Carol Cosenza
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[ANNE Y.]

PINKNEY: Good afternoon. It is Mach 27th, 2019, and I'm interviewing Carol Cosenza for SpeakOut. My name is Anne [Y.] Pinkney and I'm located in the Rauner Special Collections Library in Hanover, New Hampshire, and Carol is located in Boston, Massachusetts.

So I think just to start off this interview, if you could just tell us a little bit about where and when you were born and what it was like growing up for you.

COSENZA: Sure. I was born in Leominster, Massachusetts. I had probably a pretty basic childhood. I have one younger sister. She's four and a half years younger than me. And I was always—you know, I liked school. I was always pretty good at school. And when I was in junior high, we moved to Texas. My dad's job moved us to Texas. We moved to Arlington, and that's where I did eighth grade through twelfth grade.

And I kind of knew already when I—when I got there that I was not going to stay in Texas. I—you know, I moved in eighth grade. I didn't want to go, you know. It seemed like a horrible thing to happen to me, that I would have to leave my friends and my school. And it turned out totally fine, even though once I got there, I knew that I wasn't ever going to stay there. I knew I would come back up here to college.

And that's kind of—I mean, I don't know. What else would you like to know?

PINKNEY: Yeah, sure thing. I think just for the record, what year were you born in?

COSENZA: Sure. I was born in 1965.

PINKNEY: Gotcha. What did—what did your parents do for a living?

COSENZA: My mom was a teacher, an elementary school teacher. My dad worked in a company that made plastic things. He was—started in the manufacturing, but then he ended up in the office, doing finance and stuff. Things like the milk carton crates, the little plastic sweater boxes, that kind of plastic. Leominster, Massachusetts, is actually known as the [Pioneer] Plastics City, and that's what my—you know, my dad did.

PINKNEY: The Plastics City. That's funny.

COSENZA: It is.

PINKNEY: Yeah.

COSENZA: Actually they have a plastics museum [the National Plastics Center and Museum].

PINKNEY: Oh, no kidding!

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: So what was—what was your relationship like with your parents?

COSENZA: I think I had a pretty good relationship, have a pretty good relationship with them. You know, I was a, you know, typical kid, I think. I was not ram- —you know, sort of too rebellious. I did drama and speech when I was in—in high school, so we would go—I would go to speech tournaments and stuff. I was always a little younger—I actually skipped a grade when I was in elementary school, so I was always younger than my peers. So I was—you know, I didn't have a license when all my friends did, so basically, you know, I just sort of hung out with the older kids most of the time.

PINKNEY: No kidding. I also skipped a grade, not that it's—this is not about me, but that's funny. I have a very similar experience. Yeah, it's kind of weird growing up with people that are a little bit older than you, but you kind of get accustomed to it after a while.

COSENZA: Yeah, definitely.

PINKNEY: So what was that like for you in elementary school and in middle school? You mentioned you skipped a grade in elementary school, so what was that transition like as you grew older?

COSENZA: Well, the transition—I mean, because it happened so young, basically I did second and third grade in one year. So I was with the same kids forever, so it really wasn't a big, obvious switch for me. I was probably always a little more mature. I think girls are often more mature than boys, especially in the younger grades, so it wasn't—you know, I wasn't going into something I didn't understand or, you know, I wasn't in high school at age seven or anything weird. You know, I was just always just a little bit younger.

PINKNEY: Right. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what your favorite subjects in school were. I notice you were—you're a psychology major at Dartmouth, and so what kind of got you exposed to that field, or what especially you were you interested in in high school?

COSENZA: Hmm. Good question. I don't know. My favorite subjects probably were—[pause]—in high school. That's—I—I guess I haven't thought about this in a really long time. I mean, I was good at math. I was in—you know, I—I was in—I liked my English classes. I mean, I wasn't actually a standout in anything. I was pretty good overall. I ended up—I was salutatorian in my class. So, you know, I was just pretty good at a lot of things, as opposed to being super at one thing.

You know, I took—one thing that was different when we moved down is—in terms of, like, what language classes I could take—so in high—in Massachusetts, in seventh and eighth grades, you could take a language, so I had taken French. And when then I moved to Texas, you couldn't take a language until ninth grade. So that was a little odd. So that put me a little ahead because I didn't—when I took French in—in ninth grade, I had already—I knew a little more than most of the other folks, which is odd, thinking about taking French in Texas, but—I probably should have moved to Spanish, but instead went into Latin, so I have—so I took Latin classes as well.

But, yeah, I always noticed—part of the reason I knew I was never going to stay in Texas was the—sort of the—the political mindset of most of everyone I was meeting down there. So I kind of—I kind of knew if I just held on, I could come back here to where I thought people understood things better. And, you know, I—I mean, I remember actually going to class on a Monday and having a kid talk about having gone to a [Ku Klux] Klan rally over the weekend, which just was sort of mind-blowing to me. I didn't—I could not unders-—it was just not anything I understood.

You know, and I—and I guess I probably always had a little bit of a political bent. For example, one of my science projects, I did a survey where, you know, I asked everyone a whole bunch of questions, and then basically, you know, with a back board—a backdrop was going to be—of the survey was going to be, you know, how people answered: what percent said whatever.

And I think one of the questions was something about living together—you know, being unmarried and living together, or having—you know, something about sex or living together. And I don't even remember what the question was, but I remember my science teacher saying that I couldn't put that question on my science project, on the—on the bulletin board. And I couldn't understand why. And they just said, you know, "We can't have that kind of thing in class." So I instead wrote this big "censored"—the word "censored" and put it over the survey instead.

PINKNEY: Oh, wow. Yeah, it definitely sounds like a really different environment for you,—

COSENZA: It—

PINKNEY: —especially transferring in middle school. And how—how did your parents kind of react when you moved down to Arlington?

COSENZA: You know, it—it was sort of—I think it was what it was. I mean, it had to be—you know, for my dad's job, either was we either moved or, you know, probably he would never, you know, get promoted or move ahead or anything like that. And, you know, he moved within the same company, so

there was actually a group of folks who he kind of knew from, you know, New England when we moved down there, so it wasn't—you know, we weren't totally isolated. There were—there *were* other folks.

And, you know, and like I said, they—they seemed to do okay. I—I got involved in, you know, speech and drama. My sister was young enough that she—you know, she probably considers herself a Texan. I mean, she's been there since she was, you know, seven, so she—you know, she adapted well. I just sort of knew I was never going to stay there.

PINKNEY: How do you think that this idea that, like, Texas was not the place you were going to end up kind of started? In addition to, like, the whole difference in political mindset, what do you think really started that idea that this was not the place for you, at such a young age?

COSENZA: Well, I mean, I origi- —I mean, I originally didn't want to be there in the first place. I didn't want to move in the first place. I mean, that was sort of—you know. So I kind of—it—it would have had to overcome a lot to make we want to stay there. And it just—it wasn't anything—you know, it wasn't anything that I thought I understood it as what life was like or what school was like or—you know, the school still had corporal punishment when I was there. It was just like—it just seemed like this weird, barbaric place to be, and I just didn't ever want to stay there.

PINKNEY: Yeah, I mean, that's—

COSENZA: I loved—

PINKNEY: No, sorry, you go ahead. That's pretty understandable [chuckles], with corporal punishment.

COSENZA: I mean, I loved my—I loved my friends. I—I, you know, have an amazing group of friends, some who I'm still—you know, talk to a lot and still consider my friends. But it wasn't—you know, I just didn't think I was ever going to stay there.

PINKNEY: What types of communities were you exposed to in Massachusetts that were not existent in Texas?

COSENZA: Hmm. Good question. I mean, I think for me, Massachusetts was just more of my home and my family. I mean, my grandparents were here, my aunts and uncles and cousins were, you know, in Massachusetts, so, I mean, I think part of it was—was just that. It wasn't—I—I—there wasn't any—you know, I didn't do speech or debate or anything like that or any sort of extracurriculars, really, in—you know, I left in eighth grade. I'm not—and I didn't play sports. I didn't do any of that stuff ever. That was just never my—my thing.

But, you know, I—I think the communities I found in Texas that I ended up, you know, becoming part of, you know, were—were great. I mean, these were, you know, friends who are lifelong friends, who understood me. You know, I didn't realize then that, you know, some of—some of the kids in my group were gay. You know, I've—I've always sort of been an ally in that sense, in high school, not knowing the words, because I don't know if they existed then.

But—yeah, I didn't really know much about the gay community at all. I mean, you know, we're talking at—at that point, things like—you know, there were—there were movies that were coming out. I knew that I had friends—you know, by senior year, I kind of knew that some of my friends were gay. I didn't realize—you know, I sort of didn't learn until college that some of my best friends were gay, you know, when they actually realized that they needed to or wanted to or could come out. So, I mean, I—I've always had, you know, felt like, my finger on—on the fringe of the gay community.

And when I got to college—I don't know if it's time to jump to Dartmouth yet, but at that point, it was more of a political—a political stance rather than any other stance. I mean, I was—I—you know, it was more the—you know, seeing the injustices that were involved. I—I did a lot of work in—you know, I did Amnesty International, I did all of the shanties, I did, you know, anti-apartheid stuff, I did women's issues stuff—I mean, a lot of other stuff.

And for me, you know, working with the GSA [Gay Students Association] and being part of that in a way was political and in a way was my life. I mean, these were—these were folks who—you know, my best friends.

PINKNEY: Absolutely.

I think—so we're going to transition to Dartmouth. I think it's a beautiful transition as it is right now. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your world view going into Dartmouth. You mentioned that you kind of knew—you had this kind of consciousness of—of certain things in Texas not really fitting with your own political beliefs.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: So what do you think your world view was in 1982, when you came to Dartmouth?

COSENZA: Hmm. I probably had a pretty sheltered world view. I—you know, I was definitely a—a, you know, black-and-white kind of person. There was good people and bad people. There was good—you know, you could do good, you could do bad. You know, it took me probably several years to realize that actually the world is pretty gray out there and that, you know, there's not going to be anyone that you totally agree with on everything.

But I—I, you know, assumed that people wanted to do good in the world, that—that people wanted people to be happy. I mean, I just—the—the idea that there was—that—that things would be consciously what I consider, you know, bad—I don't think I—you know, I didn't quite grasp that. I didn't understand that part.

You know, and I—you know, and I often said, you know, after my four years at Dartmouth, I think if I had gone to a different school, like a school in the city, in a city, if I had went to Columbia [University] or, you know, somewhere here in Boston, I think I would be a totally different person.

By being who I was at Dartmouth, I was immediately on the far left of things, you know, and in a way, they pushed me, you know, to the wall. They might have even pushed me further to the left. But if I was in a place where it wasn't as isolated and there was more stuff going on—Dartmouth was pretty isolated back then—I think I would have—you know, if I had gone to a more urban—if I was in a more urban

environment, I think I would probably be just middle of the road. I think I would just sort of be, you know, average politically.

I mean, Dartmouth made me who I am, you know, which is democratic socialist on most days, democratic on my—my driver's—on my voting records. But, yeah, I—I don't think—if I didn't have to be as political as I was at Dartmouth—as I was, I probably—if—I don't know if I'm not—not making sense.

PINKNEY: No, you are. Keep going.

COSENZA: Yeah. Yeah, Dartmouth made me more political because of the situation it was.

PINKNEY: Yeah. Totally.

COSENZA: It was still—

PINKNEY: No, continue.

COSENZA: It was still—it was still ten years—you know, women had only just graduated in the Class of '86—you know, '76 was the first graduating class of women, if I'm not mistaken. You know, and I was there in '82. I mean, it was still overwhelmingly male. It was still—women were still seen as invaders on—on this campus, especially by—by alumni.

You know, there was—there was, you know, the anti-apartheid stuff going on. There was ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. You know, do we bring ROTC back to campus? There was the Indian symbol. I mean, there was just so many things where, you know, you just—I had—you know, I felt like I was holding an awful lot of banners.

PINKNEY: Right. Yeah.

I was wondering, what were your first few months like at Dartmouth? You ment- —like, women had only been at the college for ten years.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: So what was it like, those first few months, when you were transitioning into your freshman year?

COSENZA: So I lived in a cluster, the River Cluster, because—which—which ended up being a place where a lot of public school kids ended up, which we kind of, you know, realized after—after the fact. You know, a lot of us had never really—you know, we didn't have a relationship with Dartmouth before. You know, we were not legacies. We had no idea what the school was really like, and, you know, so we ended up picking our housing based on whatever little blurbs they sent us.

You know, and the blurb for the River Cluster was pretty—you know, it sounded pretty cool. It was one of the newer dorms, and, you know, it sounded really interesting—you know, and sort of never mentioning that it was, you know, totally cinderblock and far away from everything and—you know, we—we just—none of us knew that. So we were all kind of there together, you know.

And, you know, I was—I got involved in Amnesty International pretty quickly. In that—in that first fall, there was—you know, I remember in *The D* [*The Dartmouth*], there was this article—these—these back-and-forth letters with Richard [A.] Hyde, who was the chaplain, [the William Jewett] Tucker [Foundation] chaplain. And it was about gods and gays and—and how does Christianity—how should Christianity handle homosexuality and—you know, this was October. This was, like, you know, two months after I got there that this kind of stuff was going on.

Richard, by the way, is amaz- —I don't know if you know anything about him, but he—he's amazing. And he was—you know, he got a lot of flak from a lot of people on campus for—for, you know, writing the article and the letters and stuff.

But, yeah, it was just sort of—you know, the—the *Dartmouth Review* was in its heyday. And it was just—almost everything I did was a reaction to something. And, yeah, so it was an interesting fall.

PINKNEY: Oh, sounds like it! Sounds like—and we haven't even gotten to what 1984 was like, when all that—yeah.

COSENZA: We're not even at 1984.

PINKNEY: Not even at the spring of 1984. [Chuckles.]

COSENZA: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And—and so actually, just so you know—and maybe we should have done this off—off record, but I have a bunch of articles and newsletters and, you know, original stuff from that time period, and I don't know whether this is only a verbal history. I think it is. But in case you wanted stuff like this, you know, I do have, like, some of the original, you know, GSA stuff floating around here in my file folders, which I could donate if folks wanted or needed them, so that was just a side note.

PINKNEY: Yeah. Well I could put you in contact with [J.] Caitlin Birch, who is the—

COSENZA: Okay.

PINKNEY: —liaison for SpeakOut, and she can definitely talk to you about that. That sounds incredible. So I think—

COSENZA: Okay.

PINKNEY: —good segue into how you got involved with GSA. Like, what year did you start? How did you find out about it? How did you—when did you first become aware that there was the presence of the community on campus?

COSENZA: That's a—yeah.

PINKNEY: Any one of those. [Chuckles.]

COSENZA: That was a good question. Okay. So, let's—okay, so I—I was trying to—I tried to create a timeline before I talked to you so I could get my—my numbers and acts together. You know, I—I don't remember exactly when I knew about the GSA. I do know, for example, that I had a friend who got kicked out of his dorm because people were writing, you know, "faggot" on the door and—and throwing stuff under the door. And he ended up coming to live in the River

Cluster with us. They, you know, took him out of—I think it might have been Richardson [Hall]. It was one of the all-guys dorms. You know, so—

And somehow I seemed to befriend a lot of gay guys, which is not a bad thing, but somehow it happens. So I think just by default, I ended up—and I continued to work in theater for most of my time at Dartmouth. So I had a group of friends who were involved in that.

Before I got there, the year before I got there, *The* [Dartmouth] *Review* had published the names of the officers of—of the GSA. And that caused quite a stir. And I do remember at some point—I'm thinking that it was my—my sophomore year, not my first year, but I do remember that—GSA could not exist as a college organization without at least three or four officers. They needed to have officers. And folks were afraid to put their—you know, to become officers because a lot of folks weren't out.

So I—I was the secretary-treasurer for a while because I didn't mind having my name put on college documents. So I—you know, so I was technically—I was an officer for a while. I think, from my notes that I can find in my fliers, I'm thinking that it was '83, '84 when I was a UGA [undergraduate adviser] and stuff on that year.

So—yeah, so we were—it was really an interesting time. I mean, in my—in my sense, you know, the GSA had—I think they may have had a dance or something my freshman year that I went to, and, you know, it—it was great fun. I mean, I—I knew a lot of folks who were involved. But a lot of—I mean, it wasn't—people weren't out the same way they're out now. And, you know, that was okay.

PINKNEY: Could you talk a little bit more about that—like, what you mean by people were not as out—not out back then as they are now?

COSENZA: Let's see. On campus now, there's—there's, you know, a gay dorm. There are gay pride parades. There are a lot of things that we didn't have then. And it was—a lot of—there weren't a lot of kids who were out in high school, so when you get to college, it's not like there's a long history of, you

know, “Well, I’ve been out since I was eleven” or—you know, there weren’t any, you know, gay student—gay-straight alliances in high schools then.

So things—you know, so folks were coming to college, and a lot of them were afraid to let their family know that they were gay, you know, for fear of having financial assistance cut off, which, you know, happened not only after the Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa] thing but, you know, I—I had a friend whose mother came and, you know, threatened to bring him back home and, you know, not let him stay. And, you know, there were—there was—it was—it was a hard time.

It was, you know, the beginnings of the AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] epidemic, and people weren’t sure what this—you know, what was happening in—in the world. And Dartmouth is really isolated. You know, we would—we would go to—you know, there was—there was a bar in Manchester [New Hampshire] that we would go to every once in a while, but it wasn’t like you could just go out to, you know, a bar down the street like you can do if we were in Boston.

You know, we had fraternities, and we had—you know, and people didn’t necessarily leave on the weekends. You know, Dartmouth was—was pretty closed—a pretty closed environment, and it was hard, I think, for folks to come out.

PINKNEY: Absolutely. Just for the record, were you involved with the Greek system in any capacity?

COSENZA: No. But we did—we did actually all create—again, I think it must have been that—that—that—my sophomore year. We decided that we all wanted to—you know, sort of the shirts that everyone had? So we created—we had—we created Gamma Sigma Alpha—

PINKNEY: [Chuckles.]

COSENZA: They were—it was purple. And we all had our, like,—you know, our names and stuff or some initials or something on the back. So we all wanted—so we all had our own shirts. They were actually pretty. I think I still have mine. Yeah.

PINKNEY: No kidding.

COSENZA: But that was just sort of our fun—it was—it was—yeah.

PINKNEY: Yeah, that's funny. They are ubiquitous, those shirts.

COSENZA: They are.

PINKNEY: Even today.

And I wanted to circle back to something that ties in with the conversation we just had. You kind of mentioned earlier that being gay at Dartmouth or being out was kind of a political stance, and I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about how you saw that in practice at the college.

COSENZA: I don't know if it was a political stance as much—I mean, me being part of GSA was a political stance, because it went along with sort of my other, you know, beliefs of—of folks having a right to be who they are on campus. I don't know whether—I mean, I think it was more an act of courage than it was necessarily a—a political stance.

And I—you know, I think some folks were a little more flamboyant than others at—at points, and I think that's how they survived. And I think, you know, it's sort of the "I'm queer, I'm here" attitude and, you know, "Take me as I am, or don't." You know, I had a friend who had a green Mohawk for a while, and I had friends who, you know, wore, you know, lots of jewelry and fabulous outfits and, you know, all of that kind of stuff.

So I had folks who were really flamboyant, and then I think there were a lot of folks who just wanted to get along, and who they slept with wasn't really who they were in their—you know, in—in—they didn't want to make it about who they were; that was just who they slept with and, you know, why that should alter anything, you know, they didn't understand or didn't necessarily want to understand.

So I think that—I don't know. I—I think it was different for different people and how they wanted—what they wanted out of Dartmouth.

PINKNEY: Absolutely.

I think we've touched on this a little bit with, you know, *The Review* was completely in its heyday with Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985] on campus.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: But I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what the campus climate was like politically and how you felt as a person who was involved with more leftist groups and how Dartmouth kind of pushed you to the left a little bit.

COSENZA: I thought the campus was oppressive. [Chuckles.] I mean, I—I, you know, always said and I still believe that I would not have wanted my sister to go there. I—you know, it was very male dominated. It was very fraternity dominated. People studied hard and then partied hard on the weekend. And I think if you didn't have a clique of some sort, I think it was a very lonely place.

And that clique could be a sports team. It could be the fraternity. It could have been—you know, for me it was—it was drama for a while, and then it was also Dartmouth Community for Divestment and other—other political stuff. But I think if you didn't have a group, it was really hard.

PINKNEY: Absolutely. Yeah.

COSENZA: And I think it was also—I think the isolation added to it. I think the isolation added to how horrible *The Dartmouth Review* could be. I think the idea of the way it was before there were women and out gay people and, you know, all these things that were messing up our—our beautiful campus.

And, you know, that came—and—and that was felt in, you know, professors in the sciences building, who still didn't think that women should be taking a science course. It was—you know, they used to have something called Hums. I don't know if they still do that, but it was where the fraternities would sort of make up songs and—and—and sing on the—you know.

And, again, they were these—these horrible, sexist songs that they were doing for years, so why would they not do that anymore? I mean, when I was there, the—the school song was still “Men of Dartmouth” [now “Alma Mater”]. And, you know, it was—it was not meant for people who were different. And it was—you know, I feel, looking back, I’m pretty blessed that I was there at a time when so much was changing.

You know—I was involved—there was an organization called Dartmouth—oh—Students for Accountability and something, which I can’t remember right now but I can find. And what—you know, it was sort of the beginnings of students wanting to have a voice in—in things that mattered on campus more than, you know, what happened on Fraternity Row.

Tucker Foundation was getting, I think, even more political than it—than it was. I mean, it was hosting—you know, Richard Hyde was there for a wh- —and then James [O.] Freedman was there, both who were really amazing guys who were very helpful to the community, were great resources, provided a safe place for, you know, people to hang out. Yeah, it was—it was very—you had to have someone—you had to have a group, I think.

PINKNEY: Well, that still rings true today, even now.

So I think you’ve mentioned Amnesty International, the Gay-Straight Alliance [Gay Students Association]. Did you mention you were undergraduate adviser—

COSENZA: I was—yes, I was in- —

PINKNEY: —as well?

COSENZA: Yep.

PINKNEY: And you did drama. Were there any other activities you participated in at Dartmouth?

COSENZA: I was in the Women’s Issues League. I did *Stet* for a while, which was the newspaper. What else did I—I think that was—

PINKNEY: That about sums it up?

COSENZA: Oh, I mean, I did student teach. I mean, DCD, the Dartmouth Community for Divestment, took up a good chunk of my last two years. You know, I was a student teacher. My—my—you know, my degree is in psychology, which just seemed to be the thing to do at that point. And I have my—I, you know, got my teaching certification, so I did student—you know, that took up some of my—my senior—junior and senior years.

PINKNEY: What was it like study- —you mentioned that the science departments in particular were a little bit more hostile to women, so what was that like, studying as a psych major?

COSENZA: I don't think most people thought psychology was a science, so, I mean, the psych department was fine. I mean, it was really more the sci- —

PINKNEY: The hard sciences.

COSENZA: —you know, the hard sciences and math. The psychology department was fine. I always spent more time it the ed department that the science—than psychology. I mean, I was only a psychology major because you couldn't major in education.

PINKNEY: Aha.

COSENZA: But I spent a good chunk of my time in—in the ed department.

PINKNEY: Gotcha.

Okay, so I think we'll shift gears a little bit and we'll go to 1984, which was a very eventful year, for a number of reasons, and I was wondering if you could talk to me a little bit about what it was like in the winter of 1984, when the Tri-Kap [Kappa Kappa Kappa] purge happened, which was, for the record, when? Kappa Kappa Kappa.

COSENZA: February—

PINKNEY: Yeah, February 1984, Kappa Kappa Kappa is—takes a vote to force a brother out of Tri-Kap because of his sexuality.

COSENZA: Right. So, yeah. It was really odd, because Tri-Kap was the house that—you know, it had a very large number of gay brothers. It was always a safe house to go to party. And in fact, the person who was expelled was—was their entertainment coordinator. I mean, he—he had his own, you know, disco ball. He used to throw *the* best parties. I mean, he was there—you know, it wasn't just sort of like some random member, which probably is why he—that, you know, he got kicked out.

So, yeah, that time period was really hard because it was so surprising to—to folks. And, like I said, it was—it wasn't happening at one of—you know, it wasn't at the hockey frat, and it wasn't at, you know, any of those other places where it was—you know, you never wanted to go anyway. This was a place that seemed like it was okay.

And I still really have no idea what set it off, you know. They talk about—you know, all the articles afterwards, and everyone always talked about the fact: "Oh, well, they didn't want to become known as the gay house because then, you know, people wouldn't pledge it, and then the house would go under." I mean, it seems like a really, you know, far-fetched reason.

And—and what—I—I—I do not know what happened in—in, you know, February of 1984 that made the—the officers decide that this was the time that we were going to do something. So, you know,—and, again, this is the one point where I'm not sure about, you know, names and stories, so I don't know whether to—I don't want to name people out of turn. But it's, like, it is in all of the, you know, records and news stuff, but—

So, I—you know, I knew all three people who were initially asked to leave, and I know that there were other folks who were just not sure—you know, because of Dartmouth's, you know, on-again-off-again quarter system, there were folks weren't on campus who weren't sure whether they had a place to come back to. You know—I don't know. It was—it was an odd time.

The gay community—you know, the GSA was sort of like—didn't know what was going on. It just seemed very odd and surprising. This involved—you know, the fact that it ended up being national news—you know, people found out names of—of folks that—who hadn't come out yet. You know, it was—it was a sad and scary time. And—and—and it—it scared other people to, you know, kind of—if—if Tri-Kap could do this, what else could happen?

You know, a lot of late-night crying sessions, a lot of, you know, "What do we do now?" There wasn't—you know, there was no mass organization of—of, you know, "We should go and protest this." There wasn't, you know, that kind of stuff. It was just—it was, like, weirdly in shock for a while.

You know, and the fact that it ends up—they—they ended up getting rid of Joel [O. Thayer, Class of 1985] for, you know, being a negative influence. You know, it was just very bizarre.

PINKNEY: Would you be willing to provide the full name of that individual, Joe?

COSENZA: Joel, Joel Thayer.

PINKNEY: Joel, Joel Thayer.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: Thank you.

COSENZA: And Jay Berk- —you know, and [D.] Jay Berkow [Class of 1985] and [Raymond W.] "Ray" Terbecki [Class of 1984] were both also involved in—in, you know, being asked, you know, to leave or to—I—I—I don't know what the—the final verdict was on all of them, but those were the three that I know it was really about.

There was also another person who they claim—you know, it was—that he was—he told somebody what the minutes were of a meeting, and they wanted him out, and whether or not that had anything to do with sexuality still is kind of up in the air.

But, you know, there were articles—you know, there were articles in *The Review* afterwards that were just horrible, and there were, you know, letters to the editor, you know, and sort of this—this idea of sovereignty and should a dorm—I mean, should a fraternity be able to do what it wants.

There was a—a—an editorial in *The Review* that—it based—it said something about I guess President [David T.] McLaughlin [Class of 1954, Tuck Class of 1955] had—had something—when—when we were trying to get rid of—when folks wanted fraternities and sororities off campus. He would—he said something about how they both provide places where, you know, you could go with other people and not have any sexual tensions. You could be, you know, with your own gender. And *The Review* then took that and—and ran with it and said, "Well, you know, if—if—that means, you know, there's no sexual tension because there's no women. We also want no, you know, homosexual tension, so that—that expelling gay members is—is the right thing to do because the fraternity system is, you know, so important to what it is."

Yeah, I'm going to see—I'm going to see if there's anything else in my Tri-Kap folder that—that we should talk about. One of the other things that I found—was really interested in—is that the president of the Tri-Kap the year after this happened ended up—I guess "ended up" is not the right word—was gay and came out after college and just really—it was just interesting.

I have a lot of hard feelings about a lot of people at Dartmouth, still, and Dartmouth as a whole, about what it did to people, and it's really hard every time I see things like, you know, "Dartmouth is one of the most accepting places of gays. We've got a gay dorm," blah, blah. And there's a part of me that's just still really unhappy with it.

Let's see. Tri-Kap stole copies of an article that was in the newspaper so they could—it was an article in *The Harbinger*, which was another newspaper at that time. And they stole the article so they could see what it was going to say beforehand.

PINKNEY: That was February 15th, 1984?

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: I think. Yeah.

COSENZA: And then—let's see. Letters from the president—oh, no, these were letters to the president. Yeah, I've got a couple of letters that we had—folks in GSA wrote letters to the administration.

PINKNEY: Did those get sent?

COSENZA: I think so. What I have here looks like it's copies, so—

PINKNEY: Mm-hm.

COSENZA: —it must have been sent. That was also when the Straights for Gay Rights started. David [R.] Seidenberg, who was an '85, created a group through the Tucker Foundation, I think, called Straights for Gay Rights. I never was actually was involved in that organization, but they were around and—and provided, you know,—would write letters and provide support for folks, things that we were doing.

PINKNEY: Was it a conscious choice on your part to not join that organization, or was it kind of—you were overcommitted?

COSENZA: I was overcommitted, and I was already in GSA. I mean, it just didn't seem—I mean, it's not that I didn't like the concept of it. I didn't—I mean, David was my friend. It's just—you know, I already had other stuff I was—was involved with, so just didn't do that.

PINKNEY: Yeah. So was the Tri-Kap incident—was that something that was openly discussed on campus, or was it something that was kind of sequest-—

COSENZA: Oh, yeah.

PINKNEY: Okay.

COSENZA: Oh, no, it was—it was big news. It was definitely discussed on campus.

PINKNEY: And so beyond writing letters to the administration, was there any other response that GSA had to the purge?

COSENZA: No. I don't—I don't think there was—I don't think there was anything—there was—I don't know if—I don't think there was anything formal. There was a bomb threat, but we didn't do that, or at least not officially that I know of. I don't know if anyone that I know did it, but no one—you know.

PINKNEY: Mm-hm.

COSENZA: It wasn't anything that we, you know, had.

And there was actually—let's see. Yeah, Tucker actually—that same week actually had one of their fireside chats. They called is Social Awareness and Sexual Preference. It was weird, the phrase—the words that we used back—it's very funny to—to read back some of this stuff. But they had—you know, there was—there was a lot of, you know, talks. And, you know, as a—as a UGA at that point, you know, I remember having a meeting with my—my first-year students to talk about this. And, you know, it was a lot going on.

And it was—it was not—yeah, and folks knew. This was—this was a big thing on campus. Dartmouth was a fraternity and is a fraternity school. It's still,—you know, it's big news.

PINKNEY: Absolutely it is. [Chuckles.]

COSENZA: So that brings us to the spring of '84, which—I was actually off campus, so I—

PINKNEY: Oh, no kidding.

COSENZA: But what I found was a letter that my friend Jay wrote the day after, so April 29th was the meeting that Teresa Polenz [Teresa S. Delaney, née Polenz, Class of 1987] surreptitiously tape recorded the support group, and he wrote this letter the day after and talked about how—you know, how tense it was and sort of what was going on and, you know, how he didn't—

You know, he wrote, “Now for the bad news. Last night we had a GSA support group meeting, our first one.” We had decided in the winter that a support—you know, that GSA was going to be more than just sort of an—you know, an organization. We were going to have a support group where folks could talk about things and talk about coming out or not coming out or how things are going for them.

So we had consciously decided that there was going to be a support group as part of GSA, but that wasn’t going to be the GSA meetings. All GSA meetings weren’t going to be support groups. So we had just started that. And so this was the first one.

And it said, “People came open and trusting and ready to give—give and take. There was a new woman there, and we included her and said a great deal. The premise of the meeting that nothing said would be repeated outside the group. Well, this new girl turned out to be an undercover reporter from *The Review*, with a tape recorder in her bag.

“During the meeting, although most of us were suspicious, we let trust rule. After the meeting, however, Meg, David and I found her and discussed who she was and what *The Review* planned to do. We were met with all the best bullshit.

“Today I did an extensive interview with *The D*, and our friend Teresa will be cover news tomorrow. I don’t know what all will come of it, but I really put myself on the line, and alone—alone for all practical purposes.”

PINKNEY: And so this is a per- —was this a letter written to you from Jay—what’s his surname?

COSENZA: Berkow.

PINKNEY: Jay Berkow.

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: And so where were you taking your off-term—

COSENZA: I was in Italy. I was doing my LSA [Language Study Abroad]. I was on my LSA trip to Italy and, you know, got this letter

and was totally shocked and, you know, then heard from other friends about, you know, the stuff that was going on—you know, the idea that she was actually—you know, her story of trying to figure out—you know, they wanted to know what, you know, the five hundred dollars the university gave us each year was, you know, going to, and she felt that—the need to do this as an undercover—

You know, this was not long after the undercover student went to [William S.] "Bill" Cole's music class, and they did the scathing article on his class, so this whole undercover thing was sort of, you know, the game they were playing at the time.

You know, by '84, especially the spring of '84, *The Review* was starting to become less of a conservative newspaper and more of just a—you know, how far can we go saying really outrageous, radical, you know, stupid things? The original—the original *Review* folks were a little more journalistic, and then it just sort of—you know, by the time Laura Ingraham was there and Teresa Polenz, it was just going downhill into the—you know, who can we catch doing what kind of stuff.

PINKNEY: Absolutely. I mean, this whole incident generated a ton of national press, and so I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what the conversation was like on campus, if you know anything. I mean, you were in Italy, but—

COSENZA: Yeah. I think, from what I remember folks talking about, they were, you know,—I don't think anyone agreed necessarily with—with what was going on. I think they thought it shouldn't have happened. I think there were students who didn't know whether the GSA should actually exist, you know. But I think the idea of, you know, having someone undercover go to a support group was—was not—I don't think there were tons of people cheering on that concept of—of journalism.

PINKNEY: And so how lopped in were you?

COSENZA: And—

PINKNEY: Sorry. You keep going.

COSENZA: I was—I was just going to say because when I got back, because it would have been sophomore summer, you know, there was still stuff going on. I know that there was a debate at—at one of the frats, Alpha Delta, which—you know, you always wondered whether you should partake of these things, but GSA did. [Scipio C.] "David" Garling [Class of 1986] was there. He was the president at the time. so he was there, and [Margaret A.] "Meg" Pappano [Class of 1986] was there, who was Women's Issues League.

And they—you know, and it was like they were—it was sort of this—I don't know if it was a debate as much as they were, you know, sort of presenting what—I'm trying to remember, like, what the purpose of it was. And—and—I don't—I don't know. I just remember sitting—you know, being there and going—you know, I'm still not sure whether it was the right idea to go to a fraternity and try to talk about the GSA.

And, you know, by that fall, when we found out that she was actually getting off, I think it had died down some. You know, we got more students on campus, but there was a lot of—you know, people were really upset about her—her getting off, but not to this—you know, it wasn't the same kind of talk that was happening, you know, that people knew what was going on when it was actually happening.

So there was much more going on in the spring, a little bit that summer, and then by the fall it was really—you know, it was much less—you know, when the results—when the verdicts came out, you know, I don't think anyone really expected much more.

You know, again, you know, I—it's interesting, because I have—for that, I actually have the letters that I wrote to the administration, and I have—I don't have my letters; I have their responses, and they were just, like, you know, really, you know, just sort of administrative—you know, bullshit. I mean, it just really was just sort of didn't say anything, and we have to trust the process, and it was just—yeah, that kind of stuff.

PINKNEY: [unintelligible].

COSENZA: Okay, I found—I found the article about the—the fraternity thing. Let's see. It was advertised as "The Great Debate." "The forum was sponsored by the fraternity, and the discussion focused on three main questions followed by a brief period of audience questions. It opened with a question to GSA, to David, on the purpose of the GSA and the uses of college funds."

The second was about Women's Issues League and the fact that we had sort of said that we were sort of against women hostessing at frat parties, at rush parties.

And then they talked about the Indian symbol again, because that never dies.

So it was just—it was sort of a—it felt like there was no way we were going to win anything by going, but by not going, we wouldn't have won either. I mean, it just—people really weren't listening—you know, listening. And it was just—it wasn't necessarily a free-for all, but I don't think—from what I remember of it, that summer or that event, it just—it probably would have been better not to do it because it wasn't—no one really cared. You know, it wasn't meant to—to really—for folks to learn stuff. I think it was just something they wanted to do and see who would show up. I don't know.

PINKNEY: Do you remember how many people were in attendance?

COSENZA: I don't. Let me see. I can see if the article has anything. But, no, I—I—

PINKNEY: No worries. That's just more my own personal curiosity, if there were, like, ten people there or fifty.

COSENZA: There was actually a good number of people. [Turns pages.] Mmm. ROTC. [Reads silently.] No, it actually doesn't say. I don't re- —I don't remember it being sparsely populated. I mean, it was in a fraternity, so I think, you know, there was probably a good number of people just hanging around. But I—I don't remember.

PINKNEY: And could you remind me of David's last name?

COSENZA: Garling.

PINKNEY: The one who spoke—okay.

COSENZA: David Garling?

PINKNEY: David Garland [sic], gotcha.

COSENZA: Garling, G-a-r-l-i-n-g.

PINKNEY: Darling. Gotcha.

COSENZA: Yup. Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: Beautiful.

Let's see, so we've covered the spring. We've covered the summer. And I was wondering if you had any other—if there was anything else from the fall that really stuck out to you, when the—

COSENZA: Tri-Kap?

PINKNEY: Sure, from Tri-Kap. I was more referring to the fallout from Teresa Polenz's lack of consequences [chuckles], essentially.

COSENZA: Oh.

PINKNEY: Whether there was any response by GSA or anything like that or if it really all just fizzled out.

COSENZA: Not that I remember. I think a lot of it, you know, fizzled out just because it wasn't on everyone's agenda anymore. I think—you know, I think it just basically fizzled.

PINKNEY: Were there any other kind of defining moments—if you would call, like, the taping of the meeting a defining moment. Were there any more of those types of really wild and insane and awful moments in the remaining of your Dartmouth career?

COSENZA: No. But after that, there were more—I—I think it—it did cause more folks to be interested in GSA. I mean, I think

more people, after that—the incident, sort of thought that being involved in, you know, a group was worth it. And whether or not they were—you know, how much they participated or how much they went—I mean, I do—you know, we did have an uptick in folks who were coming to the meetings.

PINKNEY: Oh, no kidding. That's interesting.

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: Do you feel like the sort of climate was shifting, to become more—slightly more accepting after that, or do you feel like it was still as—

COSENZA: No.

PINKNEY: —polarized as it was. Yeah.

COSENZA: No, I don't—I don't think it was necessarily more accepting. I think it just—I mean, I think it was the same way that after the shanties were—were hammered and torn down by—by *The Review* that more people came to our DCD meetings, and there was the takeover of—of the president's office.

I mean, I think, you know, those kinds of—of outrageous, polarizing events caused people to become—you know, be a little more interested in things. And maybe folks didn't know that there was a gay student group or didn't feel comfortable.

PINKNEY: For—oh, no, continue.

COSENZA: Go ahead. I was just going to say that there—you know, there are folks who came out after college, who played the—you know, who even in—in these moments of—not self-reflection—that—that when things happen and you sort of—I think you have to kind of take a—a look at who you are, even in light of that, those who were staying closeted or didn't say anything or didn't do anything—you know, I think that—that still bothers me some.

You know, it bothers me some of people who are, you know, much more out and loud and proud now, and I know that folks—that things happen in their own time and—and how

folks deal with it. But it is hard to kind of see folks who are much more confident in themselves now, not around when we were sort of having to pick up the pieces of what was going on on campus at that time.

PINKNEY: Absolutely.

I'd like to ask you a little bit more about that, but before we—before I ask you, I was wondering: You've mentioned the shanties a couple of times,—

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: —and for—just for record-keeping purposes, if you could just quickly outline what that was like. It was—it was a divest- —it was a divest Dartmouth initiative; it wasn't related to apartheid, if I'm correct?

COSENZA: Yes, it was an anti-apart- —we were—

PINKNEY: It was anti-apartheid. Right, right.

COSENZA: Yeah. It was called the Dartmouth Community for Divestment; DCD was the name of the organization. And we were—you're right we were—we were pushing Dartmouth to divest from South Africa. And in the—you know, that fall and winter of '84-'85, it was—a lot of campuses were—were, you know, building shanties as representations of—of how folks were living in South Africa and a lot of the injustices.

And, you know, we had ours on the campus for—we built it in the fall of—of '84—no, I'm sorry, fall of '85. And they were up until Martin Luther King Day Jr.—Martin Luther King Jr. Day, at which point *The—The Dartmouth Review* and what they called the [Dartmouth] Committee to Beautify the Green [Before Winter Carnival] came with sledgehammers in the middle of the night to tear down the shanties.

You know, two of my friends were staying there. We took turns staying there at night, and two of my friends were there. And it was not—it—it—it was—it led to large-scale campus protests: taking over the administration building; there was a teach-in; classes were cancelled. It—it—it

was—that was—that was a big chunk of what was going on my senior year.

PINKNEY: Absolutely. So thank you—thank you for talking a little bit about that.

I think that what were were discussing previously kind of touched on a question I wanted to ask you, which was what do you think it means to be an ally? You've kind of been talking about how it was frustrating for you to see people who were part of the community, who didn't really—who were not there to pick up the pieces, as you said.

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: So, like, what does it mean to you to be an ally?

COSENZA: Um,—

PINKNEY: Or you can choose a different word. There are dif- —you know.

COSENZA: Yeah. Hmm. I think it means for me to—to be there for, you know, a community that you may not necessarily fully be part of. And, you know, a bit chunk of my bitterness is not actually—you know, there—there—a lot of—there were a lot of—of allies of different sorts happening. I think what bothered me, maybe bothers me—I don't know quite what tense I want to use—you know, like I said, were folks who now are very out. I know that "out" is not necessarily—you know, "out"—you know, it's not just a yes or no, so very out—you know, those two are—I don't know. It just felt like a lot of people were standing by.

And I don't necessarily think they were hiding. Maybe they didn't know they were gay in college. But—yeah, I mean, I think all I can—you know, all I hold onto is—is that they might not have known and did not want to put themselves out there. I mean, in a way it feels like Tri-Kap in the sense, where "Oh, we'll become known as the gay—the gay—you know, that we had a lot of gay brothers. Then no one's gonna pledge us because they don't want to be part of the gay fraternity."

And that kind of—you know, and—and—I—and I feel that there are people now who are out and talk about it a lot and are, you know, doing a lot in the gay community, who worked then and—and—and stood by because they didn't want to be seen as gay then. And I think probably just as—as more people got drawn to the GSA after Teresa Polenz, there were probably some who got scared away. And, you know, that's, you know, another one of the huge negatives of what *The Dartmouth Review* did to students at Dartmouth.

PINKNEY: Right. Would you—would you boil it down to kind of an issue of convenience, or am I kind of taking that one step too far, in terms of allyship?

COSENZA: Yeah. Mmm. No. Conven- —no. I think in terms of allyship, I think it really is more—I mean, other than the time when I was, you know, on the—was an officer because no one else wanted their name on it, I don't think my role in the GSA was to lead the organization or to provide—you know, I was—it was more of a support situation.

And, as I said, a lot of this is—is sort of political for me in that, you know, I was—it was the same way when, you know, I would go to, you know, sometimes, you know, help with the Native American—you know, with the NAD [Native Americans at Dartmouth] house or anything like that, where it wasn't necessarily—it's not my—you know, it's not my fight; it's not my organization, but I can support that. That's kind of what I see more, you know, as an ally—you know, not running something that's not yours.

PINKNEY: Right, but providing that support.

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: Yeah.

I think another question that I had about your experience at Dartmouth was how did—I think—we just talked about all these awful, terrible things that you and your friends experienced while attending Dartmouth,—

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: —and I think that I've gotten a sense of how you feel about the institution now and how you felt about it then, so I was wondering if you would talk a little bit about what your expectations were of the institution versus what the reality you found at Dartmouth was. I think we've touched on it a little bit, but I was wondering if you had any thoughts.

COSENZA: Well, I just—you know, I—I assumed college was going to be a grand place of learning. I mean, I—I ended up at Dartmouth because I fell in love with the brochure. I mean, I really—I had never been to Dartmouth. You know, I got the brochure, and there was someone sitting under a tree, playing a guitar, and it just seemed like this great place of learning, where everything was—everyone was, you know, open and nice and, you know, everything was great, and—you know.

And, you know, I was—I was seventeen, you know? I just wasn't—I don't think I had an idea of what it was going to be like. And, you know, when I got there, there really wasn't a lot of sitting under trees, and it was cold in the winter, and, you know, there was—you know, there was poli- —you know, stuff going on on campus, and it was just a lot of—you know, it was—was a harsh reality wake-up call that—that—at the very beginning.

And—I mean, and all that being said, I am very glad—I'm glad I went to Dartmouth. I mean, it made me who I am today. It—it brought amazing people into my life. You know, in looking back, like I said, I'm still always amazed at—at how Dartmouth supposedly is such a great place for, you know, LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer] kids today, and—and I—a part of me wants to be amazingly happy about that, but a part of me just wonders.

You know, and even things like Triangle House. I'm sort of—I'm not sure. I'm not sure if I—I—I don't know. I've been asked to donate to it, which I haven't done, partially because I think the campus should—you know, the college should fund it. I don't see why necessarily I should fund it.

And I'm not sure I like the idea particularly that—I mean, I like the idea that there's a safe place to go, and we had that, and, you know, we needed that in different places. But a part

of me wants to say that the whole campus should be a safe place to go and that we still have to set up a home, a special place where, you know, you can go away from everyone else. In a way, it's still sad that you need such a place.

Yeah. I don't know. I totally forgot what question that came from. [Both chuckle.]

PINKNEY: It was expectation versus reality at Dartmouth but—

COSENZA: Expectations. Oh, yeah. Okay, that had nothing to do with it, but okay.

PINKNEY: Oh, no, but, you know, I think you touched on some questions I was going to ask you anyway, so it's all—it's all great. It's all—it's all your experience, you know? It's all your—this is, you know, an interview about your experiences.

I think right now perhaps would be a good time to shift gears and talk about your involvement with the community during the peak of the AIDS crisis.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: I think in your bio you mentioned that you worked in some capacity or volunteered with AIDS crisis centers for a decade and a half after graduating.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

COSENZA: Sure. You know, I came to Boston right after college. I was—I had actually decided not to go to grad school. Instead, came to Boston and was the sort of the community organizer for DSA, the Democratic Socialists of America. I was their staff person for a year. I came down to do that.

And also got involved with a AIDS Action Committee. So this was—you know, so we're talking now fall of '86. AIDS Action Committee was starting one of their major fundraisers, which is From All Walks of Life [now AIDS Walk Boston], which is an AIDS walk. And I was very involved in fundraising for

AIDS Action for a long time. I was a buddy, which was someone who was partnered with someone who—who had HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] and, you know, did some practical support stuff and, you know, social or emotional support stuff.

You know, and this was sort of that—that—you know, as you said, sort of the peak of—of the AIDS time, when, you know, you were going to memorial services, you know, once a week or so. That's where you saw people. And it was—you know, you didn't really think about getting old because you didn't know who was going to be alive to—to—to—to get old. You know, so these were—it was an entire cohort of, you know, men who were gone, who were leaving us.

And so I—I did a lot with that for a while. I did a lot of fundraising. I was doing volunteer coordination for that here in Boston. And I was involved in fundraising for other, you know, organizations that sort of came out of that. There was—there was a hospice, an AIDS hospice here in Boston as well as Fenway Community Health Center [Inc., now Fenway Health], which is a health center that—that focuses on or—LGBT health issues.

So, you know, I did that for a while, and, you know, interestingly, as, you know, medicines came about and the demographic of—of AIDS changed, it was—you know, it was very interesting, and I just burnt out after a while.

So, you know—because of—I—working in these organizations you end up making friends with the folks that you're working on—with, you know, so I was, you know, losing friends, and friends were getting diagnosed, and, you know, at a certain point, I was just—it was time to stop. So I stopped doing that for a while.

And interestingly now, one of my major fundraising things that—one of my, you know, volunteering—fundraising things that I work on is an organization that started off as an AIDS organization and has now become more of a general organization. I work with Community Servings, which was originally providing food to folks with HIV/AIDS—you know,

home delivery, like God's Love We Deliver in New York and—and other things like that.

And as time went on, and, as I was saying, as the demographics changed—and the reality is it's not just, you know, folks with AIDS that—that need this kind of help, and the mission statement, the mission of the organization has changed, and it's now for folks who have any of a number of chronic or acute diseases that, you know, meet their criteria, and we provide food for them and their families, which is the same thing we were doing with folks with HIV/AIDS, but now on a broader scale.

So it's—it's a pretty amazing organization. And it's—it's great that it was able to survive, and, you know, they do lots of good things—you know, food is medicine work.

PINKNEY: Well, I'm processing a little bit. [Laughs.]

Oh, man! From GSA—

COSENZA: Oh, the Quilt [NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt]! Oh, wait, the Quilt! I forgot. I want to talk about—I want to just mentioned the Quilt.

PINKNEY: Oh, yeah, totally.

COSENZA: Okay. Totally forgot the Quilt. I know I'm looking around my house, going, *Oh, what have I not mentioned? The Quilt!* And so I did—I was also involved in the Quilt, right?—when I got out of—so I was involved in the Quilt from '87 probably to '92 or '93 and did a couple of the major—I was on the organizing committee for some of the major displays, and I was the Boston co-chair for a while as well.

And, you know, that probably added to some of the burnout of, you know, just sort of, you know, seeing so many folks go and seeing the effect of what the Quilt—you know, the impact of the Quilt on—on society as a whole, which was pretty amazing.

PINKNEY: And could you talk a little bit about what the—

COSENZA: And—

PINKNEY: —sorry—what the Quilt does?

COSENZA: Mm-hm. The Quilt is made up of individually made panels dedicated to folks who have died of—of HIV/AIDS, and it was—it started in 1987 at the [Second National] March on Washington [for Lesbian and Gay Rights], which was an amazing March. Bos- —the Bos- —we went down, and it—it was the first gay rights march in a while, and it was an amazing event. And it had this small area where they had panels of—you know, panels that were hand- —you know—painted or sewed or done. They were—you know, the panels are three feet by six feet, which is pretty much the size of a coffin, a grave. And people decorated them for friends and loved ones and family who died.

And they're ama- —it's amazingly personal, and it—people were just—were taken back—taken aback in '87, when we first saw it. And it now provides—you know, it's—it's used now more as an educational process to talk about HIV/AIDS and—and how it—what folks can do to help those who have it, what you as an individual can do to prevent it.

And it's still a memorial. It's—it's—it's—you know, as we—we did national displays every year for a while, until it just got too big to—to do it anymore. But it was really—you know, it was sort of like a—a graveyard for us, to see who was gone and—and—and see our friends and our loved ones part of—of the—

The horror of—of the AIDS epidemic was that people were taken away from their families of choice, their—you know, what—what [gay novelist] Armistead Maupin calls, you know, our "logical families" and—and given back to blood relatives. And in many instances, you know, people who were the—the—the person's real family, you know, lost touch and weren't able to—to go to memorial services, weren't able to have—you know, to see the body, weren't able to go to the graveyards.

And—and the Quilt was something—was a place—it was ours. Does that explain it?

PINKNEY: Yeah, it does. No, that was great. That was great.

I think—let's see. We've touched on this a little bit, but I was wondering if you would be able to talk about how—I think we've talked about how language has shifted over time, how like, we're kind of reading these old documents—

COSENZA: Mm-hm. Yes.

PINKNEY: —and how it just seems so different from how we talk about things today.

COSENZA: [Chuckles.] Yeah.

PINKNEY: And I wondering if you could talk about how your—firstly, like, your identity, if you choose to call it your identity, as an ally has shifted over time and, like, how your perception of LGBTQA [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, ally or asexual] activism has shifted over time since you've been—I don't know if you define yourself as an activist, but your kind of involvement in this movement that spanned, you know, multiple decades.

COSENZA: Hmm. Let's see. So when I first got involved, there were a lot less letters involved. [Chuckles.] You know, there—there—it was not, LGBTQI at all; it was often not even L. And, you know, there was—you know, and again, when I—I mentioned at one point that it was sort of a very—you know, it was a heartbreaking time to be at Dartmouth but also a very special time because things were changing.

And that includes women, you know, sort of getting their own footing at Dartmouth. There was, you know, the Women's Issues League, and we—you know, we had sort of folks who identified as lesbian—you know, being arou-—you know, GSA for a long time was sort of a boys' club. And, you know, by my senior year there were more women involved in, you know, taking activist and, you know, just general roles on campus.

And—you know, and—and—a lot of the women were also involved in DCD and other events and, you know, not necessarily—you know, sometimes the term gets bandied about, you know, "political lesbian" or, you know, "college lesbian" or something like that, you know. And it—it wasn't

that at all. It was really more of, you know, sort of the activism that I think certain people have.

You know, you—you can see that—that actually was seen again later in the AIDS epidemic, where lesbians played a much larger role than anyone ever gives them credit for. So, you know, it was really more—I don't—I don't know if my role has changed.

You know, a part of me was always still really—you know, the—the—you know, when I was sort of going in- —into Dartmouth with the—you know, there—there—there are—you know, people can do good things; people can do bad things. And, you know, by the end, I kind of realized that people can do both good and bad things.

But I—I—I think that I was still really—I'm trying to think how I want to describe—issues of—I think I wanted to do good in the world. I think I left Dartmouth still believing that I could change the world. And I—I don't think that part of it has changed. And—and I do see, you know, what can be called an allyship, you know, part of that, still feeling that, you know, people have—can have a say in the world and can change things and, you know, it's important to be a good person and to be there when people need you.

I mean, I think sort of those basic, fundamental beliefs haven't really changed. I think—yeah. I'm not sure if that totally answers your question, but I think that's kind of what I'm thinking about.

PINKNEY: No, yeah. I mean, it's difficult to kind of relate your own positionality while looking back at it at the same time. You know, it's, like,—it's—when we're talking about things right now, it's more difficult to see exactly, you know, the whole of what we're saying, I think. So how I'm perceiving it is like a complete answer, you know?

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: Because, you know, it is your experience after all.

And I think that ties into another question I had for you, which was you've mentioned kind of frustrations that you

have with Dartmouth labeling or branding itself as, like, an inclusive, accepting place,—

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: —especially for the LGBTQIA [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual] community, et cetera, or queer youths.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: So I was wondering if you would be able to talk a little bit more about that, especially with the founding of Triangle House, which you've mentioned a few times in this interview.

COSENZA: I don't—I mean, I don't think I have a—a—a problem with the university claiming that they're—I mean, I—I do not have enough knowledge of what it's like for a student on campus today to comment whether or not, you know, the moniker of being, you know, more—you know, I mean, I think it's got to be more inclusive, because it wasn't ever inclusive, so I think "more"—you know, I think anything can be considered more inclusive.

But I—I don't know—it's just—it's—it's—it's so hard to imagine what—from thirty years—you know, that thirty years ago was what it was and that now it's sort of a much broader community, except you sort of think of—you know, in a way, the world is a more inclusive place than it was thirty years ago, in general, so Dartmouth by default should be as well.

But, yeah, I don't—I don't know enough about it. I do know that when I've gone up for events for—like DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association] reunions and stuff, it's always—it's so really cool and amazing to see so many students on campus involved in, you know, the reunion events or the dances or, you know, all of that stuff.

I mean, it's just—it's—it never—it was just—yeah. I mean, it's just—it's—It's nice to see folks involved and see folks who—you know, maybe their—their sexuality isn't a huge thing as much of it as just who they are. You know, it's not something that they—they're putting on- —you know, that

they have to put on. I mean, it's so part of who they are that, you know, it's just—it's—it's really nice to see, those few times that I've been up.

PINKNEY: Yeah. So, let's see.

Honestly, I guess I'm wondering if there's anything that we didn't touch on that you'd like to touch on, anything that we've talked about that you'd like to circle back to. I think I have a couple of more questions, but those are generally about the SpeakOut project, itself.

COSENZA: Mm-hm. I don't think there's anything that we haven't—I'm just sort of going through my other documents to see if there's any other things that happened on campus. You know, sort of the first Dartmouth Lambda, which was what DGALA was before it was DGALA.

You know, some of the—the first reunions happened in—in December of '84, so that was sort of before the—oh, no, sorry. It happened in May. And so that was, like, right after the Teresa Polenz stuff, and—and that was sort of the first time they had come back to the campus.

But, yeah, I think we might have covered all of this. [Turns pages.] Yeah.

PINKNEY: We did. Yeah, we did cover a lot of ground. [Both chuckle.]

Oh, I had a—I had another question—

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: —that I just thought of.

COSENZA: Yep.

PINKNEY: So in 1990, Michael [F.] Lowenthal [Class of 1990] comes out in his valedictorian speech—

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: —at Dartmouth, and I was wondering if that was something you heard about, if that was something that, like, you heard

about on national news or if, like, it influenced any sort of thinking on your part. I don't know. That was just an event that, you know, was four years after you left—

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: —that may or may not have—that you may or may not have been aware of at the time.

COSENZA: No. I mean, I know him. I know he came out. But, you know, again, it was probably through, you know, sort of the DGALA network of stuff that I heard that. But no, I don't remember hearing about it on news or anything like that.

PINKNEY: Gotcha.

COSENZA: I just do think there's something else, not to do with Michael, but—

PINKNEY: Oh, no worries.

COSENZA: One other thing we didn't cover, and I can't—I don't seem to have a lot of my notes on it, but our—let's see, it must have been my junior year. There was an alumni who created I think it was the Carpenter Fund [sic; Edward Carpenter Memorial Foundation]. Do you know anything about that?

PINKNEY: The Carpenter Fund.

COSENZA: Have you heard anything? I think it was the Carpenter Fund.

PINKNEY: Let's see. So what year would that be?

COSENZA: Eighty-four?

PINKNEY: Eighty-four.

COSENZA: No, no, sorry. It would have been fall of '84 through, you know, spring of '85, sort of that year.

PINKNEY: You know, I—I think you've caught a blind spot on my part. I don't know a thing about the Carpenter Fund.

COSENZA: Okay. So from what I can remember, and, again, I don't seem to have anything on this, which was kind of surprising, so an alumni donated money—like, a lot of money to the GSA for—from what I re- —okay, she—yeah. I knew I should have, like, checked with some friends before I called!

So they—he—he wanted to—to earmark funds for—for the Gay Students Association, which of course the college wouldn't allow, so they created this external fund called the Carpenter Foundation, or Carpenter Fund and was—I'm trying to think who was involved, because I remember it being sort of—you know, we ended up having money, and we were able to do a—a student scholarship. And it was sort of the first time that we actually had money.

And—but—and—and I'm pretty sure that was, you know, a GSA thing, but I have no idea now. It was part of the—and there was—we had, you know, big fights about who—who could—why we couldn't get the money, and there had to be an external board that was created.

And that—that all sort of happened around, you know, sort of the post-Polenz time, and right before the shanties were—were happening, so I was just—I was just wondering if you had heard about that, and if I ever find anything about it, I can send it to you, but—

PINKNEY: Beautiful, yeah. I didn't come across anything in my research before the interview, but it seems like it's kind of—it's a little bit obfuscated—you know, kind of hidden under some dust—

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: —in the archives, so I'll—I'll check in with my project manager and just see—

COSENZA: Okay.

PINKNEY: —what the deal is on that, and if I find anything, I'll reach out to you and, you know,—

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: —we'll just see where that takes us. But that seemed—that's very interesting, the Carpenter Fund.

COSENZA: Yeah. Yeah, I think it was—it was—okay—oh, wait, wait, wait. Okay, I found something in my notes. Okay. This is from an August of '87 newsletter that—it says, "The Edward Carpenter Foundation, a nonprofit charitable fund, seeded by Dr. Ralph [B.] Elias [Class of 1932] to improve Dartmouth's gay life, was publicly inaugurated by Congressman Gerry Studds. Dr. Elias, a alum in San Francisco [California], contributed twenty-five thousand dollars to help establish the foundation."

So I—I don't remember—I don't know whatever happened to it. But this was—you know, it had—so it was after I left. It was May of '87. But—but—so it's just something interesting. It just sort of got—you know, got some money into the organization.

PINKNEY: Well, yeah, because previously only five hundred dollars was allocated, right?—

COSENZA: Right.

PINKNEY: —from—from COSO [Council on Student Organizations].

COSENZA: At least when I—yeah.

PINKNEY: Yeah. A hundred and twenty-five grand. That's—you know, that's not a small amount. So—

COSENZA: Okay. Yeah. No, it was in *The Advocate*, okay. Yeah. Let's see. it seems—it was—it was in *The Advocate* in—February 13th, 2001, and that was when it closed. It said that it was a fifteen-year struggle at Dartmouth College. "The Edward Carpenter Memorial Foundation transferred its assets to the university. The ceremony closed a sad chapter of discrimination against gays and lesbians at Dartmouth, marked by the university's refusal to accept openly gay endowments of any kind. When Ralph Elias, a Dartmouth alumnus from the Class of 1932, created the fund in 1985, the university rejected it outright, saying that it did not want to recognize gay students as a minority." Huh!

PINKNEY: Wow.

COSENZA: "Instead, the fund was managed off campus for much of the eighties and nineties." Interesting.

PINKNEY: Well, disappointing but not surprising, I guess [laughs] is my reaction to that.

COSENZA: Yeah.

PINKNEY: Yeah.

COSENZA: [Laughs.]

PINKNEY: [Chuckles.] Man! It's always somethin', you know? It's always somethin'.

COSENZA: It is.

PINKNEY: So I can see if Rauner has any information on that. I'll talk with an archivist before they close today at six.

COSENZA: Yeah. It's worth, you know, having in your—your files of things that have happened.

PINKNEY: Oh, yeah, the many files, the many files of untold stories, yeah. Man!

Well, I guess—I think my closing question to you would be, just to bring things full circle, what do you think—what were your motivations for participating in SpeakOut? Like, how did you hear about it, and what do you hope the project will do?

COSENZA: So I heard about it because DGALA, you know, advertised it, and I wasn't going to do anything because I'm not gay, so [chuckles], I was not going to participate. And it just, you know, did not seem to make any—you know, from what I thought it was about, I didn't think it was for me.

And then a couple of my friends—I've—because I keep—you know, I have sort of these records and, you know, scrapbooks and—and stuff, we had had a DCD, you know, get-together with some folks, and, you know, we were

looking through all my old files, and one of them said that I should do the SpeakOut thing.

And I said, “Yeah, but why me?” And they said because I had—I was involved, I was part of the experience, and I had all of these records [both chuckle] that I could sort of—you know, I actually have dates of when things happened. And, you know, I kind of know what was going on. And, you know, she suggested that I—I do it, so that’s how I ended up signing up.

PINKNEY: Absolutely. I mean, I’m very grateful that you—you’ve definitely kept a close eye on things. I think you probably have more information than I’ve even run into at the Special Collections Library, so I think, you know, I’ll definitely talk to Caitlin about your offer to donate some of your materials.

But I just want to say thank you so, so much for being part of this project. It really means a lot, not only to me but to everyone involved, and, you know, after the interview is transcribed, it’ll probably go up on the website.

COSENZA: Okay.

PINKNEY: I don’t know what the timeline is on that, but yeah.

COSENZA: How many of these interviews have you done?

PINKNEY: You’re my second interview. I have two more to go as part of my—

COSENZA: And how—

PINKNEY: What’s that?

COSENZA: —how many have been done as part of the project?

PINKNEY: Each participant completes four. I believe there were ten people in my class,—

COSENZA: Wow!

PINKNEY: —and they just recruited a new cohort. Yeah! So it’s a pretty substantial number.

COSENZA: That's cool.

PINKNEY: Yeah.

COSENZA: And do you get to do a—like, people from different eras—eras [pronouncing it so as not to confuse it with "errors"]?

PINKNEY: Yeah. My first interview was with a woman who graduated in 2016? Or 2015. And I think that's one of the more recent alums.

COSENZA: Mm-hm.

PINKNEY: I'm not sure what the lower bound is, or maybe it's the upper bound? I don't know how old the oldest person is—

COSENZA: [Chuckles.]

PINKNEY: —that we've interviewed, but it covers a pretty full range, from what I can tell.

COSENZA: That's good.

PINKNEY: There have been men who have been interviewed who were at the college before women were allowed to matriculated.

COSENZA: Oh, yeah, that's—yeah, that's not hard.

PINKNEY: Oh, no, it's not hard. [Laughs.]

COSENZA: Well, I mean, the other reason that I sort of did this is that I was really concerned that even when you look at things like DGALA's list of—of alumni, their directory, there seems to be big chunks of years, like the eighties, where there are very—where there are much fewer respondents—you know, people who are involved. I mean, I think that time period, a lot of folks aren't involved in the college at all, even in DGALA, I mean, which is, you know, sort of being involved on the very far periphery.

And, you know, I've—I've got friends who were part of all of this that, you know, have not gone back to the college since we graduated and you know, it's sort of those years, you

know. It's—it's, you know, the history of, you know, going to a—to a dance and going to a, you know, fraternity or sorority dance and having beer thrown on you and having stuff thrown under your door. The people just, you know, kind of have not gotten over it in thirty-some-odd years.

And, you know, I just wanted that time period not to be forgotten, so—so since they've recruited a new cohort, does that mean that—that other folks can—can still volunteer to be interviewed?

PINKNEY: Yeah, absolutely.

COSENZA: Okay. Because I think I'm going to try and get a couple o—of folks who were involved that I, you know, either didn't name or did name today [chuckles] to do the interviews because I do think, you know, doing it from their—their—their vantage point is so very important.

PINKNEY: Absolutely.

COSENZA: Okay. Cool.

PINKNEY: Yeah. Well, let's see. I'm going to stop the recording first. Thank you again so much for volunteering to be interviewed.

[End of interview.]