

Interviewee: Keri LeClair  
Interviewers: Jasper Loudon, Emma Lockwood  
Date of Interview: March 31, 2023  
Location: Clark University, Worcester, MA  
Transcribers: Jasper Loudon, Emma Lockwood



Overseen by: Prof. Melinda Marchand, Clark University

**Abstract:** Keri LeClair was born in Southbridge, Massachusetts, before moving to Worcester at a young age. While no longer a permanent resident of the city, she often returns here to visit family and has a lot of insight into the area, having grown up there. Keri is an inspirational, self-made woman, who has compiled an extensive and impressive resume. Keri has worked in all types of fields, from finance to municipal administration, and she uses these experiences to run her own business—Anchors Away Boat Detailing—that she started post COVID. Keri is also an avid supporter and participant in the arts. She regularly attends painting or clay workshops when her schedule permits. In this interview, Keri discusses her experiences with Worcester, both good and bad, tells her story of how she became who she is today and came to start her boat detailing business, and gives a lot of advice to young people, of all genders, in regards to growing up and starting businesses. Some key subjects Keri touches on are: the changing political landscape she has witnessed within her life, the challenges facing Worcester regarding the issues of homelessness and drug usage, and a lot of great personal and work advice for young people—particularly women working in male-dominated industries.

**EL:** So just to start off the interview, the first section is about your life and family and stuff. So what's your full name, including both your maiden name and married name, if applicable?

**KL:** Thank goodness there's no applicable married name. My name is Keri LeClair.

**EL:** Okay. So you're not married?

**KL:** No, that's a joke. I mean, maybe someday, but not right now. Yeah.

**EL:** Where were you born?

**KL:** In Southbridge, Massachusetts.

**EL:** Is there a hospital? Was there a hospital there?

**KL:** I think it's Harrington's in Southbridge [Southbridge, Ma, USA]

**EL:** Oh, cool, cool. Okay, we answered that one. Do you have children?

**KL:** I have one daughter. She is just fantastic. And I wish I could spend this whole time talking about her. But she's my best friend. She's 23. Her name is Courtney and yes, she is taking a break from school. She was going for nursing and now she will be returning for psychology in the next semester.

**EL:** Oh, cool. Where does she go to school?

**KL:** She'll be going to.... it's URI. [Univeristy of Rhode Island]

**EL:** Oh, cool. That's a really, really good school.

**KL:** Sorry, I kept getting Roger Williams [University] pop into my mind.

**EL:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with or your family background?

**KL:** So I know that the majority of my grandmothers—my mother's side of the family is Italian. My great grandmother, her last name was Marengo. I don't know too much about my biological father's side, but I always when I'm asked, I would say Italian. We have all the Italian recipes and I love to cook, so I go with that.

**EL:** So you think you, like the Italian culture played a part in your life growing up and everything?

**KL:** Not, not immensely. I know my mom was just always a phenomenal cook. She never needed a cookbook. Yeah. And just kind of like old school values, just like respect. Yeah, that's a big one. And work hard for what you want and don't put up with B.S. or anybody, that's for sure. But not in the mob way. Just like...[inaudible]

**EL:** Where have you lived throughout your life?

**KL:** So I grew up in the Brookfields [MA]. As an adult, I, when my daughter was young, I moved to the Sturbridge area. I was there for some years. I'm kind of one of those that likes to walk to the beat of my own drum. I had an opportunity back in 2010 to move out to Newport, Rhode Island, and that's always been a fun vacation place for our family. Yeah. I always went there since I was a kid. So when Courtney was younger, we moved out there for about almost five years, I think, and then moved back out this way. So I had been here for some time, lived in Boston for a couple of years. That's where I started my business. And then I moved back to Worcester for about two years.

**EL:** Nice

**KL:** Here and there. Not too far.

**EL:** Yeah, it's kind of the same area.

**KL:** Yeah. I like to experience new cities and spots.

**EL:** So would you say you're more of a city person?

**KL:** I'm a...I'm a, I'd say a good, healthy mix. I appreciate both. Yeah. I appreciate having the opportunity to go from a small farm town in the Brookfields to Worcester [MA]. You know, that was a big deal being younger. So yeah, you know, it's just it's neat to see different cultures in different cities, in different demographic areas.

**EL:** Yeah, totally. I feel the same way. Okay. What challenges do you think this city still faces and what would you change about the city? This city being Worcester.

**KL:** I would have to say I've certainly never driven around the city looking for faults. I mean, you can but there are things that are unavoidably...

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** ... in your face sometimes. And I would think that the biggest thing that I've noticed, I've only just, I haven't been moved out of the city, out of Worcester for too long. So the past couple of years, the biggest thing that sticks out to me that I don't view it as bothers-, I view it as bothersome, but not in the way some people do. Is this the homeless population...the drug epidemic in the city particularly. So not bothered that homeless people are on the streets. I'm...it's more of the back of my mind is why and what...I...and I don't mean it disrespectfully, you know there's so many things that I love about Worcester I can rave, but to say that I would change is I've never really seen outreach programs or vans here or there, compared to what I've seen in larger cities. So perhaps it's just that we haven't really quite incorporated anything like that yet, but I feel like that would be something. I feel like there may not be enough resources available that people may not know where to go to reach out for help.

**EL:** Yeah. No, I totally agree. Yeah. I wish I would say the same thing too.

**JL:** Can I interject here? Just to raise a follow up question. Why do you think that there haven't been these programs?

**KL:** I don't know. I will say, also respectfully to the city, I did work at City Hall for a short time and I know that they do have an office there that is designated to homelessness. I know that it's not something that's typically advertised because it's not really it's by appointment only, and I think that they don't want it to become just like a place to hang out. I don't know that they've been able to structure it enough in a way that the homeless community knows that there are resources available through the town hall.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** I knew that working there and then there would be people I would just interact with, maybe in CVS or I knew that, or maybe they were asking for change and I would make them aware that there is, there is help if you go that there are caseworkers that can sit down and help guide you as to what might be best for your specific needs. And anybody I've ever had that conversation with, they were like blown away. They didn't know that the city even offered anything like.

**EL:** I think that yeah, I feel like that's a really fair point because like I, I mean, obviously I've never been in a position to need those resources, but if I were like, I wouldn't even know.

**KL:** Where would you go?

**EL:** Or be able to know where to look, you know?

**KL:** Yeah

**EL:** I wouldn't even know where to start with that. I like I have no idea.

**KL:** So that's not even and just to just to clarify, that's not a knock at City Hall. It's not a knock at Worcester. It's in a lot of communities. I mean, even in Providence, it's, it's everywhere. And I think it's just a lot of people don't know where to start. They don't know. I guess it would be it would be up to the people in charge of city hall to look out for resources, whether it's funding, whether there are other like parent organizations that are countrywide, that they could come in, you know, set up shop in smaller cities like Worcester.

**EL:** Yeah. No, it's definitely not an issue that's unique to Worcester. Yeah, like it's everywhere. I think Worcester probably just, you know, it's like you said, it's a smaller city. So people, it's maybe like in the background like.

**KL:** Yeah

**EL:** Like Boston probably has a lot more of that stuff because it has a larger population.

**KL:** Correct

**EL:** And you know, what do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally? It's kind of a broad question.

**KL:** I know, as far as...Just growing up, being female or...?

**EL:** I mean however you want to answer like you can talk from your own experience being a woman in Worcester or.

**KL:** I feel a lot of the old feel of—a lot of what I know about Worcester is what my stepdad tells me when he grew up here of the 50s, 60s and how downtown was big and bustling. And it's always been like, you know, a business district and obviously with all the, you know, banks and everything and I have always pictured downtown especially to just be kind of right out of a

Norman Rockwell magazine. And it's just this ideal, beautiful, perfect business, kind of savvy city.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** So I think that that remains and it's growing and we have new businesses coming in and old ones going. And I know that with that, there's been a cliché for a long time for larger businesses and banks and larger companies primarily being run by men. So I find it neat. I love to keep up with the *Worcester Business Journal* and I love all of the things that they have and resources for women run businesses. And I know that there are some programs where they offer—it's kind of like business mentorship and they will assign you with a business mentor who's either owned or operated a business, and they're retired now. Actually, I think that program is also available through City Hall. They can kind of hook you up for smaller businesses, but they do have some programs that are primarily specific for women either starting or starting a business or just kind of help them get into the workforce.

**EL:** Cool. Yeah

**KL:** But as far as like other than work wise I always have work brain, work brain, 24/7, even when I don't need to be. So other than that, okay. What are, what are my hobbies? I love art, I love photography, I love walking. So yeah, I mean, I do it for a while. Just because I'm a woman, does it mean that I'm basically just—yeah, there's art shops, there's clay time. I can go make jewelry.

**EL:** Uhh I love Claytime

**KL:** Clay time, yeah. You know, you've got your paint and sips, but there's just, if you like, more of organic arts. I mean, there's a lot of great photography opportunities. I, for one, I love all the murals, all of the artist murals that are around my city and I'm having fun just finding new ones. Sometimes I'll come into the city, a brand new one will be there. I'll be like, “Oh my gosh.” So I'll find the artist name, where they signed, and I'll look them up. And I've been having fun making like Instagram reels with some of the artists' work here and then tag them in it and they love it. They're like, “Oh thanks!” So that's fun. I like to do stuff like that, but I think Worcester has something for everybody, every hobby. I'm also a tomboy and I love to go down and do ax throwing. So as a woman, yeah, you can find me there. Yeah, it's really depends what you like to do.

**EL:** Yes. So you would say generally like there's a lot of opportunities for everyone. Do you think you feel safe here as a woman in the city?

**KL:** After living in Boston, you've kind of seen it all. But I have experienced some situations in town that have not made me feel safe and things that, yeah, you're taught to, you know, be aware of your surroundings. Of course I teach my daughter. But, you know, at night you have to be careful where you are. Certain parts of town obviously. But I think if you're not hanging out in those areas, you're just, you know, okay. But yeah, I mean, if you, if you're keeping the two sides, it's I don't feel unsafe. I think at nighttime, is, there's been situations where people asking for money or something may have come up to the car that may be a little aggressive. Yeah, more so than during the day. But I also can hold my own and I'm not afraid to defend myself. You have to be careful because you don't know who you're interacting with.

**EL:** Of course

**KL:** I feel, yeah, I feel like one good, good thing about a city is there are so many people around, especially for you guys like on campus.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** There's always somebody even in earshot. So if you're from, if you, if you're using your common sense, don't go for walks during the park during the night that don't...

**EL:** You would be surprised how many people that's not common sense for them.

**KL:** So I mean, pick your friends what kind of friends do you want to have? What are your friends doing?

**EL:** Do you consider yourself active politically?

**KL:** I have stepped back from being active politically just due to the state of the way things seem to be.

**EL:** I think that's understandable.

**KL:** And it stinks that you just have to be so careful and not I don't mean in this interview, but you're putting yourself in danger of, offending or upsetting or being misunderstood, possibly

getting into political conversation, obviously with certain people that, you know, certain close friends and family are... But as far as like nowadays, I'm more cautious to get into conversations like that with strangers. And it's not that I, it's not that I don't still feel and believe the way I feel...

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** It's just that I feel like in general not to, not to go off topic or make this bigger, but the world in general just is so on edge right now. And I have to kind of pick my battles. The world's so stressed out about, like, gas or grocery prices. Like, I have to pick my battles. Like, what's my stress level at today? Like this person, this could either go one of two ways, this political talk. Am I mentally in the mood for this right now?

**EL:** No, it's really divided.

**KL:** It is so divided and it stinks that you even have to guess. I can tell you when I was a kid, pick, let's say twelve, well, I can remember my dad and our neighbor. One was Republican, one was Democrat. And they, they could stand outside in the backyard at night after work, sharing a beer, and they'd poke fun at each other for being opposite, but they'd still have a blast. And they were still friends and shake hands at the end of the night and they'd see each other next weekend.

**EL:** Exactly

**KL:** But now it's like one thing that's like end all, be all, then they've already assumed that how you think and what you feel about everything else in the world.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** I just feel like it's just so such a shame for everybody.

**EL:** I agree completely. It's like there's not going to be any progress if you can't have a conversation with someone.

**KL:** See, that's the thing.

**EL:** Yeah. If you're in a room full of people that all have the same beliefs as you, then like, how are you going to grow?



**KL:** And how is that if the world was all the same, if we all were exactly the same and thought the same way and believed the same things, we'd all be robots It would be like those books they make us read in junior high about like end of the world.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** That would be, like, boring. What is that? And you and I liked every single thing and believe the same way politically. And then I can say something, and then you just agree. Go, “Yeah, me too. Yeah, me too”. Like, what is that? Then you don't make progress in the world. You don't make progress in small groups. It's just—so right now, I feel like no matter what anybody says, it's, it's afraid to be offensive. And it is super important to be respectful of course. That's, that's a difference. To be respectful during conversations when you're speaking politically and allowing other people to have their opinion, regardless of how you feel, that's their opinion.

**EL:** Yes

**KL:** I don't want them telling me my opinions are wrong. So have that respect. But it's hard to, to feel that I feel like. Depending on who would, like I said, with close friends, you know, I can get more, you know, you can get into deeper and not have to worry about it. But it's just out in public if something comes up, I think nowadays people are more apt to just keep their mouth quiet than even say anything. Yeah. And it's just, I think a whole lack of respect for each other as a society. I mean, this can go like in all kinds of directions. Like this is like they can go down a sociology, you know, path right there. Just lack of respect. Everybody thinks, you know, that song I like The Maine made a new version now, but I think it was Tears for Fears. “Everybody wants to rule the world.” The Maine’s version, anybody who likes a little bit of old school, I mean they came out with was but they have another new version of that song. That's pretty cool. But it's true. We have, you know, just psychologically we're all just we wake up in our own brain, our own life, and it's just us and then throw in all the junk that's happening in the world. And just that combination, I think people are just kind of right now in like fight or flight mode.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** And, and kinda, what's next? It's like there's been so many negative things happening in the world that people are kind of like don't really know what to do with them. So everybody's like, what's next? What, good, bad. And so I think a lot of people politically, they don't know--I have a lot of friends who are here in Worcester and elsewhere. They've switched what they used to believe since the last presidency with some of the topics that have come up over the news, they've switched how they feel about those things. And I tell my daughter, like, if she was sitting here, just like if I had to give advice about navigating politically, you know, with conversations, how you grow to—I mean 20 years ago when I was your age, I, my whole thought process was a lot different. You know, I had, I had beliefs that I learned from my family and parents. Yeah, but

it's changed. You're always growing and changing. But I think as long as you're just - no one in the world is at any more value level than anybody else.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** Even the homeless person that we were talking about earlier, they are worth and valued in this universe just as much and like their political opinions are mean just as much as mine. And I think just respecting each other in small communities like Worcester and in, in, in as a whole, just people you interact with every day. I think just seeing respect come back is just we could get make so much progress and just cut out all the bull crap and people wouldn't feel so stuck, I feel like.

**EL:** No, I agree.

**KL:** I feel like right now everyone feels like they have to pick a side. Cause if they don't, you know, then like what will their friends think? Especially younger. And I know again, I can speak for my daughter. Her generation is very liberal in that I don't know how they could have been the other way. They could have all been very Republican. It's just what timing, you know, whatever it is that made it that way. But, but her and her friends, you know, that I've talked to, it's like they almost feel like they have to pick, they're either Republican or Democrat or this or that. And if they don't, they find themselves losing friends like. And it's just, it's mind boggling to me.

**EL:** Yeah. I think there's a lot of really good things that have come out because of the Internet and like younger generations, like your daughter and I's generation where it's like accepting people and like being able to express yourself and like being open with like your sexuality. I think that's all like really great and you know, building this like, community of acceptance and whatever. But I do think there's like, there's, I mean, there's an extreme side to everything both ways.

**KL:** And anything.

**EL:** And there's definitely an, a very extreme side to our generation being liberal where it's like I've had conversations with people which are like they won't be friends with someone because they're a [Donald] Trump supporter. And it's like, I don't - to write someone completely off because of that, I think is like...

**KL:** ...and it's so funny too because if I, I have no problem, so I have no problem saying I'm a Republican. But it's funny now, even as I'm talking about this, I'm questioning whether I should say that in this interview, because I'm already afraid right now some of these people that would have loved to read about whatever I have to say, whatever that is, now they've already stopped reading, you know but saying that, people automatically assume that I voted for Trump and that I'm a Trump supporter. And I won't say if I did or not, but it's like there's that automatic when

you state, you know, your political affiliation it's like, "Oh, well, you support that and that and that and everything else under that since the beginning of time that's ever been Republican. You are all of that!" It's like, no, guys, I'm still just me. I just kind of I believe in some of the values that go along with it. And I don't know, but educating yourself and knowing what you're talking about. I've also gotten to some political conversations with people who just wanted to be mad and just wanted to be right and didn't know what the heck they were talking about. And they ended up being wrong. And then it's just at the end, it's like, what was this even for? Like, are we still friends? We are. Oh, okay. Well, all right, well, let's go out to eat. I don't know.

**JL:** Let's talk about education. Where did you attend school for any level?

**KL:** Okay, so grade school...Just in my small hometown. And then I was home schooled from I think it was fourth grade to seventh grade. And then I went to a private school here in Worcester. I don't think it's here anymore. It was called First Assembly Christian Academy. It was right on Lincoln Street. I think the church is still there. It was just a very small private school. My mother thought that growing up in the woods, attending bonfires on Friday nights might turn me into a heathen, so I got shipped off to private school. But I did actually make some really great friends there that I still am really close with to this day. So that was, I don't know, it was, that I think that was 'til ninth grade.

**EL:** It was at a boarding school?

**KL:** No, no, it was just day. My dad worked in Westborough, so he dropped me off on the way. But then for ninth grade is when I went to Quabbin [Quabbin Regional High School]. And then from there I first started out at Mount Wachusett [Mount Wachusett Community College], for art and I just didn't really—I feel like kids have so much pressure as to what they need and want to do. Their brains aren't even fully developed. I think females are what, 21, 22? Men it's like 24.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** But they expect us to know what we want to do for the rest of our life. So I start out with art just because I love art, but that's like not something you learn. You either have it or you don't. So I felt that was just, like, wasteful of money. And then I switched to criminal justice. I did that, got bored with that for after a while, and then I went for business. Then I had my daughter really young. So this is kind of like, was a little something...school got put on hold here and there college wise. I had my daughter when I was 18, so being mom kind of came first, but I took breaks, but I never stopped, you know, I just kept going. And I ended up getting a job at a bank as a teller when I was about 21? 21. So my daughter was just a couple of years old. So that was like my first like adult job, I call it. And then from there I just kind of dove right in. I was going to night school and working on that and I really—when you're young, especially seeing my dad, my dad was like a business briefcase guy. He'd go to work every day with his briefcase and I always looked up to that. I remember being a young teenager, like, "Oh, I want a briefcase

someday,” but heck, what's a briefcase? But I ended up getting that briefcase. I worked my way up there a little bit. I was helping to manage the call center for the bank years later, and that was fun. And I learned just a lot of my basic customer service skills in those early years in banking. And then I went on to just take the roles I worked in human resources in the back end of Amcomm Wireless for some time in Sturbridge. They're a Verizon Wireless retailer that I loved. I got to kind of write and build their employee manual and helped with some of their marketing when they opened up new locations. I worked for my family also, my, my parents owned some restaurants over the years, so that was kind of fun. So with my business kind of brain, I was able to help them with that and chipped in when I can. That was their thing, but you know, I was still in and put my two cents in whether they wanted it or not sometimes...and I am trying to think...what else? Primarily just stayed in finance in Boston. I had little jobs here and there over the years, but in Boston I worked for another bank down in the Seaport and then COVID hit. And our whole department was sent home to work, like a lot of the rest of the world. And it just was—I couldn't—it wasn't for me. I didn't want to sit home. And I tell people this, when they ask me why I started my business, I didn't want to just kind of stay home and collect unemployment. And I just kind of started doing research and got the boat detailing business going. And then here I am four years later with that. So it's funny because you're always changing as a person and you really you grow and you learn new things and you're still always interested in new things. And I feel like as a kid, we're kind of taught to like, once you pick what you want to do, that's it, and then learn it, do it, retire, and then that's it. But then it's like, wait a minute. And I remember my dad telling me when COVID, you know, and I'm like, “I don't know what I want to do.” And he's like, “Do something that you love. Because then it will never feel that you feel like you're working a day in your life.”

**EL:** Mm hmm.

**KL:** So that's kind of what drove me to start the boat detailing business was just my love of the ocean. Just what can I do? How can I be near the water every day? Anybody can clean and detail, but there's a lot of research that, you know, went along with it. But it was like a whole other ballgame as far as a whole different career path. And but, but to answer the education questions, I wouldn't have been able to have my business now. Everything I've learned throughout my roles, I've kind of sucked up as much as I can, learned from people older than me or more experienced than me, tried to forget things that didn't work, as far as marketing or just good customer service. Dropped the stuff like I basically have always, whether it was in banking or marketing or with my customers now it's like I just treat them how I want to be treated. Like if I walk into a store, whether it's a grocery store or buying a car. It's just like I kind of got off topic a little bit, but I'm just trying to emphasize the business aspect of the education and just kind of trying to carry all those positive things that I learned with me to continue growing, but leaving the bad habits and stuff that didn't work kind of behind me.

**EL:** Sounds like you're perfectly equipped to run your business. I mean, you have art as a background, finance, business, customer service. Like those are all...I mean, that's really all you can ask for as far as running your own business, right?

**KL:** It is. It's a blessing and a curse. Yeah. Because now all of those I would love to pay to have somebody do all of those roles. And I have, like when we get busy during the summer, I will hire extra help. My daughter does work with me, my brothers work with me. I'm training my other brother now to work with me this summer. I have five, I am 1 of 5. My sister did do my accounting for me and scheduling for me last summer. So it's, it's been helpful to have that. But so it's good. Yes, I can do my own advertising. I can do my own bookkeeping. However, for example, I still have not finished all of my receipts and tax paperwork from 2022 yet just because I don't have time.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** So it's good to have those skills, but it's balancing.

**EL:** Yeah, of course.

**KL:** But, but it is, it's good saving me money. I complain like, oh, I wish I had someone to help all this. But then it's like, Oh, well, I don't have that outgoing payroll, so.

**JL:** I have a-- it's not in our script--but I have a question about like the nautical industry. I have worked in certain aspects of it as well, and I've always found it to be dominated by very traditionalist men. I was going to ask you, what is it like to be a woman in that environment that can be so very sexist?

**KL:** It's, it's a wonderful question. And I'm actually glad you asked. And I actually wrote a funny Facebook post maybe two weeks ago, and I wrote I had a call in the morning and it was just an older gentleman, and he asked me, "Oh, is this, is this the the boat detailing company? So I said, "Yes sir, how can I help you?" And, and he was explaining to me what he needed help on. And he said, "Well, you know, I have a lot of a lot of rust up near the bow. Did you do you know where the bow is?" So and I just...and here is the thing is, I don't even think he didn't mean it that way. It didn't sound that way. But how exactly could I possibly know? And you know what? If you don't know, you don't know the bow is the front and the stern is the back. In case you didn't know. But that's just like—so I didn't even take offense to it because I could hear his tone and, you know, he wasn't. But it was just like he truly was, like, astounded that I could know that. And, and I'm thinking if this guy knew like four weeks ago, I was scrubbing out barnacles and live crabs from an air conditioning unit of a three-floor yacht. Like. "Yeah, honey, I know, you want to call me honey...I know, yes, sir, yes, sir. I know where the bow is." And so it's, I try to laugh it off and you don't take it personally, but there are men who will often like to oversee my work and I don't mind if customers are there. It's easier for me if they're not. It's because it's

kind of like, it's like you've got someone over your shoulder. I can work faster if I don't feel like I'm being watched.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** I like the boats with cameras because they know how long they've been there. They can see you're working hard, but it kind of makes it...kind of slows me down when they're there. So there are instances where, where they'll come on and they'll kind of, "Oh, we'll use this product or I don't do it that way." And it's like, I have to bite my tongue to be professional. I'm just thinking, "Oh, I really know what I'm doing." And, and, you know, and I'll say politely, "It's been, you know, a couple of years, and I promise you you'll be really happy with the results." And, and they are. And I get it. It's a lot of money. It's a lot it's probably the most expensive hobby in the universe, is yachting. It's this whole other universe, literally of it, in and of itself. One boat, the boat I was just recently working on had four engines. Each one was around \$165,000. So if one of those goes down—and that, that's just the, that's a four bedroom yacht. That's not even a big yacht. So you know, you've got those repairmen and you've got, you know, people that do certain things. I know of a company I work with. We all kind of kind of refer and they just install the electric equipment for the satellite navigation for when you're offshore so far you can only have GPS, so they're trained to go on and just install that. And you'd never think you can just get that on the boat. There's people that are just like for cars, you know, it's people that just know how to install boat showers. It's a whole different, you know, it's, it's a world, it's fun, it's different. But as far as that, I'm very much the alpha female. And when guys try to, like there's the guys that will make jokes, you know, to try to like egg me on and see my reaction. But like I've come up with so many one liners so like I'll [give it right back to them]. I'll ask them if they know where something is that I know they don't and then see their face like, "Oh, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah [inaudible]. You just have a strong backbone. But I hope I'm inspirational, and it's actually—I'll say this really quick. There is a company or it's an organization out of Newport and they just had a seminar recently about women in yachting around New England. And they, they had some speakers come and it was kind of conversations like that. It was based for women trying to come up in the industry being primarily run by men up to now. And so we'll see.

**EL:** Yeah, I mean, my sister's in business too. She works at a construction company.

**KL:** Oh, good for her.

**EL:** Another male dominated field. So she definitely....

**KL:** To me that's inspirational, you know?

**EL:** No, I'm, like, so impressed with women that work in male dominated fields and vice versa, like male nurses and stuff like that. It's like, I think it's really cool and really impressive.

**KL:** Yeah, it's just work. It's like what you want to learn and you know. Yes, men typically go into those roles for physical strength, you know what I mean? But yeah, it's interesting.

**JL:** I've like two questions. One of them is, do you find... it sounds like you work mostly on motor yachts. Do you ever do anything with sailboats or like...?

**KL:** Yes. So when in your free time and this is not advertising, but you can check out our website. I don't want you to say it here. But I won't because I don't want to. This is not for that. But we'll do anything. So we've, we've cleaned fishing boats. Right here in Worcester a lot of the guys at the Marine Corps League, all their pontoon boats over there, I'm already getting calls to go clean those. So those are a lot of retired vets and police officers. And I actually offered them a military discount. So they love that they get 20% off. I'm always at Lake Quinsig (Lake Quinsigamond) in the summertime, so that's fun. But so now we've, we've really done...our company is ours, meaning family, it's interior. So when I say detailing, a lot of people just think of like the outside, they picked, like the buffing. We don't touch the outside. It's just everything I say deck on. So for an open bow fishing boat where there's like the vinyl like seating around, you know, that seats 8 to 10 people, for interior, that would just mean scrubbing the deck, reconditioning or deep cleaning the seats, getting rid of any rust [on] the windows, getting all the bugs off the satellite equipment and stuff like that. But then on the larger yachts, you know, that's more like housekeeping work.

**EL:** Yeah

**KL:** Because every marina they stop at along the way, you know, these people are—it's like it's just a permanent vacation. So every marina they're at they have staff that live on board with them. So when we get those boats, it's usually when they're either understaffed or just it got filthy and they need extra help or it's being sold and we have extra time or being bought. We get a lot of calls from brokers who have a big boat, like this thing. It's like five years of these people we need gone so these people can move on. But I actually like the dirty ones and I like the dirty fishing boats. I mean, we've seen it all. We've, we've literally the other day, like I did a small tugboat recently. So I think the only thing we haven't been on is a barge, honestly. And I'm good at stopping there.

**JL:** What is it like running an ocean-based business from Worcester? Because we are decently far from the water, unfortunately.

**KL:** Yes. So as mentioned, since I was propositioned for the interview, I have since moved to Providence, but I'm still here almost at least weekly, sometimes if not more because of my family. My father's still here. But that was not a problem at all. It's anywhere I go, the ocean is going to be at least a half hour. My move to Providence is strictly to be a little bit closer and we tried to expand to Newport this past summer. So we've got Boston, Worcester and Providence, so

we're kind of up and down the coast. So the driving never was even an issue. I don't mind if it's a customer and it's a long day on the water. It's a nice day. So yeah. And plus I've got Quinsig here and then I've done work in Douglas. There's a lot of people in Central Mass that, I mean, not as much, with the smaller boats like around here. It's, you know, middle class people, they want to work on it themselves. Like if I buy my own boat, even if I didn't have a boat detailing company, I'd want to be working on it, tinkering myself. You know what I mean? So it really depends on the client. Tell them what they're looking for. But I have done a lot of work in Central Mass on the little local lakes here. Webster Lake, a little one in Oxford.

**EL:** Cool

**JL:** Any consideration of expanding like northward past Boston? Up into like Maine?

**KL:** My brother James, whom I started the business with, he's currently living a couple of minutes from Bangor.

**JL:** Oh that's right where I live.

**KL:** Oh, really? That's really neat. Okay, so we have that in the works to be starting there. That's a hope of ours. We've started some of the processes to make that expansion out there. I don't know because I like how we're small; customers know us. They know who they're talking to. They know our faces. I've gone to other marinas and in Boston everybody can now go to the other people's boats at the other marina. So, I'll be cleaning at one and I'll see some of my customers from Salem. I'll be like, "Oh, hey, guys." I appreciate that small—so I do want to expand to a point and I can do that any time really. And I've actually been contemplating if this year will be that. But I don't want to lose that like...

**EL:** Community?

**KL:** ...that small, one on one, just non-corporate feel. You know, it's non-corporate. You know, I can show up with a messy bun. I always wear my Anchors Away shirt, but you know that they like that non robotic like they'll call me, "Hey, can I get you a coffee? But no, I already brought you one." You know, it's like this. They like that. Just kind of like I'm a friend, you know, it's a friend business relationship type. It's more personal.

**EL:** I had a question about the name of the company.

**KL:** Yeah

**EL:** So is that based off the musical at all? Anchors Away?

**KL:** I didn't know there was a musical. Okay, but now I may look that up tonight.



**EL:** It's is me being a nerd.

**KL:** No, you're not.

**EL:** I saw Anchors Away and that's like a old timey, like, tap dancy musical about, like, a woman on a boat. So I was like, I saw the name and I was like, "Oh, maybe that's why she named it that."

**KL:** I've had so many questions about the name. So my brother actually picked the name. It was—we were sitting in my living room in Brookline and just trying to come up with logos and stuff. And so typically in the military or navy, the term anchors away is a-w-e-i-g-h but my brother and I had a really bad, bad sense of humor, we wanted something like quirky that only we would know and we were hanging out, and so we were laughing and he's like, "Yeah, but we want a lot of boats." Picture this like a "That 70's Show" episode.

**EL:** Yeah, yeah.

**KL:** We want a lot of boats. He's like, yes. So what's the last thing you do? Like on a big boat before you go? Well, you pull up your anchor. You really don't, you really untie from the dock, but you know, go with that. It was like one of those go with that moments. Well, yeah. So he's like, he's like, all right. So anchors like that's plural. He's like, we want all the anchors on all the boats in all of Boston. They're going to like if the anchors are away, you know, it's like that's that was kind of the felt like anchors away. That means your boat's clean, go out have fun on your boat. So that's kind of—so the spellings different but we kind of did it like that on purpose.

**EL:** Oh, cool. Okay. Do you want to...

**JL:** I was going to ask you, how do you feel or how do you feel you've done in balancing your different priorities and responsibilities and roles throughout your life with business and personal? And do you feel like you've been successful at that? Is there anything you would change in hindsight?

**KL:** I will answer this as if I were giving advice. Okay. Okay. So yes, growing up with my parents, always working hard, I just had that instilled in me. So I've always kind of just had that brain. I'm actually—I just had to submit an article not similar to anything like this, but it's for this boating magazine, but they were asking a similar question. and I feel like time management is so important to just your own sanity in the sense that it's so easy to get so wrapped up. There'll be times at night where I maybe just made an ad, you know, for the next week, and then I get sucked into, oh, I forgot to send these people this contract, you know, and I can probably do invoicing for next week too, or I'm already awake, my computer's open and then it's 3:00 in the morning and then I'm tired the next day. So it's just it's being smart. It's just it's good to know

those things. It's good to stay balanced and have a good schedule for yourself and stay on target for me. And I use my calendar for everything, my Google calendar, and it's like if it's not there, I don't even know it exists. So just staying organized. But there are definitely have been times where I have accidentally—how do you say, what's the term, overpromised, under-delivered. And it was not obviously not intentional. I had every good intention and it was to try to make two customers happy and I didn't manage my time wisely and everything happened. Everything was okay in the end, but it just stressed me out and wasn't worth it. And it's just you don't. You can do a good job, but still not drive yourself crazy. And at the end of the day, we're all still human. And it's just the job.

And it's important to take time to do your hobbies, do your things that you like, or else you will—because even though I'm doing my dad said, do something you love, it doesn't feel like work, I can see how quickly that whole concept in point can just kind of go out the window if you're just getting sucked into just that and nothing else because that's like what I'm doing. Yeah, I'm enjoying my time on the water, but that's 3 hours, you know, three or 4 hours for an average boat and all this other time, is like, so you have to really just make a point now that you've—I'm glad you asked me that question because you know what? I was going to go home tonight and work on invoices, but now I'm going to look up that movie. So you have to just make time for yourself.

**JL:** I was going to ask you, do you feel like you have any regrets about how your professional life has gone so far? I know it's like a hard it is a question.

**KL:** That is really hard. I know we're getting short in time. My regrets would be yes. And I will give this as if I were giving advice to you guys. I'm thinking. I'm thinking of my daughter. If this is a type- But think of this as for you guys too, would be staying in jobs where I was not valued, where I was, where my skill sets were acknowledged and used, but they were not valued. Don't ever lower yourself for a job, even if you think that you might have a promotion in three months in if you just just just, if you do this and you're supposed to because it's the corporate world and this is what I'm supposed to do. A lot of my life up until about maybe eight years ago was I did everything business-wise, what I was supposed to do, where everybody else was doing, what corporate America tells you, what society tells you, you know, so you can have your first house and your first mortgage and your car and you're supposed to have all these things. And you can only do that by making more money and working your way up and companies and you waste. And it's like, that's not what life is supposed to be about. And I look back at how much of my life I wasted on that. I don't mean this to say don't, I don't want it to come off as don't work hard, but don't let anybody, don't stay in jobs that you think you need at the moment because that's your only way to the next best thing.

This is there are so many jobs and if there isn't one, make one, make it. Find something you love, make an Instagram, whatever. Like I am so much in support of entre—entrepreneurship, say that ten times fast, and I just feel like I see a lot of people getting stuck in jobs and I see friends from

high school that are still in their first job out of college and they're miserable and they've never—they've—and I'm not knocking it. I'm not I can't even say some. I feel like individually I wouldn't. But it's just I see people just like in this. It's like, what do you do? Same day, every day. So people love that. So it's like, that's just for me. It's just I don't want anyone to ever feel stuck and don't ever feel stuck because there's so many jobs. And you know what? You might be doing the same thing at another company and it's just a whole different vibe. And they love you and they're and you're going to have a whole different attitude every day when you walk into work. Just so that I think I stayed in jobs where I was taken advantage of for my skill set. And then I kind of got used to that and I thought that was just what was happened in the business world too. So yeah.

**EL:** That's really good advice.

**KL:** There's always another job and you're worth it. I heard a thing and I'll add it to that is when it goes, it's a meme and it says, Don't let anybody... wait, no, hold on. How did, I'm going to get it wrong, like, don't let anybody call you like just an avocado like you are guacamole, baby. It's like that. And I love that.

**JL:** Well, that's good advice for people,

**EL:** That's really good advice.

**JL:** Nothing gives me more anxiety than thinking, oh, [INAUDIBLE], I got to get a job. Cause I have to get a job soon.

**KL:** You do have to get a job. And I will also say this, the whole ghosting thing and dating, that's ridiculous enough. But the ghosting thing with jobs, I will tell you both and whoever student is ever going to read this is that yes, you guys might not believe it, but like the whole old school thing of like a two-week notice. And if you're not interested in a position to politely decline, like I have wasted hours of my life, like interviewing people, like chasing people, like no call. No, she's just like, oh, yeah, no. I just decided I didn't want it. And I'm like, well, that would have been really nice if you called or... And then just like giving a two-week notice is just so commendable and respectable. Like, I had a guy, I had a guy quit on me last year, and then I got

a call that he wanted a work reference. He was just he never came back like and I'm like, is this guy real? Like, it's kind of silly to add to here, but just always give it two-week notice. You can always use them as a reference. Yeah, miserable as you might be. It's respectable to you. And you know what is awkward is your last two weeks might be stick it out because then they really can't have anything to say to you. You can just politely depart and find another job and if you don't like that one fine, it's not to job jump I mean, yeah, your whole point to be in school is to find something you really love, but don't settle it. Follow your gut. And if you feel like something's not right, even in your interview, like just follow your gut because your gut, whatever you whatever that gut is supposed to be in quotes, its usually right

**EL:** Yeah. So that's good advice. I know a lot of people that just for the two week notice. just don't show up. And I'm like-

**JL:** That's unprofessional.

**EL:** It's just. And my dad's like a business owner, so it's like, he's like instilled. He's like, don't do that.

**KL:** Because, you know, it's really hard because then it's like, yeah, it's,

**EL:** I get that it's like awkward and uncomfortable and like, you know, I think, oh, generally, like, people in our generation don't like confrontation.

**KL:** Don't like confrontation. But, you know, I would rather someone say to me, “You know what? This isn't really what I thought it was going to be, but thank you for the opportunity.” And you know what? I really went to school for X, Y, Z, and I if I was offered this job and if someone if I if someone's working for me and I'm like a fill in for them and they're just in there in school. That's why I get applicants is mostly like college kids. They want a fun summer job, you know, hang out on water. And if they—I had a girl and she's like, “I just got this job opportunity,” and it was in her in her field. And I was like, run and go like, you know, like I gave her a gift card. If you're honest, and you have a decent employer they'll respect you. And if they don't, then thank goodness you're leaving anyway.

**JL:** Yeah. Oh I was going to say I was curious. I guess you've given us a lot of good advice, but it's I feel like it's general advice. But this one, based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today's and future generations?

**KL:** Oh, okay. All right. That's right this is a woman thing. Okay. What advice would you give to women now and future generations?

**EL:** I mean, I guess you could frame it like what advice would you give to like your daughter or like someone you know, like our generation? Like people our age. Like based on your own life.

**KL:** Okay. Mine is. If I could go back and relive my life and I could tell the figure that Courtney would sit with you or she doesn't have to be here. She can. She gets enough. I feel like, okay, so it would be that that came to my mind because I remember just like high school junior, senior trying to find your way. All that wonderful high school [INAUDIBLE]. It's like I just dropped an F-bomb, like, 5 seconds ago. Is that then? You're like, it is a lot of societal, like I just said. And this isn't just our generation. Like, it's just look at sociologically. Since the beginning of time. Cave man meets cave woman have babies. Men go to work woman stay home, clean, do laundry, make more babies, cook clean, men go to work. And it's like, obviously that's how we build our population. I mean, so you look at the family dynamics since the beginning of time and so there is a societal pressure as to what we as women are supposed to do and not supposed to do. And I do still feel that also as even though my daughter's grown and even though I've gotten to a point in life, I reach the goals that I've wanted to reach for myself in life. But I got there. I could have gotten there a lot sooner if I stopped doing what everybody else was telling me to do, even though my parents gave me good advice. There's a lot of advice to give me that I had to take in and not, you know, not use it. It doesn't mean they didn't love me, but it wasn't for me. That was what they wanted for me. Yeah. So friends to your best friends, your teachers, I would say find a college professor - one that you really can connect with that you really and like have like them be your mentor. Like keep in touch with them. You know, if it's someone that you trust, trust, obviously trust, but someone that you feel is like good, like that you feel confident in you respect them, you respect their life. You stay in touch with them and just keep those keep those connections. But don't ever do what you think you need to do because somebody else is telling that's what you're supposed to do. Because at the end of the day, it's your life. As long as you're not out committing crimes and you're trying to make do your best in your and maybe you make someone smile and you're doing good in the world like there is no life you're supposed to live. It's your life. And you have you have both like your whole lives ahead of you can do anything in the world, anything there's like anything that you want to do.

You might be 55 years old and decide that you want to become the new poker champion of New England and you've never played poker in your life. But you know what? If you set your mind to it and you learn poker and you can, and I have bad jokes, but I doubt you're going to be doing that. But you learn it and you can do it like it's anything you want to do. You just put your mind to, but make sure it's what you want to do, not what you're being told to do, but not breaking laws.

