

Interviewee: Breanna Goodrow
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Abstract: Breanna Goodrow was born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1989. She lived in Worcester for the first five years of her life and then moved to Holden, Massachusetts, a town directly next to Worcester. She attended Worcester Arts Magnet before moving and then attended elementary school in Holden as well as middle school and high school. After high school, Breanna got into her top choice college and attended the School of Visual Arts in New York City. In New York she interned with fashion designer Michael Nash. That was the first of many including Inside Edition and Seventeen magazine. After college, Breanna got a job in Portland Oregon as a senior designer. She lived in Oregon for four and a half years before moving back to the Boston area. Once back in Boston, she got a job as a creative director for a company focusing on the healthcare technology industry. After working there for a few years, she is now beginning to start a business with her fiancé in the Boston and Worcester areas. Breanna currently lives in Worcester and doesn't plan on leaving anytime soon. She believes Worcester is a city on the rise and has great potential for businesses and families.

M: Okay so hello. Do you want to state your name first?

B: Sure, my name is Breanna Goodrow.

M: I guess we'll just start from the beginning, like tell us about your parents. Are they from around here?

B: My dad was born in Kentucky but lived in Worcester most of his life on Chandler Street and my mom grew up in Northborough, but came to Worcester when she went to Worcester State [College] which is where my dad ended up after Clark. Worcester State is where my parents met and when I was born we lived in an apartment near Elm Park. We moved to Holden when I was in first grade. I've been around Worcester most of my childhood and adolescence.

M: How was school growing up there?

B: I remember I went to Worcester Arts Magnet for kindergarten and part of first grade. When we moved, I was bummed out because I had friends there. Holden was a quieter town; we had a

nice yard and it was a good place to grow up. I made a lot of friends, participated in a lot of clubs and played sports every season. I did pretty well in school.

M: So, you enjoyed the small-town vibe?

B: Yeah, it was nice. It felt bigger than other small towns because our high school was regional. Five towns came together in one high school, five elementary schools came together for one middle school, so each stage felt exciting and fun. I was nominated to be a school representative going into high school, so I got to go to the other schools and meet kids from other towns, and it felt very exciting at the time.

Z: How many people were at your high school?

B: I think there were about 500 in my freshman class, so the high school was probably a couple thousand. It was pretty big I guess. By the time you get there it feels like you're in a much bigger environment.

M: Did it bring you closer as like all these different communities or was it...

B: I think for some people. For me it gave me the opportunity to meet new people and I had some core friends I stuck with through elementary school, middle school, and high school, but for the most part I found myself in different groups then kind of hopped around friend groups and by high school I was kind of friendly with everybody. Depending on what activity I was doing or sport I was in, I pretty much had interchanging friend groups.

M: Tell us some more about what that was like representing the school.

B: It was good. It gave me some opportunities to feel like a leader in my little community. I was also nominated to go to a national student council meeting to represent the state. I think it was my junior or senior year, but that was pretty exciting because you got to meet kids from all around the country and there were kids from other countries, like Australia and Canada. I think through all those years I definitely felt like I was building up some sense of leadership. I was also the captain of my sports team.

M: What sports did you do?

B: I played field hockey in middle and high school and was a captain. I played basketball freshmen year of high school and softball, freshman, sophomore, and junior year. So, I kept busy. I played field hockey all year round, so sometimes I was doubling sports in a season.

M: What classes did you particularly like in high school?

B: Micro and macroeconomics was a favorite actually. That was optional, but I enjoyed it. And there was one class about globalization. I loved. It was basically about how cultures mixed together and new ideas come to form because of that kind of inter meshing. I thought that was interesting. I liked history a lot. I took honors history and I like science a lot, took some honors and AP science classes. I was really interested in a lot of things. I loved writing. I guess I liked everything. And I liked art a lot, but didn't do digital art until after high school. In high school I felt like I was more about the humanities in general, but I always knew I wanted to do something with art after high school.

M: Where did you end up going to college?

B: It's called the School of Visual Arts and I did an advertising major my freshman year, then switched to graphic design. It's based in New York City and it was the only school I applied to. I applied early, very early and I had to do a portfolio review so I had to drive myself to Boston and go to Mass Art [Massachusetts College of Art and Design] and be interviewed and have slides looked at and projects looked at by people. I was able to do it in the summer and then basically by August I had applied already. I applied early so I knew I'd find out by Christmas and I thought, "Okay, this is the only school I want to go to." I had a safety school and then I had a reach school, but then I visited the reach school. It was Syracuse [University] and it was too cold so I didn't want to go there. And Quinnipiac [University] was interesting because they had a mix of business and art major. You could do both actually. And I was thinking about doing that and I could have played field hockey there. I was being recruited for that team. But ultimately, SVA, when I went to New York City, it just felt like where I should be and I didn't really want to go anywhere else so I didn't apply [to Quinnipiac] and then found out before the new year that I got in to SVA. So that was exciting.

Z: Were you active in any clubs or community kind of things in college?

B: I did student council. Oh, in college? No. It was different because it was a different kind of college experience. In college it was more networking because my school didn't have a campus. We didn't have a campus actually. So, I did work, I work studied and I did a restaurant job and so I had little groups that I was busy with, but club wise, our school didn't have many and they didn't have sports so I couldn't do sports. But I did a lot of internships. I started my internships pretty early, before you're supposed to and technically you couldn't get credit for it, but I got this opportunity to be a celebrity stylist intern. And so, I worked for a guy named Michael Nash. He was Justin Timberlake's stylist for a while. He does Joan Jett and a bunch of other people like the guy from band, Aerosmith. So that was cool. I got to meet celebrities and go to photo shoots and

learned what that world is like through him. And he was super nice, but it was really hard to get the job. I went to three meetings where he blew me off totally. No call, no show, but I kept following up and kept persisting and he was like, “Oh my God, my bad, now I’m in LA.” And so I thought this guy must be important. Oh, and I should have prefaced, this was a Craigslist ad that I responded to, so I had no idea who the guy was. All I knew it was an intern for a stylist.

M: Was it in New York?

B: Yeah. So, we do shoots all over the city and there's one in New Jersey with the guy from The All American Rejects [rock band]. That was cool.

M: Did you feel like after the first or second time of him no showing up that you might think like, oh maybe like maybe...

B: I shouldn't follow up?

M: Or was it like did you have the, you know, persistence the whole time?

B: I had a gut feeling and I'm the kind of person that's always followed my gut. So, when I thought that it was kind of rude, I was like, “Well, it's New York and if he's a stylist maybe he's important. I might as well try. It's no sweat off my back just to send an email.” So I thought, I'll just do it. It's not that big of a deal. And he was taking me out to lunch. But it ended up being a really cool experience and I ended up getting two of my friends jobs with him after that. My friend Erin ended up moving to LA to work with him when he moved out there. So yeah, it ended up being this weird serendipitous thing that benefited me and a bunch of my friends. I did *Seventeen* magazine as an intern and also at *Inside Edition*, I was an intern and did the graphic design for the motion graphics team.

M: Was it a good networking opportunity to meet future employers?

B: I mean, just being in that city, the events that you would go to. I went to a lot of educational talks, lectures basically. And the creative community. I got to meet, creative directors from big companies and my teachers—to teach there, you have to work in the industry. So, all my teachers were well connected. One of my classes was at the *New York Times*, so every week I would go there for class, which was awesome. And that teacher ended up getting me my first job—well, a connection through him basically got me my first job because he gave me a good recommendation and told me about the opportunity.

M: It was an internship for the *New York Times* or at the building?

B: No, so he was a teacher of mine. Arem Duplessis, he's a creative director at Apple now and at the time he was the creative director for the *New York Times* magazine. I took him for two years of class, for print design and then for my senior portfolio, which means you have to create your own work and it's very open ended. They basically don't give you strict assignments and you just create a body of work that you want to apply to jobs with. You kind of have to figure out what it is that you want to do. And I knew I liked print and he was a print guy, so I wanted to keep working with him. His former employee had moved to Oregon to work for a publisher. I guess he was trying to find people out in the west coast but didn't like any of them very much or it didn't work out. I heard from my teacher that this opportunity to be a senior designer was available and he recommended me for it. I would never have applied to that. Usually you're out of school, find a junior designer job and then designer and then sometimes designer two and then senior designer. I would have never even considered the opportunity, but he was like, "Oh no, you'd be great for it. I like this guy. I know him personally, we worked together," and so we did a Skype interview and I got the job.

M: And so you're in New York City or you're doing all these cool internships and you're meeting celebrities, so what makes you want to eventually come back here?

B: I didn't come back here first actually. I ended up moving to the west coast for a few years, but then when I came back from Portland, Oregon, I was out there with a boyfriend and I felt a little—I didn't have any family out there. And the friends I had were more like acquaintances or work friends. I did a lot of events and networking out there too, but you don't always get close to people that way. I don't know, it felt like not a ton to stay for. And then when my employment ended, I just sort of decided, that it would be a good transition time to come back. It had been 10 years and I kind of missed my family, and so we came back. I thought publishing got boring I guess. Layout design I guess didn't cut it for me anymore. I was trying to do more at that job and plan events and do all sorts of stuff. They were like, "You don't need to do that, just do your job." So, when I came back, I knew I wanted to do more in my career. And I thought I could apply it towards the healthcare industry because the healthcare industry is so prevalent in Boston and in this area. I thought it would be a good target for getting a job in that sphere. And it's not as popular with a lot of creatives that I know because it seems boring and technical and there's tons of rules with compliance. And so, I just thought it would be an interesting opportunity. So that brought me back.

Z: And what do you currently do now?

B: I'm a creative director for a private equity firm focused on the healthcare technology industry. So that means I plan and produce the visual creative work, videos, writing posters, event booths for trade shows. If we're in a magazine I coordinate the interview and prep my boss, the CEO, on

everything that he needs to say. So that's the kind of work that I do. He has so many companies, we just keep buying one, making more, but there's basically eight of them now. And then I'm mostly in the spine medical device realm or in the biologics realm. His practice is also part of the portfolio. He has businesses in Florida and Jamaica. And then he has tons of personal project type of businesses that I help create. So the beginning of 2018, he wanted an activewear line. So part of my job was to figure out how he can have an activewear line and to create that and then to produce photos about it and make the Instagram accounts, create social campaigns. So those are all things that I did for him last year around that, which has nothing to do with most of my job. But I also get to travel around the world to go to events. Our business spans every continent. So I got to go to Singapore last year. Barcelona, Toronto, Jamaica. But basically, being a face of the brand, I'm representing the company and then setting up our events, making sure things go smooth and get photographed.

M: So I'm just thinking of the transition. You started out as a leader of your school community going from town to town and then you end up representing your company going from Singapore to Jamaica.

B: Yeah. Yeah. It's crazy. And so, I'm actually leaving my job in a couple of weeks. I decided that in my thirties—I turned 30 this year—that I wanted to have my own business. I'd always admired people who ran their own business and I read a lot, tons of interviews on 'how do creatives have their own business'? How do you make the leap from working for someone and having full-time security to being out on your own? And everyone seemed to be able to figure that out by their early thirties and they never talk about it an interview, but they seem to get it together. I've just always had it in my mind, that I'm going to get it together to do that in my thirties. So somehow, I did that magic and I guess this job has helped. It pays me really well. So now I'm at a place where I'm taking contract work, so I'm double working. Currently I have two jobs. I have a client who pays me basically a full-time job rate and then I have this full-time job. So it's enough that I've saved up for a few months now and I can take the leap. I definitely like the last thing I'm doing for work for this job which is to represent the company at the Hall of Americas in Washington DC at this event that the Jamaican embassy is hosting for us and to try to get people to invest in the company that I worked for. Which is such a weird way to end this work experience, but it's because my boss knows I'm leaving and he's like, "You're so great, please come and do this event with us. We really need you." It's just nice to close out this time of leading from within a company to going to lead out on my own, as my own proprietor so to speak.

Z: Is the company you're going to run the same type of work?

B: Same exact work that I do for my boss. I'll just do it for other people. It's funny because he's such a big personality, so focusing on his work is a little much. I'm going to be able to focus on things that I want to do and causes that I believe in. I've realized that I've built up my confidence,

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I can do it for him, so I should just do that for myself and I could potentially be making more money. And it's one of those things that, I don't know, it feels potentially impossible, but not really, not until you try.

M: Are you going to be freelancing or is it going to be more of like an office?

B: I've created an office space for myself, but I'm also potentially going to be renting an office somewhere in Boston one day a week to do Metrowest clients and Boston area clients and also work around Worcester. But I own a house here so I will primarily be in Worcester. It's freelancing, but treating it like building a business. I want to employ my husband for example. We're getting married in September and he's a marketing guy. So, it would be a good complement to our business to have him on my team. But I don't want him to quit his full-time job because he's paying for our health insurance and half our mortgage. I basically need to build up a business that can support both of us and then I can hire him and we can potentially go from there. I'm not thinking about it as freelancing because that's one of the hold ups that I've heard about that keeps you from thinking about your business in the way that actually allows you to scale.

M: So you're going to be your husband's boss then?

B: No, I mean we'd work as an equal partnership, but funny enough, when we met, he was my boss. I met him when I moved back from the west coast. I ended up leaving the guy I was with because I was supporting him for three years—financially supporting him, which was a problem. I ended up leaving him in 2015, about a year after I met my boss slash soon to be boyfriend, soon to be fiancé. But it was funny because we had a boss employee dynamic for a little while and it was totally fine. I respect him. We didn't even think about dating each other for over a year. But when he left the company, I took over his role. I became the boss of what he was doing and we were still were together. We moved in together very soon after. He would hear about how I was running the team, where he used to be the person running the team and he was just like, “Oh, you're so much better at doing that.” There were so many things that he would comment about, it was funny because he would feel like he experienced all the things that I was then experiencing.

M: That's crazy. So why did you go from New York to Portland? It seems like you...

B: For a job. It was just for a job and I would have stayed in New York for sure because there's way more opportunities in New York than in Portland, Oregon.

M: Must have been a good job.

B: It was a senior level job. I would have never gotten a senior level job in New York. It was just not the way things work. But having that skillset and that education, taking it somewhere where it's less common made me more valuable I suppose. I got paid like a junior, but from a title perspective they made it worth my while.

M: And was that a decade in Oregon or?

B: No, no, between New York and Oregon, I guess New York was five years and Oregon was almost four and a half.

M: Was Oregon like a total black hole in your life or did you get something out of Oregon?

B: I loved it. I was kind of wild in New York so I needed to slow down and especially leaving college I didn't have—I don't know if you guys feel this way, but college for me was like I can go out until two or in New York you go out till four. I go out until four and then go home and have a snack and do my homework and go to class at nine. I just was this nonstop person. I'd nap in the middle the day and then work at night and then go out and then repeat. I didn't have a healthy lifestyle to put it lightly. And the city had lots of temptations and I had a lot of friends there. And so leaving was a nice way to kind of put a stop to that and start my first real job. All the other jobs were real, but my first employment job that wasn't an internship. I was not worried that I'd mess it up by going out or hanging out with friends too much. It was a nice lifestyle shift because Oregon is so slow, everything happens at a snail's pace. So that's kind of why the job was boring too. I made so much extra work for myself. I made a typeface for a book. I didn't need to do that, but I wanted to because I had time and why not. And so that's why I picked up so many hobbies, like I embroidered. I got back to my crafty roots. I've done stained glass since I was a kid and they have a lot of stained glass manufacturing facilities in Oregon. I used to go there and buy sheets of unique glass and do little projects. I don't have time for that anymore, but it was good. I felt really connected with my crafty roots.

Z: And then moving back here was kind of pick it up?

B: Yeah, I picked it up for sure. And then I reconnected with family. Also meeting new people because I basically didn't get in touch with anyone that I was friends with before. If you haven't seen the theme, I kind of just go—pick up and go. I made new friends and went to a bunch of networking events. I had to do it for my job too. Part of my job was to plan events. One event we planned, it was a conference in Boston and at one point I took over the whole planning of that. And so when I was planning that conference, I was going out for networking three nights a week with the intent of getting speakers at my event. I also volunteer at Jeremiah E Burke High School, with BUILD Greater Boston, with kids that want to start businesses.

M: So given that you've, you know, you've done a lot on both sides. Do you prefer east coast or west coast?

B: East definitely. It's the people, I think it's the people.

M: The people in what way? They're faster moving there?

B: I guess they're more agitated. I hate using the word that way, but it's like they are hungry for more. Whereas on the west coast, people are very chill and happy to be, and maybe it's because the weather's nicer, I really don't know. But I like a little bit more attitude and a little bit more fight.

M: So then you're okay without, if there's like less pottery and like all the others?

B: I feel like there's still so much art here too, especially in Worcester. It's actually one of the reasons I'm excited about starting a business here because I can reconnect with all that in a different way. Like having clients who have small businesses or independent crafters who are trying to get their work out there and helping them build their websites and stuff like that.

M: I can't speak to this but you've been all over the world. Has there ever been a place where you go, you know what, I think this is preferable?

B: No not really. Not really. I don't know if you always feel a little tethered to where you come from. But, I mean, I could definitely live in any city, put it that way. I would have no problem living in any city, but it's nice to plant roots somewhere.

Z: I mean Worcester has obviously been a really big part of your life. How has the community affected you at all?

B: I feel like there's so much potential. I've always felt that about Worcester. I mean I've seen it kind of shitty most of my life. So, it's one of those things where it's so close, like you're so close to getting there, and there's this huge reinvestment now happening with the city. Hundreds of millions of dollars over 50 years or something crazy like that. I have hope. I still hold out hope for it. I think it's cool that they're finally fixing up some of the buildings downtown.

M: Driving in do you see anything like, oh?

B: It's funny, just coming on to campus, I was like, "Ugh, I don't know anything about

Worcester because I've never been on this campus.” So there's times where I'm reminded that I don't know much and there's always new things to discover. I lived in Brighton for a while before moving back and buying a house here and it's so expensive there. I mean people are going to be flocking here because you can get something nicer instead of living in Allston or Brighton.

M: You've maybe driving up here, there's the factories, they're remodeling them.

B: For condos, which is cool. That works for me. In Portland there was a lot of gentrification happening so I definitely learned a lot about the community issues that causes. I lived in a couple of neighborhoods that had been recently gentrified and there was a lot of evidence that the building I lived in used to be a heroin den apparently, like, no joke. I met someone from the neighborhood and they were like, “You know, where you live used to be real sketchy.” But I didn't know, I had just moved there after the remodel.

M: What's your message to Clark students in regards to like the changing city?

B: I would say to invest in it. I think there's so much potential. I guess that's how I feel about Worcester is that there's tons of potential for it. What I want to do with my business is to help the people that are here now build themselves up with the city. So you're not really leaving people behind, but you're just helping to grow what you have and that will attract more.

M: This is a stretch, but do you have any plans to like set up in Worcester?

B: Someday I would like to have an office here. My cousin just bought a building, actually. She has a business in Worcester, but it's moving to a new location and it was cool to see that she, instead of just leasing a place, was interested in really investing in staying in Worcester. She runs a small medical billing company downtown. And it was just cool to see her do that and definitely was inspiring to do the same some day, not yet.

M: Right. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but we're living in a region that used to thrive before any of us were born. Do you feel any role growing up in this and having your parents from around this area to contribute to that?

B: It's funny, I guess it must. It honestly must, but when I was looking at colleges, my mom was like, get out of Worcester, get out of the state, don't even look anywhere in the state, just go. Because she felt like she never left the state. She was in Northborough and she went to Worcester State College. She stayed in the area the whole time. So she was very much pushing me out which was nice because then I didn't feel like I had to stay, but it became time that I came back and that still blows my mind. My husband—my fiancé— is from Sutton originally and he

also was like, “I’m never living in Worcester. I’m never going back.” And then we both said, “Oh, we should just buy a house in the Greendale neighborhood,” when we were looking. It was just like, “Oh, it’s so cute here.” And it had what we wanted and we couldn’t find anything like it in other places in the state.

M: So you do live in Worcester?

B: Yeah, we bought last year, basically a year after we got engaged, we bought a house here.

M: And remind me where, I’m not super familiar with the broader area.

B: It’s north Worcester. Going towards like West Boylston and Holden. It’s right by Quinsigamond [Community College] if you know where the community college is.

M: I ask this to everyone. I mean what are your favorite restaurant?

B: Well, Bocado, I love Bocado. And then there’s this Italian place that’s on Wall Street and I don’t remember the name, but it’s in a neighborhood you don’t think there’s restaurants in, but that’s really good. And then what else do I like? I learned about Armsby Abby, I think it’s called, which has beer. And Dead Horse Hill for brunch on the weekend. Acoustic Java. There’s one around here I think. I go there on the weekends too. No one sees me there because I go right when they open.

M: The one that has the factory in it?

B: I’ve been to that one, but I like the one that’s closer to the campus. I think it has more food. So I go there and it’s sunnier, there’s more windows.

M: The one near this campus?

B: I think so. Yeah

M: Yeah. Yeah. You have been around.

B: I didn’t realize it was that close to until now, but I go in the morning.

M: The building on top of you is student housing.

B: Oh really? Oh, that’s funny. That’s funny. Cool

M: For sure. Is there anything else you want to add?

B: It's up to you guys. Do you need any other questions answered?

M: I think we did a pretty good job here. Like the way we wrapped it up.