

Interviewee: Carolyn Milewski
Interviewers: Monica Fenwick and Emma Ganci
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Transcribers: Monica Fenwick and Emma Ganci
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Abstract: Carolyn D. Milewski, a Worcester native, was born in 1948. As a Polish-American, she grew up in the Vernon Hill area with those of the same ethnic background. Carolyn attended St. Mary's High School and later continued her education in the field of accounting by earning an associate's degree at Becker Junior College and a bachelor's degree at Nichols College. Carolyn says that she felt she was given an opportunity most women don't receive when her male employer paid for her college education. Carolyn also had to overcome obstacles when compared to men. Carolyn's interview highlights how a male signature was required to receive a credit card, to take out a mortgage, and to get a loan. During the course of her career, Carolyn noticed that most leadership roles were limited to men, and that most medical professionals were men. She spent time being her parents' caregiver, although she had an equally qualified brother. Carolyn shares her views on the suicide epidemic, and how she had a stronger way to deal with her own personal struggles. She used her struggles to help herself.

EG: So basically providing explanation on why we are doing this interview, the woman's--- the Worcester Women's History Project is basically a city world--- city- wide oral history of the lives of Worcester women to collect stories of the broad range of experiences based on the goals of the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester. We are focusing on areas of women's education, health, work, and politics and community involvement. We want to focus today's experience for our class, Women's Studies, on how it was for you to be brought up as a woman. And on that sense, so thank you for your help on this important project.

CM: Could I just ask, are all the colleges in Worcester doing this or is it just an Assumption Col--- the fact that you mentioned Worcester?

EM: Yeah.

CM: I didn't know if it was...

MF: I think some of the other colleges do it, too.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Okay. I never heard of it, so to me it's new.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Okay.

EG: They mentioned some of the other colleges did it as well, but I think for this class it is mostly an Assumption based...

MF: So, do you want to start or me? [Laughter]

MF: Okay. So first we are going to ask what is your full name, including both maiden name and married name, if applicable?

CM: Okay, my name is Carolyn D. Milewski and I am single, never married. So there's no children, no husband. None of the above.

EG: What culture or ethics or ethnicities do you identify with, like your family background?

CM: Right. Well, first of all, I'm white and because it was on that question thing there, and I'm Polish -American.

EG: Okay.

CM: But I am born in America but of Polish ethnic background.

MF: Were your parents from Poland?

CM: No. My parents are American also.

EG: Do you want to tell us more about your parents other than where they are from?

CM: Well they're both deceased now by age. If they were alive, they would be 99 years old. They were both born in Worcester, my parents. First of all, are you Worcester people or are you out of state?

MF: I'm from out of state.

CM: Okay.

EG: I'm from Massachusetts.

CM: Okay. Through the time you've been going to school, you must know Worcester's kind of identified with neighborhoods or areas. There's many cities and towns. So, in Worcester there is an area called Vernon Hill. Are you familiar with that?

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: Okay. It's where Kelly Square is, where they are going to build the big Polar Baseball...

MF: Oh, okay, yeah.

CM: Okay.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Kelly Square, Water Street, okay. If you go up the hill that's Vernon Hill, okay. So my parents both came from Vernon Hill, okay. And in those days, turn of the century, the city was divided into those kind of areas. People always identified, they said, "I came from Vernon Hill, I came from Grafton Hill. I came from Shrewsbury Street." Like the Italians, you know. Kind of ethnic people lived in ethnic neighborhoods. So, my parents lived on Vernon Hill, which were predominantly Polish, Irish and Lithuanian. The Italians were all down on Shrewsbury Street, you know. French people were up on Grafton Hill. So that's why I---I just refer to that because you're not from this area, and you're not aware of that. But many communities have ethnic neighborhoods. My parents went to school, by that I mean they went to Saint Mary's School, which was a Polish Catholic school. They technically didn't know each other as children, but they met later, in their early 20's. Because again when people live in ethnic neighborhoods, you know the kids in the neighborhoods, so to speak. [clears throat] So anyway, they married. They were 26 years old. I'm doing the math. [laughter]. They were 26 years old when my father came back from World War II, because my father served in the war. They were engaged. So, when he got discharged from the military, that's when they got married. They continued to live on Vernon Hill. I was born in 1948. They got married in 1946. I was born in 1948. And they continued to live on Vernon Hill which is, again, answers the questions I gave to you there. And they lived there until 1950 when we then moved, my parents and myself, to Auburn. So since 1950, I lived in Auburn. So, technically I was born in Worcester. I lived in Worcester for a very short period

of time. But my parents moved to Auburn because that was...Again, if you study history and so forth...When the military men came back and they were all getting married and moving to the suburbs and the baby boomers were born, and so I'm one of those baby boomers. So, they moved to Auburn. My mother was a stay at home mom, housewife. My father went to work and then in 1952 my brother was born. So two years later. And we still continued living in Auburn and I still live in Auburn. So, I really identify with living in Auburn. But all my family relatives, connections, and my connections were in Worcester, because even though I lived in the suburbs, we were very close to a bus route and I rode the bus into Worcester. And I went to Saint Mary's kindergarten, grammar school, and high school. Graduated in 1966 from the high school. And the main reason why my life evolved that way was because Saint Mary's was a Polish Catholic school. So again, ethnic people and again a lot of changes in the city in all these years. A lot of ethnic people went to their ethnic schools. The Italians went to their Italian school, the French kids went to their French schools, the Irish kids went to the Irish school, and so we went to the Polish school. That's why even though we lived in the suburbs, we commuted into the city and anyway I graduated in 1966. I did not go off to college. I went off to work. In those days, 1966, there wasn't much emphasis on having to go to college. And the reason I say that is because you could literally get a job anywhere. I mean --- and my skills, that time coming out of high school, was I had business skills. Meaning I had typing, I had bookkeeping, and so I went into the workforce. And I started working, and I worked my way up, you know, through the ages and so forth into different level of jobs and so forth. But one of the ironic things is, and answering the questions on the paper, was that I've always been in accounting. Started out bookkeeping and then worked up to accounting. And things started changing, like everything in the world. I'm not quite sure on this but by the end of the '70's already, Bill Gates and those people were creating the computers and stuff, okay.

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: Alright, if you go back to when I was in high school, there was no such thing as a computer. We didn't know what a computer was, okay. There was no such thing as a cell phone. We were taught to do math, and so forth, on spreadsheet. You know on the excel spreadsheet? Well, we did that on a piece of paper, a spreadsheet. So, it was kind of towards the end of the '70s when all this technology was kind of coming on the scene, and so forth. And I was at a job working in Worcester at that time for a gentleman who recognized my abilities. And he said to me, "Carolyn, why don't you have a college education?" He was was a very nice man and he said to me, "I think you should consider going to college." He says, "And if you do not want to go to a four- year college, then why don't you think of a junior college or a community college?" And at that time Quinsigamond Community College existed, Becker [College] existed. So, I checked out a few schools, and the reason I went to school, was he paid my education.

EG/MF: Oh, that's so nice.

CM: Those were the days, not so much now, when employers would pay and reimburse you for your college education. So anyway, I went to Becker College. I went part- time and I worked days and evening. He paid my tuition, he paid for my books. And I was a straight A student. And I graduated class valedictorian.

EG/MF: Oh wow. Congratulations.

CM: So, he was impressed. Okay, he got his money's worth, shall we say, okay. And, in fact, when I graduated, he kind of gave me a little bonus, financial bonus. I remember he had a vase of flowers for me that day, we had a cake in the office. All that kind of rah rah. [Laughter]. And I have to say, you know, I struggled through it like anyone. You're working and you were going to school part- time and so forth, and at that time Becker College was Becker Junior College. So I took the business course, I took the accounting courses, and I graduated... with honors. And then I decided because I was already in that mode, that educational process mode, I then went to Nichols College out in Dudley. So, I literally graduated in June and then transferred over to Nichols. That took me six years and again I'm talking part- time because I'm going nights. And I'm still living in Auburn, so I'm commuting to Dudley the other way. This was my routine, I worked till 5 o'clock, ran down the parking lot, jumped in my car, drove home. My parents were alive. I lived at home. My mother had supper at the table. I wolfed down that supper and got to college at six o'clock.

EG: Oh wow, that is a busy schedule.

CM: I did that for six years.

EG: Did you enjoy it?

CM: Yes. I mean you look back on it [laughter]. But I did that summer, winter, spring and fall.

EG: Yeah.

CM: I went around the clock. And at that time, again the colleges have changed so much with the courses, you know, you had to sign up for a course and it was eight weeks. Well, if there was enough enrollment, the class ran. I'll give you an example, if you took accounting you had to take accounting one and accounting two. Well, if they didn't have enough students enrolled in

accounting one, they dropped the course. So you had to pick another course. So, that's why it takes you so long to go part- time because Nichols was a really large size school, maybe it was a little smaller than Assumption, I don't know how big Assumption is, but there was a few times I needed courses to take and they didn't have enough enrollment. They don't teach two people in a class. I think it was a minimum you have ten people in a class. So, sometimes my classes got dropped, so I had to wait for another cycle to go around. So, let's just say accounting gets dropped, so I got to take a science course or a literature course. That's why it took me so long to get through that. But anyway, so I graduated in '88 from Nichols College. And again I know you young ladies are of this techy generation [laughter]. We had compu... I did not have a computer at home at that time. We had computers at the college at Nichols. I had to do all my homework and all my assignments at the campus. So, Saturdays and Sundays I was driving out to the campu---well one I had a computer courses I'm referring too. If I had literature, I didn't have to worry about. So, there were a few particular computer courses I needed to take to graduate at that time and I had to drive up there. So, I---I drove back pretty much in my senior level back at that time. Back and forth, back and forth. And I remember I had this one teacher, she taught statistics. And it was a particular program and we were given a password because again we didn't have computers at home, so we had to go there, get a password, sign in [clears throat] and you had to do the homework assignment on that program, and then you electronically sent it to her. I think we had some printouts, but I remember we had a sen... You know, she knew if you did the assignment or not, and that's how you got graded for it because again we didn't have computers,

EG: Yeah.

CM: We didn't have laptops and all that. I know it sounds antiquated, but bear with me.[laughter] Once upon a time, there were no computers. [clears throat] So anyway, when I look back now, graduating in '88, I'm really glad I did because so much changed after that. I almost want to say that there was this explosion of this computer industry, and I remember right around the time I graduated. I'm not sure if it was the next year '89 or '90. Word was already out on the streets, so to speak. The colleges were requiring incoming freshmen to have their own computers, so now I assume you probably have to have your own.

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: Well, people didn't have... Well they were very expensive, so that's why I didn't have one at home. Because I went to the school, I did it there. I went to the job, and I did it there. My logic at that time was, "Why do I need a computer at home? It's at the school, it's at my job." But, yet they were not interfaced. In other words, I couldn't do my homework at work because of restrictions on the computers and so forth. So anyway, that kind of worked out good that I

managed to graduate without having to buy a computer as opposed to incoming freshmen and I--I because I was, at that time it was called continuing education because you were going to the night program. Remember, I wasn't a day student. So, I'm assuming that when they encouraged day people, day students to have a computer, they must have also encouraged the night continuing people to pick up the same rhythm. So, I think that it took some of the burden off the teachers as well because now everybody came to class--- or had their own computer at home so they could do their own assignments at home.

EG: Yeah.

CM: So, teachers didn't have to set them up in these... Well we used to call them computer labs in these buildings and stuff like that, anyway.

EG: Were there other women in your night class or you...

CM: Oh yes. I want to say, let me go back to Becker. When I went to Becker, I'm going to say it was probably... In my classes and classes it was anywhere between 10-15 people. They weren't super large classes. I mean, Becker's not like UMass [University of Massachusetts] or something.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Or Harvard the big huge classrooms... It was predominantly females. I would say maybe it was 75 percent women, 25 percent guys, that kind of ratio. And when I went to Nichols, it was maybe a little bit more men. And what I found also around that same time--- and oh excuse me. I had also changed jobs. In between jobs in between that because, let me just go back to when I graduated from Becker. I stayed with that company for about another year, [clears throat] and I was already going to Nichols at that time, and I decided to change jobs, I decided to better myself. I figured at that point, "Okay, you told me to go to college and get a..." Well, it was an associate's degree. So now I did, so now I wanted more money. So, what happens is when you get educated, and a degree, they can't afford you anymore, right?

EG: Yeah.

CM: You know when you come in your entry level and you work a few years in a company, they kind of have you at pay scale. And if you better yourself, meaning education-wise and so forth, then you price yourself on the market. So, they basically don't say it to you in so many words, but people start changing jobs, people leave. And my boss was, I want to say, very

surprised. I don't want to say he was hurt, but I think he thought I was going to stay with him. I'm talking about the gentleman who encouraged me to go to school. His name was Roger Bradford. I think he was disappointed that I didn't stay with him for longer. But I really thought that I kind of done everything that I needed to do on that level.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Of my job requirements and so forth and I wanted to better myself and leave, which I did. So, I changed by going to Nichols College and then I, I changed jobs. [clears throat] So, then when I was going to Nichols, I was working at a company in Millbury at that time. And the same thing, that company had al--- this was now in the '80's. It was still going on, it was still quite popular, employers were paying for college education. And I've been out of that market now for so long. Can you tell me, do employers pay for college educations?

EG: No.

CM: Do you know of anybody?

EG: No, not at all.

MF: I've heard of it happening before..

CM: Okay, that used to be a benefit, you know, when you went for a job and they say, "Oh and by the way, we have college reimbursement." Well, people were jumping on these jobs.

MF: Yeah.

CM: Well I think they got themselves out of that market when they found out, "Oh my God," because as soon as they graduate, they leave.

EG: Yeah.

CM: So employers were not reaping a long term commitment out of that person once they got educated. So anyway, the company I was working for at Millbury at that time, which was in the '80's again, same thing, he paid for my education, because I was again working in accounting. He was giving me more responsibilities and then I graduated with my bachelor's. And I didn't graduate with accounting but was business administration. And the reason for that was when I graduated in '88, Nichols College did not offer in the night program an accounting major. You

could only graduate with a B.A. in Business Administration. Two to three years after that, again I'm talking stuff started changing in the '90's really big time. And then they started offering accounting courses. Well, by that time I had already graduated and... So, I worked at that company a long, long time and then again... Here were as far as women at Nichols, I want to say also there were more female teachers, instructors, professors, and so forth. At Becker, no when I think back, it tended to be more male professors, but again, women were being educated now, women were getting their degrees, their master's.

MF: Yeah.

CM: And they were going into education, and they were being professors in these schools. So, when I was at Nichols, I maybe, I kind of had a balance of professors were half and half. I mean I really have to sit down and add the numbers, and I pretty much more in my senior level, particularly remember the statistics professor. I had a sociology professor and she was female, and I didn't think of it at that time. It didn't kind of like register with you, you just expected it. You know, you walked into the classroom and this was who the teacher was for the course. And you moved on to the next class. It really didn't... I, I really didn't have that identity that was a male or female teacher at that time.

EG: So, there was discrimination between boys and girls in your classes or...

CM: Well again, I didn't feel that so much and the other thing that was pretty much at that point, as I was going through those '80's of going to school, I was still with a lot of females that were single, versus the men in class were married, because the same thing was going on in the industry for men. If the men didn't better themselves, and I'll go back a little bit further. Men didn't come out of [the] Vietnam [War], at the end of the '70's okay, so they went back to work. Well they were working. Maybe they went to a factory job, okay, to a store or something. They were running into the same problem. They didn't have a college degree, so now these men started going back to college. I can't remember on this so don't--- it's not maybe accurate. You have heard of the GI Bill [The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944], when then men used to go to college on the military, GI Bill?

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: You get a college education from the government, I think the men who came back from Vietnam were still covered under that GI Bill, so they went to college. So, when they were in college, their wives were at home, if they were married, taking care of the kids. So, that's why I didn't have a lot of men in my classes because they were eventually phasing out. And you know

who filled their seats? Their wives, because now I was in class with married women who said, "My husband is home taking care of the kids because I helped put him through college, and now he's helping to put me through college." So, the women were now reaping that benefit. So I have to say, you're talking about discrimination? There was less men and I'm talking the night program now, this is not day school, this is night where people are working, people have families. They have to go to school for eight years. You know, maybe they don't take the next semester because there is a conflict or something. Maybe their husband travels and he's a salesman. They can't get a babysitter. So, women struggled at that time to go to school part-time, married women. I was single, I was in a different situation. I was going because I wanted to graduate and get a degree and so forth. So, I would say that the women tended to outnumber the men for that reason. The men were already educated and staying home, working days, now it was her time to go back to school. Again, once you ed--- you know, graduate, you lose touch with those kind of people. So, I have no idea what happened in the '90's and so forth. Whether the classes still balanced out 50-50, but Nichols was again, way back in time, I'll go back to the '60's and '70's. Nichols College, out in Dudley, was a male school. Are you familiar with the fact that there are still schools around that are only female, only male?

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: Nichols at that time was a male school. It was when the colleges started introducing those night programs that the women came. The women didn't go to day school. When they opened up the continuing ed programs, that's when the women started coming into the picture and Nichols went co-ed. Day and night, okay. Becker for years already was co-ed, that wasn't a a problem, Becker. Holy Cross for years, I live very close to Holy Cross, and it was a male school. My cousin, Cathy, went there in the '70's and I think she was in one of the first classes of female, she was an incoming freshman when Holy Cross went co-ed. So, you know, when they started, it was gradually. And I'm going to say the same thing of Assumption, there was no females.

MF: Yeah there were.

CM: Back in the '60's and 70's, maybe the maybe the '80's, I don't know. I don't know the history of Assumption, but Assumption was a male school. Because it started out as Assumption Prep [Assumption Preparatory School]. It was a boys' prep school and then the boys who graduated from there, went to Assumption College. [whispers] There was no girls.

MF: Do you think that's because like the women were home taking care of their...

CM: Yes, you have to understand that culture that... I'll go back to my mother, my mother was a stay-at-home mom. When my brother and I got older, and I was maybe 13, 14, that's when my mother went to work, and the reason my mother went to work was financial. You know, now you got two kids and at that time we weren't even talking about college. But just everything started escalating, you know. We got two cars because my mother now needed a car to go to work. So, she had to work so we could afford a second car. So, just that kind of stuff. We lived within our means as a family on my father's paycheck, but then we were no longer babies. So, my mother was working at that time at, Saint Vincent's Hospital, which is long gone from Vernon Hill, the big hospital that is downtown. And as I was saying about Vernon Hill, this was Saint Mary's High School. This is Vernon Hill. This is Saint Vincent's Hospital. My mother drove up the hill, my brother got out of the car, we walked across the school yard and my mother went to work. It was--- it just worked out. We were just right in the route. So, she dropped us off, we went right in the morning with her, dropped us off. And then at the end of the day, we went to my grandmother's and hung around there. And my mother got out of work at four o'clock and she picked us up and we came home. So, we were with my mother basically. She was dropping us off for school, bringing us back at the end of the day, and my mother worked at Saint Vincent's till she retired, and my brother and I graduated from school also (___?). So, that's when that culture of women were staying home, stay-at-home moms, but that all changed again that time. Oh, I was in high school in the '60's so my mother was already working in the '60's. Women started going to work in the '60's, that leaving the home and babies. And there was only two of us, so as we got older, it was easier for my mother to manage that. And we had chores and things to do at home to help out. Also, with my mother working, things needed to be done at home, and we got to be teenagers my brother and I...

EG: Were the chores evenly distributed between you and your brother or were there...

CM: Well, we have to go back to that stereotype. How about we do the basic?

EG: Yeah.

CM: My brother cut the grass. [laughter] He washed the car. He did those kind of, those guy things. He took out the trash. And my job was I helped my mom with the laundry, helped with the dishes. But in some ways my brother also had other chores. Like I remember my brother had to clean his room. We had separate obviously bedrooms. My brother had to strip the bed linen so that my mother could do the laundry. So, it wasn't like he sat back and did nothing, he kind of had things to do also. It wasn't just, "Well, I can't strip the bed because that's women's work." No. His job was to strip the bed, get the dirty laundry down to the laundry basket. He didn't do any cooking, my brother. He had to set the table, you know, that kind of stuff. And again, I have

to say because when you think back to your life and so forth, how much has changed. It wasn't that much of an issue. I mean my brother never said things, "Well like, that's girls' stuff." I mean you kind of didn't say that, per se. It wasn't much in our vocabularies to say that. Stuff like that started evolving after the so-called Women's Liberation came into the scene, and the E.R.A. [Equal Rights Amendment]. That's when this all started becoming equal rights, and women wanting equal rights and women don't want to do this. That was a time also, women weren't in the military the way they are now. Okay, the only women in Vietnam were nurses. I mean, they were never really women in the military. Girls didn't sign up to go to Vietnam. That wasn't something you wanted to do. That changed as the military started to offer education to women, so they went into the military, opportunities to travel and things of that sort. So, I have to kind of say, that I want to say, I started to see more of a shift of that in the '70's and definitely by the '80's. And I think that impacted a lot of things that so many of my friends and so forth, their mothers all went to work. All of those mothers who were stay-at-home mothers in the neighborhoods, they were all now working. Families started having second cars, so to speak. You started--- people started to go on more vacations and things because before you didn't have that kind of money, that luxury. When I was a kid growing up, vacation to us, we went to the beach. You know, we went on day trips, we went to picnics and cookouts and we visited a lot of relatives. There--- nobody went to Europe. Nobody went to Cancun that was not... Nobody ever heard... You know at that time when I was a kid growing up, there was Disneyland in California. Walt Disney, that was something we saw on television. There was a Disneyland in California. I never went there. None of my friends went there. None of the kids in the neighborhood... Well now every kid who's two years old has already been to Disney World.

EG: [laughter] Yeah.

CM: I mean you see people taking their babies, taking all their toddlers. There was no such thing and again, maybe that sounds naïve, but it wasn't an issue. Everybody kind of lived the the same way within the same means of you went to the beach when you went out on a vacation. And then we started to travel a little bit more. When I was in high school, I remember we went to Washington D.C. That was a big deal, I mean a week's vacation in Washington. I mean we drove, we didn't fly. We went to New York City. We went to the World's Fair in 1964. That was huge, I had never been to New York City. I mean I don't want to say that I was that sheltered, but that was just the kind of stuff that we lived within that scope, that this is what we could afford so we didn't go to expensive places, there was no reason to go. And pretty much when I think back of my relatives and stuff., most of my relatives, and I'm talking extended family, everybody kind of lived in within Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island. Those are the people you went to visit. You didn't have many relatives in New York to go visit, so there was no reason to go visit. [Laughter]. You know, that kind of stuff... Am I going on and on? [laughter]

EG: No, you're good.

CM: Are you more concerned about trying to incorporate into this oral history of what position played in those years?

EG: Yeah.

CM: Well now as were talking and I have to keeping thinking back to that that it wasn't that obvious I guess what I'm saying. When you ask that question, I have to think about it and say, well nobody questioned it. It wasn't an issue. But I will tell you something, have you girls seen the movie, it came out last year, maybe this year, the one about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, On the Basis of Sex? Have you seen that movie?

EG: I haven't seen that.

CM: You know Ruth Bader Ginsburg the judge?

MF: Yeah.

CM: The Supreme [Court] judge, okay. There's a movie, well it already came out last year, On the Basis of Sex. She's one of the first female lawyers who pushed a lot of legislation through because she was trying to incorporate laws that people were coming to her that they they were being discriminated on [the basis of] sex. I want you to see that movie, and it's great. I also happened to work in a law office. I'm now retired, but anyway. I sat there, and a flood of back in time started to come over me. And I was talking to a friend of mine who's relatively my same age. You probably can't identify with some of the stuff, but I did. I'll give you an example. Talk about discrimination of women and equal rights and all that.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Okay. When I was 21, in downtown Worcester... Are you familiar with downtown Worcester where city hall is? Okay, across the street from city hall was a store called the Denholm's Building, okay? It used to be a very, very, very nice department store. Right next door to it, which is now an empty lot, coming a little more towards the Hanover [Hanover Theatre], there was a women's clothing store. By that women's, they didn't sell men's clothes, it was a women's clothing store. In those days there were stores that were strictly a women's clothing store. It was called Richard Healy's. When I was a teenager and I used to ride the bus

back and forth back to school and I hadn't... I used to leave Vernon Hill, Saint Mary's, to come to city hall, cross the street and my bus used to come to the Denholm's Building. And then I went home to Auburn. So, I had 10-15 minutes to kill, and in those days glass windows always had mannequins always dressed up. They changed them all the time, beautiful clothes, you know, wintertime, summertime. Next store was Richard Healy's. I used to stand in front of that window and drool over the clothes in Richard Healy's. That was my fantasy. I'm a teenager. I'm 16,17 and they kind of had at that time which was called the junior department, as opposed to the mature ladies. They were introducing in those days the younger girls, like high school junior college clothing. Always had nice clothes in there. Those were the days when you went to work in the business office. You had a suit, you had nice shoes, high heels, that kind of stuff. We used to stand I'd say, "Someday I'm going to have money and I'm going to shop in Richard Healy's." Okay, that was my little dream right? I'm 16,17. So, I now go to work because I didn't go to college and I'm making money, and not a lot of money, but I'm making money. It's my money, okay, I got money in my pocket, I got a bank account, okay? And I turn 21. You know what I did when I turned 21? I went to Richard Healy's and opened up a charge account. I went to Denholm's opened up a charge account. I went to Filene's, which in those days it was Filene's, went to Filene's and opened up a charge account, that was a big deal. But I had to wait till I was 21.

EG: Why is that?

CM: Because, you couldn't have a credit card as a women before 21.

EG: Oh, wow I never knew...

CM: You know voting and stuff like that.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Drinking laws, okay. Think back, you know it's not that long ago. You couldn't drink, you couldn't vote. You couldn't have a credit card.

MF: Could men have a credit card?

CM: Yes. Now here comes the, here comes the part two to that. When I went to the office and asked for an application, I had to take it home and have my father co-sign because he was male head of household. I didn't have a husband. Now if you had a husband, your husband would have co-signed. Like you are the woman... You're Mary Smith, you had to take it home and John

Smith had to co-sign because John Smith was responsible for your debt. My mother for years had a credit card. My father's name is Chester. It read Mrs. Chester Milewski. She didn't have her name on there because Chester was responsible for her debt. I got the credit card, and I was responsible for my debt. My father never had a problem. I'm an accountant.

EG: Yeah.

CM: I can add two and two. It wasn't until years later that the department stores starting easing up. There was no Mastercard in those days, Visa, Discovery, American Express, none of that stuff existed. You got a credit card for this department store, that department store, and so forth. It was years later afterwards when my mother opened up credit cards in other stores that are long gone, out of business now, that she had her name on them. My father was still alive, my father never shopped in Richard Healy's, he had no reason to go in there.

All: [laughter].

CM: But, as credit restrictions eased, I want to say...But in this movie with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the reason I bring that up, that's in there. There's a very little brief thing about women's rights and women being able to apply for credit. I know because I was 21. And it was because I was single and because I had to have a job to get an application, for an application you have to have income...at that same time, I'll give you another example. let's just say you wanted to buy a house. No bank in Worcester would have ever approved me for a bank loan or mortgage because I was a female.

EG: So is that why you lived with your parents?

CM: Yeah. I mean, I didn't have that kind of money, let's be real.

EG/MF: Yeah. [small laughter]

CM: Now, if you got married, and you had a husband, you went to the bank and applied for a mortgage. Right? So, it was Mr. and Mrs. John and Mary Smith. So, what I'm saying here is if you want to talk about discrimination and the easing of (umm) based on sex, that's what we're talking, that movie, that's what that movie's about. It's not about sexual encounters, it's about being a male or female and how you are being treated for sex discrimination. But the liberty with the title of that movie, that's what Ruth Bader Ginsburg was fighting for, that she wanted to see people have opportunity. At that same time in that movie, I think she's going to Harvard, she's fighting an uphill battle in that movie because she is the only female in the entire Harvard male

law class. You know how tough that was for her? They kind of couldn't discriminate against that in college because even back way, way, way in time, women did go to college. But just sitting in a classroom with 50 guys, and she was smart, very smart, so she's answering the questions, and these guys are going and giving her the dirty looks.

MF/EG: Yeah.

CM: ...like they are hoping she drops out, they hope she flunks, they hope she doesn't pass the bar. But she did. So, she personally was fighting that uphill battle as a female in a male world. And if you talk to women who became women doctors, they had the same problem. They're in medical school, and all the men are sitting in the class, and she's the only female trying to become a doctor. Most of them didn't succeed. Going along with that same thing, if I think back, now that I brought that up, I never went to a female doctor in my life. Well, years later. I went to the dentist, it was a man. Pediatrician was a man. You go to a gynecologist, it's a man. Think about, I don't know about you girls personally, or maybe your mother, even in this day and age there aren't that many women who go to a female doctor. And I have this conversation with my female friends, and I'm going to tell you something - personally, I have my personal physician, it's a male, I've been treated occasionally with a female, by a female, don't get me wrong. But I don't go to female doctors. I've been so oriented to a man being in that position. A surgeon? I would never think of going to a female surgeon. Right?

EG: Yeah.

CM: I've had surgery on my hand. I mean, maybe you young girls feel differently about that but, you come from that kind of a background that, you know, you go to my doctor and he gives me a referral, you know to go to a specialist. I guarantee you, there's probably no female name on that referral list. Because she's probably not in that profession okay, maybe she's not an orthopedic, maybe she's not a heart surgeon, you know, cardiologist. So, if your doctor says you need to get a referral to here, there's not even a female on there. So what I'm saying is you don't even think that way and say, "But doctor, I want to go to a female cardiologist." He'll probably say, "Hell, I don't even know one."

EG: Yeah,

CM: Or you got to go to Boston or go to, you know, maybe if you go to the bigger cities, okay. I'm sure they exist, don't take that the wrong way, but we've kind of been so saturated with that environment that we don't think out of the box sometimes to say, "I'm going to live my life where I only deal with females." It's a little tough you know? That kind of interpretation and so

forth. But if you ladies have a chance, go see that movie on Ruth Bader Ginsburg. It's kind of enlightening from an educational standpoint. I think you might come out saying, "Wow! We've come a long way baby." That's how, why I walked out of the movie, those little things that were kind of registering backwards in time. I said "I remember that. Yeah, that's the way it was." So I think if I'm going to say probably because I never moved out, with a roommate or anything, but I bet females had problems renting an apartment because I'm going along with the housing thing with the mortgage at the bank. You want to bet there was landlords, who discriminated, and said "Uhhh, you moving in here with a husband?" "No, I'm going to move in with my girlfriend, or you know, college friend." "Well I can't have two females living in and I can't have no wild college girls living in this apartment."

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: They, I'll go back again to stretch that a bit, when all this discrimination was trying to be broken down, so to speak and eased, landlords could discriminate, okay? Banks could discriminate, so they didn't have to say to you, and you know, ethnic people will tell you, black people will tell you, Hispanic people will tell you, "They didn't rent to me because I was black." Can you prove it? I mean they know they are being discriminated, but a white person goes and rents that apartment and nobody discriminates against them. The other ethnic person tries to do it, and they discriminate. So even though we've broken down a little of barriers, and it's 2019.

EG: Yeah.

CM: It's still up there. It's still up there. And they go another two, three, four, more generations, you know.

EG: Did women your age recognize these discriminations or were...[Interrupted]

CM: At the time I want to say no, I, you know, you know I would probably have to say the day I brought that paper home and said to my father, "Dad you need to sign at the bottom," I probably never consciously thought about that because they said to me, "Oh ma'am, you're 21 so, because you don't have a husband, you need your father to sign for that." And you know maybe if you didn't have a father, you had to have a grandfather. I think that the term that I'm using here is they needed a male person to sign that document. Maybe an uncle, you know. In other words, somebody. But you weren't recognized as being stable enough, financially stable enough, to have a credit card. So they depended on the male, obviously my father was a working male. So, they figured he was good for it, if I defaulted on my debt somewhere. So I don't...That didn't register to me until many years later afterwards, because afterwards, alright I was 30, 40,

whatever, and there were other stores that came into being and I needed to get a credit card with them. We'll just say for instance Macy's. If I went and opened up a credit card at Macy's, I guarantee you there's no (____??) on there that says that my father has to sign, or my husband. I can open a credit card in my name. I know for years now all you college kids that you get bombarded with all those credit card applications, right? Can I just ask, do your parents co-sign or do either one of you two girls have a credit card in your name?

EG: I don't.

MF: I only have a debit card.

EG: I have a debit card.

CM: Okay, okay. But do you have to fill out an application and have a parent co-sign that?

MF: I think my mom does.

EG: I think my mom did come with me.

MF: Yeah.

EG: Yeah.

CM: Okay think about that. I mean, and I think it's because of your age.

MF: Mhm. [nodding]

EG: Could have been.

CM: Okay. And I don't think it has to do with the fact that you're female. I think if your...do you have brothers I mean...

EG: Yeah.

MF: I have a brother.

CM: I think if a boy did the same thing...

EG: He would also need my mom's or parents' signature.

CM: Yeah, right. It's because the age, so you probably can't say it's discrimination at that point, okay? So, the credit card companies, remember, they want to make sure they're going to get paid. Who's going to default on the debt and who's going to be responsible for picking up the slack? But, it was just...I know it sounds naive to you. Probably that there were so much that was going on in our lives that was standard, accepted, it's the way it was. And we kind of were of that generation that we didn't question a lot of stuff, we weren't protesting, you know? We didn't throw temper tantrums and that. If they said you can't get a mortgage, you'd go home and say I can't get a mortgage and you kind of just move on. That's the price you pay for not being married, you can't get a mortgage. So maybe that's why a lot of women got married, so they can get a mortgage.

All: [laughter].

EG: Yeah.

EG: So what was your perception like during like the women's movement since you didn't really recognize the discriminations when you were of that age?

CM: I won't say probably because that came about maybe in the '70's, '80's. I mean I could be off on my dates here. It was a little unnerving, maybe is a good word. But as it started to evolve, and I want to say more so for myself because I wasn't married now, I started to kind of accept it in the sense that, yeah why can't I have that right, you know? I was kind of in that position. How come because she's married, she can do that but because I'm single, I'm being segregated--- discriminated against? I'll say it that way okay? Job opportunities, I'll give you another example. I'm going back a lot of this to Ruth Ginsburg situation. When I was in high school, I had a part-time job. I worked at the Telegram & Gazette, the newspaper company here in Worcester, which was a big newspaper at the time. I had a part-time job after school and I worked in classified ads. Which is a thing of like which is a dinosaur to you people, okay. But in those days, when you wanted to find a job, you went to the newspaper. Remember there was no internet. Work with me here.

EG/MF: [laughter].

CM: So, you want to find a job. Get out of high school, you get out of college, you're looking for a job. You see it all the time in the movies, the old-time movies. You see people sitting and they're circling and they're looking for jobs. That's what real people did, you needed to find a

job. I worked in classified ads. I was an ad taker. I came in after school, it was my high school--- it was my first high school job. It was all women, there was no men in that department. We sat with headphones, and you-...A call would come through, and you would listen and someone say “I want to put an ad in Sunday’s paper in the employment section.” “What’s the ad for?” “I want a secretary.” In those days, and this is 1965, ‘66, the newspaper was divided into male and female jobs.

EG: Wow.

CM: So, if you called in and you want a secretary, I’m your ad taker, so I automatic---when you check the paper, we had the typewriter, not a computer. We had a typewriter. You would put...We had a headline, so we had to categorize it that it was going to be in the female employment. Secretary was the headline, okay, and then you describe the job. And somebody calls up and says they’re looking for a waiter for a restaurant, busboy, male employment. See what I’m saying...waiter, waitress. The newspaper was divided employment into male and female. And we had to put those jobs into categories. That went away later. I gu--- I’m going back to the equal rights, you know? How people said well, “I can do that job.” Women said, “I can drive a truck.” Right, “I can use a forklift.” So, when all that discrimination with the equal rights kind of surfaced, example, the newspapers had to do away with that and then it was just employment. So, that if somebody showed up for a job, you couldn’t discriminate against them. A word that many men funny to be secretaries, trust me. Okay?

All: [laughter].

CM: But that’s the kind of small stuff that, if you were living through it, you started to see some of those barriers breaking down and women asserting themselves and saying, “Well, you hear this all the time.” And you may face it when you go into the workplace. They still say to this day men still make more money than women, okay? Let’s just say, they’re both lawyers okay? I guarantee you he makes more money than she does, and he always will in that sense, okay. He’s in the law firm is what I’m saying, okay, unless she becomes a partner or something like that in the firm. But, that’s the kind of stuff that women started to become agitated about, angry about, asserting themselves. You hear these jokes, you probably from your family. I, I hear it more from women. Everybody works with people that are not perfect employees and so forth. And you work with somebody and say he is such a jerk, he doesn’t know diddly, right. I’ve been here five years but he makes more money than me, right? He’s been there six months, and you’ve probably heard this...I wasn’t really in those kind of jobs, but people that come into certain jobs and your pay scales like your grade level is one, two, three, four, well he’s a five. Let’s say that’s the top grade, and she’s a two, and she is never going to make five. So, he’s always going to

make more money than her because he is a grade five, and we used to be told this, again this is stuff that women all can identify with this. The reason the man makes more money is because a) he's a man, b) he's married, and c) he's supporting the family. He's even making more money if he's a single guy, if he's a bachelor. A.) He's a man. That's what, and bosses used to say that. "Well he's got three kids, Carolyn, I can't pay you that kind of money." Let's just say, okay, if a woman goes in they used to say to women you know well you should go on your job review and negotiate and they'd say, "Yeah, but Carolyn, you're single, you live at home with your parents."

EG: Did your boss say that to you?

CM: I never encountered that, but I--- I had heard of other people who had ran into that kind of discrimination, that when they tried to assert themselves, and I'm talking strictly on the money angle, they didn't even want the title and all that, they just wanted more money. And management would always defend it, "Well he's supporting the family and you're not." So, it was like women were penalized for being single is what I kind of want to say. But if you were trying to compete against another single guy, it went back to he's a male number one.

MF: You mention how your boss was a male, was your whole like work force, like being an accountant, very male dominant or is it a female dominated job?

CM: You know, pretty much from the time I went to work in the business world, and because I worked in the accounting department, 99% of the--- of all of the accountants were men. It wasn't until now, maybe the last 10, 15 years I did work for a female. Well, she was a comptroller. But, the person who was above us was a male.

MF: So the higher ups were always men?

CM: Absolutely. I did work, approximately about 10 years ago, at a law firm here in Worcester. There were three male attorneys and one female. And just the way it worked out, one gentleman retired. They were mature men, one gentleman retired so he left the firm. Another gentleman got promoted to a judge in the Worcester Court House, so he left, he got promoted. And the third attorney hung on into retirement, he came in part- time. So, Karen who was the female, was kind of running the firm, shall I say. You know, as they were--- this was over a period of time. Now the men are gone, actually two of them are deceased and one is retired. She's still an attorney and now she's a private practice. She's still here in Worcester, but it's just her and I know when I left, the girl that was her paralegal is still working for her. So it's a very small law firm. What I'm saying is Karen didn't go out and partner up with other men. And during the time I worked for her, she was a very good lawyer. She's a personal injury lawyer, workers comp [compensation],

and so forth. I think my personal opinion now, is that as the men left, she kind of was able to assert herself, you know, and maybe now she's a smaller firm, she doesn't want any men with her. You know what I'm saying? She doesn't want to go back to being...

EG: Yeah.

CM: ... Jon Jones and Karen Smith because he probably would have the first name also on the sign.

EG: Yeah on the billboard.

CM: The billboard.

All: [laughter].

CM: In that particular case, and again Karen, she's maybe 50, 55 now an age where she's not yet ready to retire. I think she probably, again, had to assert herself in that male ---although there's a lot more female attorneys now, granted. But sometimes, during the time I was working there and we obviously became active with a lot of law firms. I didn't see a lot of female names, in the title. There were females in the firms, but they weren't partners. Karen became a partner. So, when you're a partner, your name is on the door. When you're an attorney working down in, you know, the lower low levels, a lot of people don't know that, you know? People say, "Well, she's an attorney, well who does she work for, you know." If you look up the list, she's wayyy down, the bottom of the list, you know? (laughs) So, I think that is changing for those kind of women who got educated and now went out in the world to compete against the males. And what the breakdown in the discrimination and so forth, I think that's where that came into being, that these women went out asserting themselves and the men kind of had to bite the bullet.

EG: Yeah.

CM: You know? I think a lot of men got pushed into that...of accepting, pushed into acceptance, because the women were asserting themselves so much. You've probably heard it. You still see it to this date, women are in the military. Okay? Women are our generals, women are lieutenants, okay? If you put a bunch of guys in this room, I guarantee you they will still tell you that they don't like the fact that the women have those ranks in the military, okay? You still hear it, women that are being sexually harassed, women in Afghanistan and Iraq, that are being sexually abused, and sexually assaulted, right? So, that doesn't tell you that the men are really accepting those women, and that includes women who are the superiors. Some 18, 19, 25 year old guy is

taking orders from a female lieutenant? You really think that he's taking it? Well, I doubt it. And says, "I need to assault her...on a Friday night, you know?" I-I may be stereotyping that but, that bothers me when I read that, it goes on in the military academies, West Point, the Naval Academy, the Coast Guard Academies. How many girls, you know, have been all have come forward to file a discrimination charge because they're being assaulted in the academies?

EG: Yeah.

CM: And there's school having to deal with it.

EG: Do you want to ask a question?

MF: Yeah. Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

CM: Well, I want to say particularly, I think education is still very, very, important. I think that a woman can advance more in the world, equally, and break down some of those barriers of discrimination if she has a college education, forget about high school, I'm talking college education. I'm talking higher-level educations, whether she has a master's, or she's a doctor goes on to medical school and so forth. I think sometimes maybe that there's a little more acceptance. They realize that she's educated or she's trying to compete with them on the same playing- level playing field, okay? Because if she's not, and she's just trying to assert herself by saying, "I can do that job..." Assuming that the male is already educated and so forth and has years of experience, he's still going to put her down because he feels threatened that she's competition, more than anything else she's competition to him because he's in fear that she's going to replace him. She's going to have the corner office instead of him, and she's going to have her name on the door or the sign outside. So, I think education is very important, that if you want to advance yourself promote yourself... I mean I see these women on television on the talk shows and you know people who write books and things of that sort. I'm finding is I listen to these people talk, that there is a lot of very well-educated women out there, that people just aren't aware of. And I think they're still kind of the silent majority in that sense, that they're not out there tooting their horns and boasting, you know, how well-educated they are and they're not waving the Harvard flags and all that, but they're very knowledgeable women. Sometimes, when I... I watch a lot of PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] documentary programs and so forth. When someone comes out to the podium and they're going to introduce the guest or someone who's written a book, they always start off by saying, "And she's got these degrees, and she's been on these committees, and she was awarded these titles and so forth." And sometimes you go, "Wow." Which you and I don't have but she's a very well-educated woman, and that's why I think in some ways they're

that silent majority that they just don't go out there boasting about it the way the men do, on the men's club boasts about it.

MF: I think a good question to end on would be what are you happiest about, about like the decisions you made in your life, and the choices you've made?

CM: Well, I think, even the short time I've been with you ladies, here are people who really know me, my close friends and so forth, I'm an independent female. My grandmother was an independent woman. My mother was an independent woman. My mother handled the checkbook. Okay, I'll say it that way. My grandmother handled the checkbook. And my mother kind of raised me to be kind of assert... I'm also the first -born child, and I've done a lot of reading about birth order, okay? First born children, they're going to go out there and blaze that trail, they're that pioneer... They gotta do it right or wrong, make the mistakes, get punished, whatever. My mother had a lot of confidence in me, a lot of assurance, that I could do it. It was kind of like... You know if you cry when you a child, "Ah I (___ ??)" You can do that. I know you can do that, or she pushed me into things and made me go to places I didn't want to go. I didn't see that same pressure on my brother. It was because I blazed the trail, and it was easier for him to kind of follow in my footsteps. And when my parents got elderly and their health failed, and so forth, because I live to--- because I didn't get married and I lived at home, I took care of my parents. My father died first, he had a heart condition and he had cancer and he passed away. And then my mother and I were together, and my mother developed Alzheimer's and I became my mother's caregiver. My brother was married and had children, and my brother lived over there, so he only came in and out of her life as a visitor is what, "Okay, hi ma, how you doing?" Okay. But I was with my mother 24/7. What I'm saying is that was a lot of responsibility on me. In between that time, I had lost my job, companies went out of business. I was at home taking care of my mother. I've had to make a lot of decisions. I had to handle my mother's finances. I was the one that went to lawyers. I was the one that talked to the insurance companies. I was the one that talked to social workers. My brother was not in the picture, and I only mean that because he wasn't in the picture. I feel now when I look back at my mother's death that, a lot of my childhood, or my upbringing, in my involvement with people in my home life prepared me for that. There were so many people that said to me, "I don't know how you do that." You hear people say, "I couldn't do that." If some people become a doctor or nurse and they go, "I couldn't do that kind of work." Okay, but there are people who are nurses and doctors and they can do that work. People said that to me when I was taking care of my mother. Okay, not pleasant. My mother messes the bed at 3 in the morning, I got to get up and clean the bed. I put her in the shower, and washed her, and bathed her, put her back into bed. There were people who would say, "I can't change a baby's diaper." Okay? But somebody's got to do it is what I'm saying. So that person who steps up, is the person who has responsibilities and duties and so forth. And

when I look back on that, I think that's what got me through. My mother had Alzheimer's for about eight years before she passed away. Was it easy? Hell no. There were days I sat on the couch and cried. I was in bed crying into my pillow because it was so hard, but I did it. I got through it. I survived. I got the strength from somewhere. God was watching over me. Whatever came into the picture, and so many people said that to me. "I don't know how you managed to get through that alone." They were referring to the fact that I didn't have a husband. I think I was prepared for it, I think that my upbringing, my background, prepared me for what I was going to have to deal with some day. And, you know, whether you have it in your families or your best friends, you hear people who fall apart, you know, what tragedy happens in their life. They can't take it.

EG: Yeah.

CM: And you hear so many people say, so many people say that in your generation, which is very sad. How many of your friends have committed suicide, and you know, as a person like me I find that so emotionally upsetting when a 19 year- old commits suicide and they find papers and they say, "I can't take it anymore." Really? And you're 19? So, that is sad, that a 19 year- old checks out and says, "I can't take it anymore." What are you going to do when something really comes into your life you have to deal with it? You suffer an accident. You lose your job. Your house burns. That to me is struggling. Having to take a test tomorrow and maybe not getting a perfect A is not, "I can't take it anymore." I sometimes feel that when I read the stories and parents come forward and say, "I had no idea my, my child, my college student, my high school student, was struggling on that level and was so depressed." I can't think of ever being that depressed as a 16 year- old. I mean even my friends, we talked about this, you know as adults, and say 16 and being depressed. You know when I was 16, you worried about if I was going to pass the exam and going to go to the prom. You know if you---if your boyfriend was going to call. That's what we worried about when we were 16. We weren't worried about killing ourselves. We didn't worry about taking pills and doing ourselves in at 16 and it just---I didn't know anybody, didn't even fathom that anybody died at 16. I mean, the closest we came to having friends die was when they went to Vietnam. I mean that, that was war and they didn't come back. We understood that, but I'm sure...Have you in your time since high school and now, have you lost personal friends or classmates? Has anybody died of suicide? Have you?

EG/MF: Yeah.

CM: Okay, does it bother you, does that really bother you, that a young person like that isn't going to graduate with you?

EG: Yeah.

CM: I think that is sad, that's really sad that you, as young people, are losing your friends, your classmates, your neighbors. And they're never going to live to be 21. You're always going to have... When you get older, you'll have that memory and say, "Yeah, I had a neighbor who died at 15 or 16." And I'm talking about suicide, not a car accident or something like that. That they didn't,, They didn't travel the same path that you traveled. And is it that you're stronger? You know? Is your family background, is your education motivating you to stay on course? I mean, I don't know. I obviously... That's a psychology course, why do people choose to commit suicide? I sometimes think of it as some kind of weakness. Why are they so weak and everyone else is so strong? And I don't mean that kind of stuff. Why do you have the strength to persevere another say and another year to make it in this world and that person said, "I. Can't. Do. It. Any. More." "I'm checking out today," you know? It-it really bothers me that, when I hear them on the news and television talking about the high suicide rate. Wow. Wow. It's just... Did I answer your question, or did I go off the tape?

EG: No, you're good

All: [laughing.]

EG: I'm glad that, you used your struggles to help you.

CM: And you know, something that I thought about, too, after my mother had passed on and I had my quiet moment, I take yoga by the way, so you have time to meditate. I'm in a place now that I'm retired and I have people who criticize me that I should be working. I've come to a point in my life where I have calm and peace, that I have quiet time in my life. I, I still live alone, but I have that time that I'm at peace. I say this to people, I wake up with joy in my life. I don't mean I'm ha, ha, ha, ha. I wake up and I'm content, I'm not anxious, meaning that I'm not looking over my shoulder that somebody's coming after me, that somebody is going to kill me. I wake up with that content in my life and I think that sometimes. Everybody is put on this earth for a reason. We all matter. Okay? I honestly believe I was put on this earth, why I'm first born, because I was meant to take care of my parents, as a caregiver. Not my brother, my brother was meant to be married and have grandchildren, okay? I was meant to be the caregiver. So, in other words, I'm fulfilling my mission in life. I'm where I should be, and why I was destined to go down this path, and so forth. Why I've lived to this age versus people who die at a young age... And I've come to realize that about people that, you know, it's like, again, people, I sometimes feel such compassion for people who have a handicapped child. I'm referring to somebody that's bedridden, okay? A child that has a birth deformity of some type, a child who's in a wheelchair.

There's a reason that child is in your life, meaning you as the responsible parent. And that's your job. You were meant to have this child and you were meant to be this child's caregiver. And I was ---I--- people say to me, "Oh, I feel so bad that you're not married, and you don't have a husband, you don't have any children." And I say, that wasn't my path. In other words, okay? That wasn't where I was supposed to be. I had my mother for eight years. Let me tell you. (Laughs). She was difficult. Okay. She was my child, you know? I had days where she wouldn't eat food, she wouldn't change her clothes, she wouldn't take a bath. You know when a little kid throws a temper tantrum? My mother threw a temper tantrum. But that was the disease, that wasn't my mother. Because I had a very good relationship with my mother growing up. But she became my child. And when my brother and I went to the doctor, we were preparing after she was moved to a nursing home, and the doctor said this to us, "You have to understand that you have to be the responsible adults now in this relationship. Your mother's going go like this. She's going down health wise, and mental condition. And you've got to be in control, you've got to make healthy decisions, you have to make sure she's fed, she's cleaned, she's not abused." And it was true. It happens to people, the same thing with a person who's sick with cancer. Their health is going to go down and down and down. If you're that caregiver, you've got to make decisions, whether they're legal decisions, financial decisions, emotional decisions. It's tough. It's tough. It---so, I feel like sometimes now when people say that to me, where I am in my life and I say I am kind of reaping the benefits of having gone through the tough times, you know? When you're living in the moment, and you think this is never going to end. She's always going to be like this. Mom's going to die eventually. That's always in the back of your mind. This is not going to last forever. She's getting older and her health is declining, and she will, we're all going to die. So, I kind of now am in that spot in my life where I'm kind of content with myself. I think my friends feel... You know what I almost want to say? A little jealous... I think, you know, if you think back to people who have a lot of children, maybe have a lot of bills, you have to put kids through college. I used to, when I was much younger, people would say, "God, I wish I was single like you." You know when you got multi kids and multi bills and all, and you've lost your job and you say, "You don't have any of those problems, you're so lucky to be single!"

All: [Laughter].

CM: Do people say that to you, I mean you're college girls. Or people who didn't get a college education, "You're so lucky to get a college education because I didn't." You know?

EG: Yeah.

CM: That kind of stuff. So, you kind of always are going to meet those people who say that to you. They're jealous, they envy you even if they don't say it to you, you know? Have I rambled on way too much?

EG: No, you were perfect. Thank you for taking the time to tell us stories.

CM: You didn't mention have you been recording all this?

MF: Yeah. [laughter].

CM: Oh, okay I hope I was speaking clearly.

EG: You were.

CM: I'm gonna need to have a drink. I'm tired.

All: [Laughter].