there; she had been on off terms and traveling the whole time I had been a member.

And she was the one who had written that article in *The Dartmouth* about gender nonconformity. And her name was Alison Terry, '06. And she went by “AT.” And it was the first time that I had met a woman who was masculine—you know, who was—who was definitely either butch, possibly, you know, like, one day not identify as a woman, which she was talking about in her time there.

And I had just been—in my time at Dartmouth or in high school, in all my travels, had not met anybody like her who I was attracted to. And so I instantly saw her. We became close. And I just knew. Like, *Oh, this is—this is what I'm attracted to.* And I felt totally calm about it.

And my sister visited campus and saw me and AT together and started asking about it, and I just kept nodding my head. Like, “Yeah, there's definitely something between us.” And my friend Vivian Chong [spelling unconfirmed] who was my best friend at Dartmouth—she also—she came. And I got in a little spat with AP, and afterwards, Vivian stopped me and she said, “What's going on? Are you girlfriends?” I said, “No!” And I think that same night we—we kissed for the first

time, and I just started telling people, “Yeah, I—I’m interested in women.”

PHARES: So this is all your junior women—junior winter?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah.

PHARES: Okay.

ROSENBLUM: And I had been going to all of the—you know, like, I was firmly in the queer community by then. I had been going to those two—those two LGBT groups on campus since I started. Almost all of my friends were gay. So it wasn’t—it—it—there was no shift. You know, like, and telling most of my friends was the easiest thing. They were kind of just like, “Oh, okay.”

There were a few people I waited to tell. Like, there was one girl who I felt—I felt, you know, she was gay. She actually is now and married to a woman. But I felt like she wasn’t okay with herself, and so I struggled to tell her. And I struggled to tell a few of my friends who were very straight—you know, who I didn’t really think had gay friends.

And everyone was just—aside from my friend, who I think,—you know, was closeted and also, you know, was interested in me, and that—that went really poorly. And we—we had a very toxic friendship for a couple of years. Everyone else was very supportive. It was very easy. You know, it was like a dream, coming out.

PHARES: And was—were you accepted at home too?

ROSENBLUM: I didn’t come out at home until my—part of the way through the summer before my senior year, so I think I—I guess I waited about six or nine months. And I did a Birthright Israel trip, which is so crazy, because I’m actually atheist—you know, very openly atheist now. I’m anti-Zionist. I don’t know why I did that, other than it was a free vacation and my parents had not been able to take us traveling anywhere.

And I was so miserable on that trip, because I knew I had to go home and come out to my parents. And actually, my mom

was following the photos on the website and writing to me and saying, “Why do you look so miserable?” [Chuckles.]

So as soon as they picked me up from the airport, I walked into my house, I look at my sister, and I say, “It’s happening now.” We walk into our den, and—and I came out to them. But I came out to them as bisexual at the time.

And my mom just flipped out because she now had two—you know, she had two daughters, and in her mind she was never going to have a grandkid and we were never going to be happy. And she had known my sister was queer. And my sister is more—like, a little bit more of, like, a—you know, a little bit more butchy. But she never saw it coming for me. So she just sort of—she sort of flipped out. But then she realized, “Oh, this is why you’re miserable, and that’s not bad. And this is like, to- —I can totally handle this.” So, you know, it—it turned out to be fine.

PHARES: So this is 2006.

ROSENBLUM: Yeah.

PHARES: So once you kind of started forming this—I mean, you said you were a part of the same spaces since freshman year. But do you think—were there people that you lost or, like, moved away from as you kind of found yourself?

ROSENBLUM: I really can’t think of any. You know, I have to think if my friends were asked the same thing and they said that—that I—we were not as close, I’d be really sad to hear that. By this point, I valued my friendships so much, I just didn’t—I had—from high school I had—I probably have three very close friends, who I’m still friends with. But I just felt like I—I just felt very lonely.

And when I went to Dartmouth, I had all these people around me, and I spent most of my time nurturing those friendships. Like, I was the one who would always make plans. You know, “Let’s go do dinner tomorrow.” And I would never cancel. Everyone was flaky. I never did. So I kind of think of myself as, like, a reliable friend, who really cared about people.

I did—I did start to realize that some communities were more—I was more, like, superficially in than others. I would say that Theta was one of them. Like, by the time I graduated,—I think in the last couple of weeks before graduation, I was—I was making out with a girl in a hallway of Theta, and a couple of my sorority sisters were just, like, shocked at this. And they said, “Oh, we had no idea.”

And I was so upset that they made me feel uncomfortable for doing that and also that they had taken no time to get to know me, because by then I was probably—even though, like, it was only a year and a half after I had come out, I was probably one of the most outspoken queer people on campus.

And I just thought, you know, *I know everything about everyone you've dated?* Like, of all—of all the people in my class—in my sorority, I knew all of their, like, hookups, everyone they dated, what they cared about in life. I knew about their families. And I thought, *Maybe you haven't take the time to get to know me, and then maybe that's up on me. Like, maybe I haven't really been open to sharing,* because I didn't think it was going to be as sympathetic of a space.

So I definitely had, like, who were my people and who weren't, but I don't think I lost any friendships.

PHARES: You said you didn't think EKT, or Theta was as sympathetic? What do you—what do you mean by that?

ROSENBLUM: I guess just, you know, compared to—at the time, Sigma Delt[a Alpha] had a lot of queer women, and when I joined Theta it was very queer, but my class wasn't. And my class had a very strong personality. And so they were not—it was a welcoming space, but there were a few people in my class who were very religious and conservative—you know, voted Republican, went to all the religious groups, were just less comfortable, you know, talking about the things I wanted to talk about.

And by that point, I felt not only that I was queer but actually that I was, like, a very lefty queer. Like, you know, I—we would get into debates on campus about is marriage—should we be fighting for marriage? And my point of view,

even to this day, is, like, no, we should not be putting our money into a patriarchal institution.

And so then I would go into, like, the walls of Theta, and it felt like I was going a little bit backward, maybe a little bit more towards, you know, like, what my high school experience was like. Like, are we really living in the same era here?

So in that sense, it didn't feel—I didn't feel like there were open arms, you know, around me. Like, who- —whoever I am, whatever I—whatever I want to do is okay. Like, it didn't feel like—I didn't feel that it was an openly homophobic atmosphere, but it didn't feel totally welcoming. And so I mostly stopped going to meetings there for—for probably two terms.

PHARES: And how did this compare to when you joined?

ROSENBLUM: Well, I was the new member educator, so I had to go most of the time, and I wanted to fulfill my role. But I was never—yeah, I wasn't, like, a partyer or a drinker, so I wasn't—I wasn't the one who spent the most time there. I never lived in the house. So they wanted me to live in the house, and I had to put up a big fight. “Like, first of all, I make money as a UGA, and second of all, I don't want to live with any of you people.” And, like, basically that's what I said. And so that kind of [unintelligible] on things for a little while.

But most of them were good people; it was just a—it was just a lot of, like, straight girls. And I guess at the time, I kind of judged that and thought, you know, *I don't think it's a pipeline issue. I think there are a lot of queer people on campus. Why are they not joining here? Is it because of this group?*

PHARES: So did you have any interactions with the Sigma Gays? Oh, sorry, that's what we call ourselves, the Sigma Delt.

ROSENBLUM: [Chuckles.] That's awesome.

PHARES: Did you interact with any of them, or were they in the same clubs and groups?

ROSENBLUM: Sure. I think—if I remember correctly, I think the way the schedule was my senior year was it was—I think it was Senior Society meetings and then house meetings and then, like, partying, all on Wednesday nights. Or maybe not. Maybe it was Monday night for Senior Society. So I found a couple of nights a week, I was—I was going there. So after meetings would end, I would go hang out at Sigma Delt.

PHARES: And how would you describe them?

ROSENBLUM: You know what? Now that I'm talking—I think I went out less—I went out less to Sigma Delt than I did to [the] Tabard. I think I was much more often in Tabard. I started dating my friend there, who was—who had just been elected president, and at the time, there was, like, a queen—in my mind, like a king bed in that room, in the—in the basement. And going from—from a twin to, like, a queen bed and, like, knowing the president of the house made me feel special, I think.

And so I found that Tabard is just—it was, like, a lot of blurring of gender lines. And I was—I was friends with one person on campus who started identifying as trans, and then I was acquaintances with—with another. And that was sort of, you know, to me, like, it was the gender revolution. Like, this was the biggest issue of our time, was breaking down sexism by showing that gender is a performance and it's a social construct and that we can identify any way we want. So I really liked the freedom of—of, you know, makeup and dress and dance parties at Tabard.

At Sigma Delt, I found it was mostly women, and so that felt comfortable in a different way. I loved—that's why I had joined Theta, was I just loved being around women. But now it was a lot more queer women. And the ones who were straight were much better allies. Like, they were friends of mine or acquaintances, but they were just so much better at being, like, "Oh, yeah!" You know, "Dana's dating Charlene, but now they're in a fight." So, and it's just lesbian drama everywhere, even though they were straight. You know, it was, like, they were using terms that I was just starting to learn, and it felt a lot more comfortable and chill, and you could just truly be yourself.

And most of the nights were—you know, very few men were there, and I just—I never wanted to be around men my whole entire life, but certainly not in a—in a, like, drunk basement. I had—you know, in my—early in my senior year, I had actually had to go into Phi Delt[a Alpha] to—to remove one of my sorority sisters from a bed where, you know, we all believed she would have been imminently sexually assaulted.

So I just—I was scared, you know, to be around men who were drunk, particularly white men who were drunk. I had few male friends on campus, mostly gay, a couple straight. And I pretty much only wanted to spend time with women. So that's why I went out to Sigma Delt. Like, I didn't want to be drinking or playing Pong. But I just felt if I wanted to—that that's where I could find more women without men.

PHARES: So how do you think all of this lined up with MAV.

ROSENBLUM: Lined up with what?

PHARES: MAV.

ROSENBLUM: Oh.

PHARES: Gosh, what did you call it? We all use acronyms now, and I don't even know the real name.

ROSENBLUM: [Chuckles.]

PHARES: Do-do-do. Violence.

ROSENBLUM: Oh, MAV, Mentors Against Violence?

PHARES: Yes. Thank you.

ROSENBLUM: Meaning why did I join that?

PHARES: Kind of like your relationship with men and how you viewed all of that. How do you think that possibly lined up or why you decided to join MAV.

ROSENBLUM: Oh. I think I wanted to be a SAPA—like, the Sexual Assault Prevention [sic; Sexual Assault Peer Alliance], but I didn't

have time. I had missed, like, their last training. And Mentors Against Violence was just starting up. If I remember correctly, I knew the people who were starting it, and it felt like a more general approach. And at the time—so I was directing the Prison Project at the—at the women’s prison in Windsor.

A few of those women were actually queer. And almost all of them, maybe ninety percent of the women I worked with—and all they talked about of the other women in the institution were in there because of some guy. So either there was intimate partner violence and they were defending themselves, or they had, you know, sold drugs or passed a note for a guy, or they had written a bad check for a guy or their dad or their brother. And so I just was in this place of, you know, *How do I—yeah, how do I fight and support women?*

I’ve never experienced violence against me, so, you know, it doesn’t—it didn’t bring me trauma to—you know, to be able to counsel others. And so I joined MAV, and they did some cool things. I think there were some trainings for—for men in fraternities. We had something to do with—with revamping the—the trainings giving to the first-years. And it was just like-minded people.

But I saw that as—I saw that as, like, different from—it didn’t feel, like, connected to gay community or anything like that. It just felt like something, you know, sort of like through the women’s and gender department [sic; women’s, gender, & sexuality studies department], something to do to feel like I was making a difference. And I probably joined that, like, maybe the end of my sophomore year or sophomore summer or something like that.

PHARES: Gotcha.

So can we talk about your relationships, possibly?

ROSENBLUM: Sure. Sorry, I was taking a drink. [Chuckles.] Yeah. Well, I—so I came out, you know, pretty deep into my—my—my time at college, so I—I was seeing AT, and it came out that she was actually dating a girl in our sorority who was not out yet, and so it was sort of a secret relationship, and I just didn’t



want to be part of any drama. Like, I had finally come out, and I was, like, *I'm not goin' back in*. So that—that quickly fizzled.

And then I—I came back to New York a bunch, and my closest friend from high school had finally come out to me when I came out to her, and so we would go out to—to bars in New York and gay nights. And I met this girl [Erica] at a—at a—at Mason [The Mason Jar], this bar in Midtown [Manhattan]. And she was dating somebody, and she ended up breaking up with her. And so we started dating, and she lived in Westchester [New York]. And so I remember taking a few—I was so busy at that time on campus—I remember taking, like, a few overnight drives, where I would—I would leave at noon, get to her place, hang out, leave her place at, like, four a.m., and drive back up to campus. So that was happening for a little while.

I started dating somebody who had recently graduated, who was actually my supervisor in my role in the admissions office. I won't—I won't name who they are to protect identities. But that was a really cool relationship for me because I was dating somebody who was—was in Hanover but was living off campus and who would, like, have a real life, and hang out with friends and cook in their home.

And by that point, I was, like, over the Dartmouth bubble and the dating scene there, and so this felt real. And we could go out to Yama [Restaurant] in Lebanon [New Hampshire] or wherever it was. And we could, like, have a real life.

And so we took some weekend trips. Like, we—we stayed at one of the Dartmouth cabins. I think we went—we went somewhere—somewhere else. I can't quite remember if it was Bos- —yeah, it was Boston [Massachusetts]. We went to see Ani DiFranco in concert, and we hung out with this other person who lived in Boston, who had worked at Dartmouth.

And her world was just like all the graduate students and the staff, and that was a new world for me, and I always loved hanging out with older—older people than me. So that was a cool time. But then we started—became more friends than anything else.

And then just a couple of smaller, like—oh, sorry.

PHARES: How old were they?

ROSENBLUM: They were two years older than me, two or three, yeah. I mean two classes.

PHARES: So they were in '05?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah.

PHARES: Okay. And they were on campus, working in the admissions office.

ROSENBLUM: Right.

PHARES: Okay. Keep going on what you're saying, sorry I interrupted you.

ROSENBLUM: And so—yeah, and then I started dating—I—I went home again, and I met one of my sister's friend's older sister, Corinne [spelling unconfirmed], and she's about—she's turning forty so I think she's six years older than me. So at the time, she was, like, twenty-seven or twenty-eight. And so much more, like, you know, stable and set in her life than anybody I knew on campus. And so we started dating. So she visited me a couple times on campus, and I went home, and that was really fun, and it was cool to, again, be with somebody who, you know, wasn't in the Dartmouth scene.

And then I started hooking up with my—my friend Amber [E. Kelsie, Class of 2007], who was the president of Tabard. And we had been friends for a while, and that was more of, like, an intellectual crush. Like, she's brilliant. We had so many interesting conversations until late in the night. She taught me so much. She made me more radical. She made me think differently. And I was super into that more than anything.

So that was my—yeah, that was my—my time on campus. And—and I wasn't trying to really date anybody seriously. I was so busy. I also knew I was going to move to San Francisco [California]. I had visited it once on my own. And I

just loved it there. And I guess a rumor started that I was going to live on a lesbian commune there, which I loved. I loved that rumor and that people really believed it. But I wasn't. I was just—I was just moving there. I was going to find a job.

But I knew I was moving across country, so I wasn't trying to have any ties to keep me—to keep me, you know, on the East Coast, and I definitely didn't want to move home, so—but by the time senior year started, I was ready for it to be over, and I wanted to be on my own.

PHARES: You don't have to give it to me if you don't want to, but do you know what Amber's last name was?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, yeah, Amber Kelsie, K-e-l-s-i-e. She was an '07. We're still friends. She's brilliant. You should do an oral history with her. It would be fascinating.

PHARES: Yeah, you should tell her to sign up.

ROSENBLUM: [Chuckles.] It's very hard to get her to commit to anything. This is the kind of person she is. But I will—I will give it my best go.

PHARES: And do you have, like, a—

ROSENBLUM: She was actually—she was almost the reason I didn't get my diploma, because she actually—I had given her these graphic novels that I'd gotten from the library. I was, like, the only person who used the library for—for fun. And I got these graphic novels, like, on interlibrary loans. She borrowed them. She lost them, and we come to find out that they're each work, like, \$1,000 because they were—they're not in print anymore, and they're very old and hard to find. And neither of us had that money. And so I had to do some shifty things with somebody I knew who worked in the library to get them checked back in. And then eventually, when she moved out of campus, months after graduation she located them. So they're in the right hands now, but they were going to withhold my diploma if I did not—if I did not return the money or the books.

PHARES: Do you have a general timeline of all of these relationships?

ROSENBLUM: Oh, gosh, I'd have to remember. So—so AT and I started—we're—we're—I met her junior winter. Junior spring, I—I turned twenty-one that April and—and likely went home that spring break. So I think that's when I met Erica [spelling unconfirmed], who had lived in Westchester, and I was seeing her through the—the summer, when I worked on campus as a senior intern, for admissions.

And right after the summer, I started dating the person I worked with, and we were seeing each other through the end of January and then kind of on and off in the spring.

And in the spring, at kind of the same time, I—I started seeing Amber, and I—I believe I met Corinne probably around February or early March of my senior year.

Super-short relationships that felt like [chuckles]—that felt like heartbreakers at the time, but they were probably, like, a few months each.

PHARES: Do you think you got a lot—a lot out of them?

ROSENBLUM: I learned a little bit about what I didn't want. I—I—I felt in a couple of instances like I was being controlled. And I think I was maybe susceptible to that because I was just so grateful to have—to have somebody interested in me. I'd gone so long without dating, and seeing my friends date, and I really wanted that. So I was willing to set some things aside to get it.

And a couple of the people were, like, you know, very controlling: wanted to make the decisions, kind of put me down. But nothing major. I really liked that especially with Amber, and it was mostly because we were basically just friends, but that it felt very equal, and that she lifted me up, and she—she engaged my mind, and it felt more like, *Oh, wow, we could be best friends and also, like, be romantically involved. This is cool.*

PHARES: And so going to the broader Dartmouth community, do you think—I mean compared to now—it seems really progressive? Do you think that, as a whole, is how you describe it?

ROSENBLUM: Dartmouth doesn't feel progressive to me, having lived in San Francisco and New York for so many years, and I go back to campus a couple times a year. But there was some movement while I was there. We—I was part of the committee to bring gender-neutral housing to campus, which I saw as—you know, would be really helpful for queer and trans people. But I don't think that's how it's actually played out.

I think the college might have been the first or second in the Ivies [Ivy League colleges] to do that. And it was just important to them to not be the last, I think. So I'm not sure they were doing it for the right reasons. But we were able to get that done. You know, I was also part of—my friend, [Timothy A.] "Tim" Andreadis, '07, became the first gay—gay school president of an Ivy League, so that was, like, a really big election.

We had some important—there was a lot of important activism happening, and some got international attention. Like, *The Dartmouth Review* printed a cover with someone who was Native American, who was, like, almost, you know, naked, was violent and holding, like, a knife. And we had a huge rally on campus around that.

And, you know, a townie had yelled the N-word out of a car at a couple of black students, and so we were rallying around that.

There was also a comic strip in *The Dartmouth* that made light of sexual assault in a frat basement. Or not necessarily made light of it but, because it was in a comic strip, it was inherently supposed to be funny. We had a huge rally outside of—of *the Dartmouth* offices and ended up writing some responses there.

So it felt that there were a lot of people who—who believed like me, who were trying to change the campus. And when I joined Phoenix, I came to find out, from one of the—so our two advisers for Phoenix were Xenia Markowitt, who no longer works there, but she was the head of the women's and gender support department. Xenia: X-e-n-i-a Markowitt.

And also—oh, gosh, I’m forgetting her name, the wife of the president at the time, the Dartmouth president, Susan [DeBevoise] Wright, James [E.] Wright’s wife. And we come to find out from Xenia that—that there was sort of a secret society of women professors and staff who were kind of fighting against the establishment. And there were alums who were similarly doing that, and it felt like, “Oh, we didn’t know. We thought we were—we thought we were in this alone. That’s really cool.”

And I had—I also—lastly, I had Michael [A.] Bronski, who was—who was my professor—you know, he was at the time the only queer studies professor. And he brought in—and I can tell you a story about one of the people he brought in, just—now I look back, like, just giants in—in the field. But that—you know, he exposed me to so many things.

And later, I actually founded a nonprofit called Trans Bodies, Trans Selves, and we published a book, [*Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*], and the first person I went to was Michael Bronski.

So I was really, like, awakened on campus, even though the campus itself felt like it was, you know, stuck in—because it’s such a slow-moving, old, white, conservative institution, but it felt like the people on campus were actually very progressive. Meaning my people. Like, the people I spent time with.

PHARES: Yeah. I’m just wondering about this gender revolution particularly, that you mentioned.

ROSENBLUM: Well, I learned about—about, you know, trans people while I was on campus. And one of my acquaintances, who was trans, committed suicide while I was there, and this is so sad, but I—I—I do not recall her name. And we—we were never able to have a memorial for her because the college would not plan it, and I think they said her family didn’t want it. And so we did something on our own.

And around that same time—this is my senior year—I had a friend, Cody [T. Lavendar], who was a ’10, and he had gone—I think he went abroad or he went on a trip, and he—you know, he passed away. And the story they told us was

also very confusing. And similarly, like, the college did not plan a memorial and we had to—we worked with [Pamela S.] “Pam” Misener, who was our—our representative in OPAL [Office of Pluralism and leadership], to—to plan something.

And I just felt—you know, both to me seemed like suicide on a campus that—you know, where there was such—so many resources, so much privilege. We had access to mental health services, even though, you know, sometimes there was a wait list and, you know, maybe you couldn’t go as often as you wanted. There was food.

I knew that DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association, or Dartmouth LGBTQIA+Alum Association] had the Bourne Funds, you know, which was used for a couple of students who lost family support coming out. You know, so that to me felt like a safety net. And I just thought, *If gender identity and sexual orientation issues are—are so major here, what is it like in the rest of the world?*

And, you know, like, language was changing every day. I mean, it still is, but we were always—you know, gender-neutral pronouns weren’t even a thing that was talked about then.

So I moved to San Francisco with the intention of—of doing two things. I knew I wanted to do criminal justice advocacy. It’s the state with the second largest prison population. And I didn’t want to move to Texas. And I also moved there because when I visited, I saw the most openness around gender identity. You know, I met the most trans people. It felt like a very welcoming city, and I wanted to be part of that. And I ended up leading a nonprofit for queer women and trans people there.

So to me, at Dartmouth, I was—it was, like, this microcosm—like, very small subset of, like, what I thought was happening around the rest of the country.

PHARES:

I feel like that’s a good lead into your editorial. What were you—what were you thinking when you—like, what was in your head when you were writing that?

ROSENBLUM: So it's so embarrassing, because I wrote that at three a.m., so the writing is so bad. But what happened was I was at—I was at the Theta formal, and I come to find out that—from somebody who was there, who was on the SEC [senior executive committee]—they told me, “You've been selected as a marshal for graduation.

And I didn't even really want that, because I felt like then I was representing, like, Dartmouth, and I was never pro-Dartmouth. And I was, like, “Well, how did *that* happen?” And they said, you know, “Your friend So-and-so”—I don't remember who. I think my friend Janelle [R.] Braverman [Class of 2007]—“nominated you, and we selected you.” And I'm, like, “I don't even know who's on the SEC. I don't know that they value what I—what I've done on campus.” I think I've done, you know, a lot, but—

So said, “Well, who else is on it?” And they said, “Oh, well, we—we tweaked it so we made it four men, four women.” I said, “Okay.” And I find out that six or seven of the people are white. And I was, like, “So you tweaked this for gender, but you didn't tweak it for race, and now you're asking *me* to be part of this, like, white group of people who have gotten this honor.”

And I was livid. And so I'm going around the formal, talking to everybody about this, and I decide, *I don't know that I want to step down yet, but I'm definitely going to write an op-ed.* And I say it at the table, and I guess one of the girl's boyfriends, who she had brought to the formal, said, “You're going to write an op-ed about that? I'm gonna write an op-ed you know, saying the other side.” And I thought, *Shit! I should not have said this out loud.*

And so by the time I got home, I had to quick write an op-ed so I could be the first one, and I think he—he got it in the next day, and I don't—I don't quite—quite remember what—what that said. It was either published in *The Dartmouth* or it was published in *The Dartmouth Review*.

But my feelings were, just, like, *What is this world I'm living in, where they think that's okay?*—that we elected this group in the SEC, who I didn't even remember—I'm sure I voted, because I believe in voting. But for the mostly white group.



And then they felt it was okay to elect this majority white group.

And we were not majority people of color. I think they—I don't know, maybe last year Dartmouth hit that mark; I'm not positive—or getting close to it. But—but we were probably about thirty-five or forty percent. And so that just seemed to me to be totally, you know, racist and also mind-boggling.

PHARES: So first I should clarify. This is her piece called, "Gratitude and Curiosity," published in *The Dartmouth* on May 7, 2007.

So yeah, I think this is actually really interesting, and I want to know what you think about or if you think about maybe being picked because of your identity or something like that. Like, I know they don't particularly have quotas anymore, but, like, affirmative action type stuff. I feel like that was a little present here, from—like, from what you said.

ROSENBLUM: Like, was I picked as a marshal because I was queer?

PHARES: Yeah. Or, like, you know, like, kind of. Like you said, they're cherry-picking or, like, four women and four men. And it's, like, do you think the women would have been picked if they didn't care about appearances?

ROSENBLUM: Right. Yeah. No. Sorry, I forgot that. I definitely believed I was picked because I was queer. I—I think if I was a white straight woman having done all the things I'd done, I don't think I would have gotten picked, and I didn't have any close friends on the SEC.

And as I wrote in that article, there was one other person who was queer in this group, who was either a flag bearer or a speaker, and I can't remember who that is, but I remember thinking I was the one who was—where my queerness was connected to activism, you know, whereas—whereas that—that person did other things on campus.

But I definitely felt like—yeah, yeah, in addition to gender, there—there was a feeling of, like, "Oh, this is that person." And Nicole Mahr, my freshman roommate, was chosen as well. And I felt actually like, you know—and she was a very open-minded person, but she was very involved in the

Christian groups on campus, like The Navigators. And had [recording glitch; unintelligible]. “Oh, she’s filling that niche.”

And I mean, it was so cool, because we got to be the first and second people to get our degrees confirmed—conferred during graduation. We were the first two people called up because we were in the front row, because we were both marshals. And so we were on stage together, getting our degrees, and that was awesome.

But I just didn’t understand why we had marshals at all and why it had to be elected in, like, a popularity contest. And it brought back for me running for student government in high school, where I was trying to change my high school and the popularity practice. So ran for president for four years, and I didn’t get it the first three, and then I finally got it my senior year. Because they were, like, “Uch, well, Amanda is the only one who’s gonna do any of the work, so we’ll—we’ll elect her.”

So, it was like, this was the first time I felt I was, like, chosen on some popularity contest, but it didn’t feel good because it didn’t feel like a group that was diverse enough to be proud—that I could be proud to be a part of.

PHARES: For the record, can you explain what a class marshal is?

ROSENBLUM: So the class marshals would lead the rows during graduation. So we would walk first, in front of our rows. There were eight—eight rows of—of people walking in. And then we would seat everybody, so we would count and, like, “Okay, there are fifteen seats in this row.” You go in, you get people moving quickly, and then, “Okay, you’re the next row.” So this very, like, weird logistical task. But in all the photos for graduation, we—we walk in first, you know, so you see all of our faces.

PHARES: And why—what did it mean to get picked? Or, like, why were people picked?

ROSENBLUM: People were picked to sort of represent the class. Like, you know, they’re not the people with the best grades. That’s the valedictorian and salutatorian. They’re not the people we—we need to hear a speech from. That was another girl, who

everyone was interested to hear what she would say. But these are people who represent kind of like, I guess, the best of the class in terms of, you know, their commitment to academics and enrichment and—and have led our class in some sort of meaningful way.

PHARES                    So moving to after college, what did—what did you do? What was your first—

ROSENBLUM:            I—yes. I moved to San Francisco, and I had actually saved all my money from—from those three jobs on campus, and so I didn't work for a c- —for I think two months, and so I became on the steering committee for the California Coalition for Woman Prisoners, which would do visitations to women's prisons and advocate for—for mental and physical health and release for the women there.

And then I—I became involved with this—with organizations through the [San Francisco] LGBT Center and eventually led that group, called Center Women Presents. And that was a group of—community building for queer women and trans people. So I did that.

And then I starting temping at nonprofits, and I eventually got a job as an education life coach for students who were in college but were non-traditional college aged or veterans or formerly incarcerated or who had disabilities and were going to school online. And so I was coaching them to—you know, around social and emotional wellness and finances and academics to retain in college.

PHARES:                    So do you think—it sounds like—do you think a lot of your identity influenced what you chose to do?

ROSENBLUM:            Absolutely. I never would have—if I didn't have the, like, self-reliance and—and—I was, like, committed to my mission, so much so that I moved to San Francisco on my own, not—not knowing many people there, though my friend, John [E.] Valdez [Class of 2007], who was one of the members of that Gile group from my first year, had—had by now come out as gay, and he was from San Francisco, and he was going to be living there. So I had him.

But I—you know, I got—I got an apart- —a—a—a room in an—in an apartment in this polyamorous household, off of course, craigslist, and they said it was in Mission [District]; it was actually in Excelsior [District], which is, like, the outer, outer, outer mission.

I knew nothing, but I did know I could do anything—like, I thought, from Dartmouth, I could do anything I set my mind to. *My convictions are correct. I'm—I'm—I'm trying to serve the people who are most in need*, which to me were trans people of color, specifically trans women of color, specifically those without access to housing, and people who were incarcerated, who—who were female identified. I just thought, *If I—if I do that, like, my life has—has meaning and purpose, and I can—you know, it will have all been worth it, like this time I spent at Dartmouth.*

PHARES: So you seem to be pretty involved, still, with Dartmouth. You're vice president of DGALA? Or—

ROSENBLUM: Yes.

PHARES: Yeah, so—and you are—serve as the Women of Dartmouth national committee for community development—first, can I ask what that means?

ROSENBLUM: [Laughs.] I know. These are two meaningless roles. And I was not involved with Dartmouth for—for about eight years or so. But, yeah, I became involved in these two groups when I moved back to New York. So I was dating somebody who had gone to the Dartmouth Medical School Dartmouth Medical School [now the Audrey and Theodor Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth], and we met, like, a day before my graduation. Or—no. Well, we met before that, but a day before my graduation, I found out she was going to be doing rotations in San Francisco at a gender identity clinic, and so we were dating three years long distance, and ultimately I ended up moving back to New York.

And I had no community here. And so I joined DGALA, where some of my friends were on the board. And that led me to, like, ultimately this leadership role and also to being the Women of Dartmouth liaison.

And so as chair of global community development, we have nine or ten regions around the world, and it's my goal to ensure there's leadership for those regions, that they have diverse events and programming, that they're attracting diverse people, that we're working with affiliated groups, that we're doing some advocacy work—you know, some—some—some other—you know, we also plan the Day of Service. Those kind of things.

PHARES: So how involved is that job, or position?

ROSENBLUM: Probably more involved than I have time for. It's a lot of, like, connecting with people. Like, I just found the new chair for New York, and, you know, on-boarding her and supporting her. And I'm doing the same for San Francisco. It's a lot of, like, phone calls. And, you know, sometimes we get together, so there's lots of events I go to, which is really fun. We have some summits in Hanover.

But it's defin- —I'm definitely, like, back into the Dartmouth world. And because of DGALA, I'm now on the [Dartmouth] Alumni Council. But what I like about this work is that I get to meet really cool people from various backgrounds and ages, from the Dartmouth alumni/ae universe. And, you know, it's not like when you're in college, you only have people your age, but I work—where I work and I've been for eight years, it is a lot of people my age.

And there's just something about the people who graduated from Dartmouth—it's just people are doing really cool things. There's a lot of authors. There's a lot of founders of—of organizations. There's a lot of inspiring people. So that has been cool. But I—I will—I will happily give up the leadership opportunities as soon as somebody else comes along ready to do them.

PHARES: How would you describe yourself at Dartmouth compared to now?

ROSENBLUM: Well, I think was very scared at Dartmouth. I just wanted to be accepted. I feel more self-assured now. How can I explain this? Well, so—I was telling you—so in Michael Bronski's class, we had—we had Amber [L.] Hollibaugh visit, and she is a famous activist. She started Queers for

Economic Justice. And she's also like, a famous fem, so she's written some kind of like sexy manifestos around the butch fem dynamic.

And—and I remember, like, she wanted to go get coffee. I took her to Novack Café. And we're waiting in line at Novack, and I just thought, *Like, this is so cool. I'm meeting somebody who's, like, you know, such a gi- —such an amazing activist.* And she looked at me, and she just said, "Us fems have to stick together, right, honey?" And sort of like gave me a shoulder tap or high five.

And I just didn't know what to say, because at the time, I was—I was very into not identifying as fem. Like, you know, I have a shape-shifting identity. I get to decide. But she said to that me. I just wanted to be accepted and loved by her, because I just look up to her.

And so I knew that that was not right, but I also didn't want to offend her, and so I just said something like, "Yeah, sure we do." And then I just kept kicking myself about it later, because I was, like, *Now, she doesn't really know me. We didn't get to complicate that thought of hers.* I never thought I could call out somebody who I thought of as brilliant.

And now I definitely would I would have said, "Well, what—what makes you—you know, what makes you think I'm fem?" And, like, approached it with curiosity and, like, learning moments, and I really value people teaching me and being able to, like, have hard conversations. I don't feel like I have to be loved by everybody.

Through—when I—when I started *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* and we wrote the book, we—we had about, you know, two or three hundred people involved in that process, and there were a lot of people with very differing opinions. And we sort of had to, like, take in opinions but also stick to our convictions. Otherwise, nothing gets done. Like, you're just always in that mess of—you know.

So, like, understanding, you know, that I have a point of view and that could be—that could be complicated by people, and that's okay, but ultimately, like, if we want change, you know, some things have to happen. And I could be the one to do

that. Like, I don't have to call on anybody else. And I'm the one. And I—I—my voice is important.

So I think—I think I've come some way from Dartmouth, but I have most of the beliefs that I—like my political beliefs? I have pretty much the same ones that I had when I was a student.

PHARES: So since you're still pretty involved in Dartmouth, what do you think about it now and what it's become?

ROSENBLUM: It's hard to tell, a little bit, because they distance the alumni/ae from the students. They really don't want us to be interacting with students somewhere on campus. I think they're afraid of what we'll say or do. It's hard to get the real story and not, like, the packaged story.

You know, I was—I was really behind the—you know, I joined DGALA when we were opening Triangle House, and we had big dreams for what that would bring to the campus, and I'm not sure that it has. Maybe it wasn't needed in the way that we had envisioned it as being the kind of like community—safe community center hub. And not that it had to be, like, a safe space, but that it could be, like, a brave space that people would go and know that they could—that they could engage with people and—and, like, be who they are or want to be.

And then also—yeah, also on DGALA we—when we launched SpeakOut, and hoping to—to bring back people who had really, really difficult experiences on campus and be able to talk about those.

But—but because of this experience with the lawsuit this year and—and forcing anonymous plaintiffs to reveal themselves, and even this last statement from [Philip J.] Hanlon [Class of 1977] about the mediation and it being very much about the change the college is going to make, instead of empathy for—for the survivors and their bravery and everything that they've been put through, and the fact that this class will—will only, you know, bring some justice to the—the women who were affected by these three professors and not to anybody else, and knowing that the

psychology department has almost no women tenured professors.

And I'm very close with a couple of professors on campus, especially Melissa [F.] Zeiger in the English department. And I know that the professors are—are pushing back against the college administration. But I just think that that is still a very backward place.

But now we're twelve years after I graduated there, and so there is, you know, so much more visibility in—in the world and in media for—for—for queer and trans people, and I know that Dartmouth is no longer in that bubble. Like, people access the internet and use their phones and everything outside of campus. So of course, like, people who are students today, you know, are—are—are very different than who we were before, because it's just a different world.

And I guess the last thing I'll say is just, like, since [President Donald J.] Trump has been elected, I know there's been, you know, important calls to protect undocumented students on campus. And coming from New York City, where in our public schools, the schools I work in, we—we protect undocumented students. The City University system pays financial aid for undocumented students. Like, it just seems—you know, things like that just seem so backward for a college with so many resources to not be doing the right things.

PHARES: Are you still in contact with people from Dartmouth and, like, the queer community from when you were in school?

ROSENBLUM: Yeah, I'm friends with, you know, a lot of the same people, some of the same staff members. You know, definitely Michael Bronski and—who else? Pam Misener, for sure, who was our OPAL contact

PHARES: Is there any—first, would you do it again? Would you go back to Dartmouth if you had to?

ROSENBLUM: Well, I do college counseling, and, you know, I just think there's no right fit for students. Like, I think most colleges have the same, you know, strengths and challenges, and no place is perfect. But over all, I do think that I was pushed in



the right ways. I think I also got lucky, and maybe that was just because I didn't spend time in frats, or around peop- — you know, certain groups of people. I don't know.

But I think I—I—also as a white woman, you know, I—I didn't have—I didn't experience personal discrimination or violence. So for me, you know, it was better. But a lot of my friends did. And I think that was really hard for me to see. I also think that's true on many campuses.

So I'd likely do it again. I don't think I would ever send a child there, or I don't recommend it to my students, but some of my students do attend the, like, fly-in program for low-income students from the cities, and if they fall in love with the campus, like, I'm not going to stop them. So some of my students have gone to Dartmouth, and some have had really good experiences, especially, like, coming from the Bronx to—to Dartmouth. It's a culture shock. But they've been grateful for everything they're given there.

So, you know,—you know, like, I'm trying to, in my alumni/ae work make it better for my students who were there, but I would never send a child.

PHARES: So what advice would you give to someone like me, then?

ROSENBLUM: Well, I wrote this—so I don't think you guys still have it, but we had *The Dartmouth Free Press* when I was there, and I wrote this piece when I graduated. I think they asked ten people to write—write features or something like that. And I remember—I can't remember the words I used, but I think I wrote something like, you know, "Treat—treat Dartmouth like a map, where you can, you know, choose—choose where you want to go and where you don't." And that that's totally okay. And that you can have spaces you feel comfortable and you don't have to be forced into spaces or not, and you get to decide that. Because I think some of that is like a mob mentality, especially the first year. And, like, "We're all gonna do this" and "We all go out" and all that.

So I—I definitely think, in a—in a school I think of it as large enough, that there are—there's somebody who had everyone's same passions and points of view and who can—who can, you know, be your friendship soul mate and

who can make you feel comfortable. And so the challenge is definitely finding those people. But—then not feeling like you have to spend time with people who—who you don't feel good around or who don't make you feel like yourself or don't make you feel like a better version of yourself.

And I definitely took advantage of spending time with grad students. Like, grad students are people too. [Chuckles.] And a lot of them had not gone to college at Dartmouth, and it just gave me a different perspective about how it—how it could be.

And—and professors as well, you know, many of whom had not gone to Dartmouth for college and had lived many years and now had tenure but knew the—knew the challenges there and, like, they would be able to echo what students were saying. Like, “You guys are right, yes.” And that felt really good. So, you know, hanging around people who are not just undergrads.

PHARES: Well, I've really enjoyed talking to you. Is there anything else you'd want to talk about or add?

ROSENBLUM: No. I've loved talking to you. Thank you for letting me tell my story and reminisce a bit. And I so appreciate the work you're doing.

PHARES: Yeah. Well, I am not exactly sure about the timeline of when this will be up [on the website], but I am sure they will let you know or let me know so I can let you know.

ROSENBLUM: Okay. [Chuckles.]

PHARES: Well, I really appreciate talking to you. I've had a great time getting to know you and hearing your story. Do you have any questions?

ROSENBLUM: So what—what year—you're a '20, '21?

PHARES: I'm a '21.

ROSENBLUM: A '21, okay. And I would just say, I'd love to—you know, I don't want to make you record your—your story, but I'd love to meet you. I'm coming to campus for the club officer's

weekend in mid-September, and coming back for Alumni Council in October—or, no, November. And if you ever come to New York, I'd love to take you for coffee and get to know you.

PHARES: Yeah. Well, I really appreciate it. And, yeah, thank you so much.

ROSENBLUM: You too. All right.

PHARES: Have a good day.

ROSENBLUM: You too. Okay, bye, Kirby.

PHARES: Goodbye.

[End of interview.]