Interviewee: AiVi Nguyen
Interviewers: Beverly Mastroianni and Julie Jean Jacques
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Transcribers: Beverly Mastroianni and Julie Jean Jacques
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Abstract:
AiVi Nguyen was born in Worcester, Great Brook Valley in 1984. She went to Holy Name High School and received her higher education at the University of Pennsylvania where she received her undergraduate degree and Boston College where she went to law school and graduated in 2009. She is Vietnamese American, born to Vietnamese immigrant parents. She's lived in Worcester most of her life, and works as a lawyer at Bowditch and Dewey. AiVi strives for there to be more women in positions of power especially in Worcester, MA and sits on many boards including the Kennedy Community Health Center. She likes to serve on that board as well as many others because it gives her the chance to give back to her community.

BM: Alright. Okay. Perfect. [laughs] Okay, so we are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences, based on the goals of the 1850 First National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester. We are focusing on the areas of women's education, health, work, and politics and community involvement. Thank you for your help with this important project. So to begin, we just wanted to talk about just, like, your general, your family, your involvement in Worcester. So what is your full name, including both maiden name and married name, if applicable.

AN: My name is AiVi Nguyen, and that's A-I capital V-I. One word. And N-G-U-Y-E-N, and that's my maiden name, not married.

BM: Perfect. And when were you born?

AN: [ ], 1984.

BM: Have you ever been married? No,yeah. So, do you have children?

AN: No children.

BM: Okay, what cultures, ethnicities do you identify?

AN: Vietnamese and American.

BM: Okay, cool. Could you tell us about your parents?

AN: Sure. They met in America in probably 1983.They don't really talk much about it, but my mom and dad were both born in Vietnam, just different parts of Vietnam, and they didn't know each other. My mom was born in Saigon, in the city, the capital, and my dad was born in a really cute little beach province in the middle of Vietnam. And my mom, they both were refugees, but my mom escaped Vietnam on a boat in like the 70's and my dad flew here. None None, of them talk about it, but, so they're both refugees that just happened to meet in Texas. My mom always lived in Worcester, but her nephew was friends with my dad in Texas, so that's how they met.

BM: Wow that's crazy

AN: They don't talk about it. They're not very romantic.

BM: [laughs]

AN: So I'm like, I don't really know, and I'm pretty sure that mom was pregnant real soon. [laughs]

BM: Yea

AN: So, [laughs] then that was me. So, but…

BM: Wow.

AN: …they're both—it's usually interesting for people to be refugees from Vietnam and not have known each other, and then meet here and marry.

BM: Yeah. So do you have any siblings?

AN: No siblings.

BM: No siblings. Okay. That's Oh, my gosh. Wow. Why do you think they don't talk about it?

AN: I think, well, so I think the refugee experience is not fun.

BM: Yea, rght.

AN: And I'm like, I don't know what atrocities they've seen, so it's just I feel, I feel like whether it's, like, a PTSD thing or we don't want to talk to our kid about traumatic things, and I think they're just happy to be, I think they feel grateful. So there's no point in looking backwards if it's just going to bring you sad memories. I'm assuming; they've never articulated this to me but that's sort of the experience, I think, for like, my generation's parents.

BM: Right. That makes sense. But it's definitely just a heroic story. But so, our next question is, what was the neighborhood like generally, where you grew up?

AN: So I grew up, I was very poor. We were very poor because we were—I was the kid of a refugee. So it still exists. I grew up in Worcester. I grew up in Great Brook Valley, which is Curtis Apartments now, which is on Tacoma Street, which is like the projects, Worcester's Projects. And then we moved, I think in like, I probably was in first grade, moved to Millbury Street, which is Millbury Street in Worcester. I don't know if, how, like, if you guys are from Worcester, but it's like…

JJJ: I didn't really get the name of the valley.

AN: Great Brook.

BM: Great Brook. Okay.

AN: Millbury Street. Back when it was like, I guess for the Worcester Women's History Project, back in the '80s and '90s Millbury Street was where all the bakeries were, but also bar hoppy. Not a place—not a neighborhood—not like a place where you would want to have a house, or live in a three decker. It was a three decker. And my aunt had a store down the street. So it's like, by Kelly Square, where the new ballpark is now, kind of. And then we moved to Upland Gardens, which is, like, the second projects in Worcester. Two words, Upland Gardens. And it's on the Auburn Line. They still exist. Both of these housing projects still exist, but they're just not like we wouldn't, I wouldn't refer to them as projects now.

BM: Okay. And when you're saying Millbury Street, could you spell that?

AN: M-I-L-L

BM: L-L, okay.

AN: B-U-R-Y.

BM: Awesome. Thank you so much. [laughs] I wasn't sure if it had one L's or two L's.

JJ: Millbury Street in Worcester, right?

AN: Mhm.

BM: Okay, thank you. Where do you live in the city now? And yeah, we'll start with that. [laughs]

AN: I live right on the Holden line. So it's **r**esidential, really cute, like you know small houses, good neighborhood, kids ride their bikes. Like near, well, if you're not from Worcester then you wouldn't know. Like near Bancroft and Saint Peter-Marian. The two high schools, I guess Saint Peter-Marian's not there anymore. But, like, residential, very residential. Almost like Assumption's[University] neighborhood. If you were to drive around, it feels the same way

BM: Okay. All right. Very cool. So do your other family members live in the same area?

AN: Yeah, so my mom and dad live in Worcester, and because I'm an only child, there was no way that I was ever going to live not near them. So if I was ever going to live anywhere else, I would have to be able to pick them up and move them with me. So Worcester's where I stayed, which I'm happy that I did, but it was totally based on some, like, a sense of obligation to be sure that I'm always close to my parents in case they need anything.

BM: Yeah, that makes sense. Our next question is, what challenges do you think this city still faces? Sorry, such a big question.

AN: I'm like, no, I'm like,…

BM: [laughs]

AN: …it's a lot of white men in power still.

BM: Yea

AN: So I think it's just this sort of—but I think we, the city, has come a really long way of recognizing that you can't be a diverse city without diverse leadership. So I think that the city has moved in the right direction. It's just things like this, I understand, take a lot of time. So that, I think that's, that's where we struggle. And it's just Worcester people, like we like to have our cars and we like to park our cars, and we like to not have to worry about public transportation. So it's, it's hard to sort of make it a walking city. And I think housing, I think people, it's very expensive for a lot of people to find a place to live here now, which is too bad, but it's those are the things we have to deal with. Like, if you want to be a real city but only be affordable to very wealthy people, it'll be problematic down the down the line, I think.

BM: Right, so with all this being said, is there something you would change about the city?

AN: I would—so our current city manager, he's wonderful, and he's come up a long way. Eric Batista.

BM: Could you spell that? Sorry. [laughs]

AN: Yea, B-A-T-I-S-T-A

BM: Perfect. Thank you

AN: I would, I wish he could just be king for a day and pick his, all the leaders, other leaders under him, but I, you know, he inherited people who are in power in different departments. He's doing a wonderful job at it but I think if we could just change some faces in leadership positions, in city government I would love to see that.

BM: Yeah, that's awesome. Have you seen any like specific changes in Worcester over time?

AN: Yeah, so when I—so I graduated law school in 2009. I went to Boston College Law School and in '09 I was 24, maybe 25, and single and everybody was like, "You are not going to Worcester. Like you're literally going to be a spinster, you're not going to meet anybody there's like no bar scene, there's no young people, there's no single eligible men there, you're going to be alone." And I was like, "Well I have these parents, I have this student debt." Ain't no way I'm not living in Worcester, right? So ever since then though it's like the city actually has become a place for young professionals, where it's like people are tired of Boston, they're tired of how expensive it is, how crowded it is, and they're tired of not being able to like rise to the top faster, you know? So it's like in Worcester, you can really, if you're hungry for it, you can become a

leader. And I think in this—so if we're in 2023 now, so in the past 14 years, I've just seen like, there are bars, there is a nightlife, there are restaurants. Like, the Hanover Theater had revamped completely in that time, and that we get Broadway shows in Worcester. So it's like people are attracted to it now in a way that in '09 people were like, "You're crazy, it's like Podunk, what are you doing?" And I think it's just totally changed and it's like very fashionable now. And I bought a house, no problem. My friends in Boston have houses that are millions of dollars. And I'm like, that's a lot of money. That's like a really big mortgage. But in Worcester, you just have a chance to live a really nice, peaceful life that you can be fulfilled at your career and I'm not frazzled driving to work in the morning. I'm not, it's just a really nice life that I think, finally the rest of the world sees. And you know, we have Woo Sox. Like, we have huge businesses attracted to the city, coming to the city and building here, which it just wasn't like that like 15 years ago. So it's very promising. So upon graduation you should stay in Worcester I think.

BM: Yeah, no, that definitely sounds promising for us, because I feel like the world's so big and I get so overwhelmed.

AN: Yea.

BM: But knowing that Worcester is a great place to stay.

JJJ: Okay hold on, to follow up on that question, do you feel like Worcester's becoming like overcrowded or?

AN: I don't, so I don't think so. But it's just I am, I fall into like a privileged space now. So it's like I'm too privileged to even really know how hard it is for people to find housing until I see—I read newspaper articles and it's like we're building all these apartments, but there's still hundreds of people who cannot find housing. They cannot afford housing. The shelters are overcrowded, but you don't, I don't see it. It's not like overcrowding where we have to get on a subway and we are able to see that there's too many bodies. I mean but anecdotally and just sort of in the news, I think it's really hard for lower income to lower middle class folks to just get ahead. And I think that's sort of across the country. But I think for Worcester it's a little, it's a little sad because the history of Worcester is like working class. This is the place where you could go and not have to worry, like you could work and afford your house. I don't think that's true anymore. I think people are working full time and not able to afford their bills. But again, there's this whole pandemic thing. Banks are failing, which is weird to think that a bank could ever fail. You know, but anyways, I believe it when, when I hear that Worcester's overcrowding. But it's not like New York City where you go and you're like, this is a lot of people. So I don't see it in my every day, like walking around or driving around.

BM: Right, okay. What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place it is, in your opinion?

AN: Aside from the city government not being diverse, I think it is really diverse. I've been to other states like Alabama one time I went and I was like, there are not Asian people here. Like, which is weird to me because I just grew up, not that we were majority, we're not, like it's not California. But I didn't grow up being the only person of color in my elementary school. I grew up with Vietnamese kids, like around. So I think that the diversity of the city population, is actually, it doesn't exist in other cities. And I just think the affordability. I know, I know it's, so if we are going on record, it's 2023 now and everybody's saying we are getting priced out, we can't afford houses. Market rate isn't really market rate, it's like expensive rate. But I still believe it to be much more affordable and realistic to live in Worcester and have it still be a city without paying tons and tons and tons of money to like park your car or whatever.

BM: Right, right, okay. And then our final question of this genre, we're going to ask what do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been, generally?

AN: I think women have much—so it's weird. Women have much more opportunity and exposure to leadership roles. So, women actually get to do stuff, [to] say stuff, and it's always been that way. But its leaders of nonprofits and leaders of certain corporations, they're still the old boys club. But I think Worcester's history is deeply, deeply feminine. Like, it's deeply women leaders are who if we had to pick famous people from Worcester, I think there's a lot of women, and I think sort of the history of it, till this day is like, do you remember this person who you know, mentored me and 50 other women? And that person is with a cohort of people her age who are like, do you remember that person who mentored me? So I think that that sort of sense of sisterhood in the sense of like women leaders feel like they owe it to the next generation of women leaders, to like help say something. I think that that's not true of other places. I just compare everything to Boston. I'm pretty sure it's not like that in Boston. [laughs]

BM: Right, right. No, that's fair, to compare it to Boston. Okay, awesome. Thank you!

JJJ: You mentioned that you graduated law school, and you went to Boston College?

AN: Yes.

JJJ: Was that both, like, undergrad and law school?

AN: No, I went to University of Pennsylvania, and then I went right to law school.

JJJ: All right. All right. What were your challenges in education?

AN: I think poverty is everybody's challenge. I mean, I always say I was lucky, and I was lucky that I just was bright, you know? And teachers, I had a lot of teachers along the way who helped me have access to things that I wouldn't—like poor kids don't get to go to camp unless someone is able to tell them about this camp and get them set up and get them applications or whatever. So I'm lucky in that sense. But I think it—poverty—you just don't have access to like computers or the internet. Back in the day, without the internet would be so hard to research things, it used to be kind of very expensive, I think. And if you didn't have a computer, if you had to like catch the city bus to school every day, I think that those were the challenges. And just not having the ability to pay for camps and go to do extra stuff. I think that was a challenge. But in terms of education, I got out of the hood because I'm very good at school. [laughs] I didn't really have academic challenges. But I think in general, anything that held me back was just I didn't have access or exposure to nicer things or just I didn't know what college looked like because I didn't know. It was just imaginary in my mind. So just sort of access to be able to see what it actually looks like. I think that since I've grown up, you see kids taking college tours and stuff. They're able—we're allowing them to imagine what college actually is. But I think the kids I grew up with in my neighborhood had no concept of what it means to just go to school and live there. Like, that's how basic it was back then, I think, but sort of academically I loved school. [laughs]

BM: Right. Was there anything that you were like, drawn to, to go to Pennsylvania?

AN: No. Well, I didn't think I was going to go, I thought it was too far. But you know, when college application time comes and you get accepted to places, and some place will give you more money than the others, and then it just, I didn't think I would get in necessarily to a lot of the schools I applied for. And then when I actually visited, I was like, I could do this, I like this.And it was between there and Dartmouth. I got into Dartmouth. Nothing against Dartmouth…

BM: Wow.

AN: … but Dartmouth is like a lot of grass. Like, I went to visit, and they were like, "I hope you like cross country skiing because in the winters there's lots of snow." And I'm like, "I definitely don't like that."

BM: [laughs]

AN: I definitely don't want to do that. No, so Philadelphia was just a lot more exciting than wherever Dartmouth is but people who are outdoorsy and like frisbee and stuff [laughs] love, love Dartmouth, right? And I'm like, "Thank God I visited and just didn't accept the most

prestigious or whatever." But I remember thinking, cross country skiing. I never—I don't ski in general, and I'm like, wait, so you don't even have a hill? You just have to use your muscles?

BM: [laughs]

AN: So like no, I'm not doing that.

BM: That's funny.

JJJ: Upon finishing your formal education, what did you see as your options?

AN: I always knew I was going to be a lawyer. I think it would have been really bad if somehow I changed my mind in law school or after law school, because that was just a trajectory, and I think I'm lucky in that way. I think people struggle with what do I want to be when I grow up? But it's hard because in real life, I don't think kids are saying, "I want to be an investment banker," but that's a real good thing to be after college. Right? [laughs]. But it's just you don't—doctor, dentist, lawyer, police officer, those are the occupations that we imagine, and we try to fit into those buckets. But I was lucky that I always wanted to be a lawyer, so I just did everything that lawyers would do. Like I took—hate is a strong word—didn't love math, I didn't love science so I took a lot of history classes. I took a lot of English, liberal arts type classes, but I always knew I was going to be a lawyer. And if I wasn't going to be—like, right now, if you said, "If you weren't a lawyer, what would you be?" I'm not sure. I'm not sure what I would have done otherwise. I mean, now I know what I would be like. I don't know. I would like to be rich and volunteer and garden you know.

BM: [laughs]

AN: But back then, if it was like suddenly there's no such thing as lawyer, what do you want to be? I would not be sure.

BM: Right, was anyone in your family, or like any anyone you were exposed to?

AN: No, no. I don't even know. No, I don't.

BM: No? That's so interesting!

AN: I mean I just, I loved like all my American history classes and I just think the laws, like when you nerd out on it, that's what drew me to law and justice, but the job isn't as sexy as you

see on TV, but it's turned out I'm still happy with the job. But it's not like I'm in "Law and Order" …

BM: [laughs]

AN: … and you know it's not as glamorous. I mean, people ask me this all the time, and I'm like, "I don't really know what it was."

BM: Yeah. That's cool.

JJJ: What support network and mentoring have been important to you. Either like in undergrad, now?

AN: I think now, I mean I think for Worcester especially, I work at Bowditch and Dewey, which is a 120-year-old law firm, and one of my partners, he is like one of the greatest litigators of all time. He just took me under his wing, he takes all of us under his wing. So just having the ability to have access to one of the most well-respected lawyers in the city really helps you to gain invitations to rooms you wouldn't necessarily be invited in. And then once you get there, you prove yourself, and suddenly you're invited to do lots of things. You know? So I think mentorship from the legal community in terms of Bowditch and Dewey. But then there are women who run other companies that I just sort of met along the way who helped me get into other rooms that Mike Angelini is not going to get into, certain rooms like Linda Cavaioli from the YWCA used to. It's like the mentors have been people who were, I think, excited to see a Worcester kid grow up and stay in Worcester and succeed. I've been lucky in that way, too, where people just offered help, and I quickly knew it was okay to ask for help or to reach out to people and make connections. But it's been in the professional world, definitely, that I've gotten my most mentorship and my best friendships are other women who don't necessarily work at the same firm as me or are even lawyers, but they're in positions of—I don't want to say power—they're in high level positions, and they struggle with sort of the same things I do, where it's tiring to be the only chick in the room and kind of young still. It used to be really hard for me. I'd be 32 years old, looking around, there's nobody under the age of 60, all white dudes. And it's nice to have people who've already done it, or people who are doing it in other spaces to just talk to throughout the time. I don't know. I think I would have gone crazy by now, 14 years later, because there's not that many women. All of my lawsuits, it's very few that I have women as opposing counsel. So, it's nice to have women outside of my every—like in my real interactions. I'd argue that I'm one of the few women litigators, business litigators, at the whole firm. Everybody has their niches, but I'm like the traditional—when you picture what I do, you picture a 50-year-old white man. So, it's nice to have women who, whether they sit in healthcare or in nonprofits, are the equivalent. They expect me to be a 50-year-old white guy, and here I am.

BM: I love that, that's awesome. Sorry, I just was wondering if you could spell—there were two names you mentioned, it was Mike,

AN: Angelini, A-N-G-E-L-I-N-I, and Linda. Linda Cavaoili. C-A-V, I think it's A-O-I-L-I like aoili.

BM: Perfect. Awesome. Anything else you want to add?

JJJ: No, that was it.

BM: Thank you, that was, that was awesome! [laughs] So next we were thinking about talking about, I mean we've been talking about your work but kinda like, going deeper into your past. So what was your first job?

AN: Like, ever?

BM: Yeah, ever.

AN: Yeah, like how old are you? I don't think you would remember. So Service Merchandise, used to be like Best Buy but a real mishmash, like weird. They'd sell jewelry, but also appliances, and also like Christmas ornaments. I worked there when I was 15. And then I worked at Lady Foot Locker. You know, so I was a kid hustling.

BM: Right.

AN: I was a kid that was—no one was going to buy me my own car, nobody was going to buy me anything, so I started working young. And then I worked at bartending, you know, waitressing. I worked at Boulevard Diner. One of my favorite jobs in the history of my life is Boulevard Diner on Shrewsbury Street. I used to work 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. in the summers. It was fun because drunk people come in and all they want is toast and bacon, right? And it just was fun. And ownership there is so nice. And that's like quintessential Worcester. And they'd be like old school Worcester would come in and be like, "This is weird to see this Asian girl on the grill, but I kind of like it." But then I became a lawyer and I have worked at Bowditch and Dewey since, I never have been at another firm. I worked there during my second year of law school during the summer, which is like, back in the day. I don't know if it's the same now, back in the day it was like whoever invited you to be their summer associate, in your second year was definitely going to make you an offer and you take it, right? So I never looked back and I never went to a different firm.

JJJ: When you mentioned Service Merchandise, and you said like Best Buy, so was it a store in Best Buy?

AN: No, it's like, it's so weird.

BM: [laughs]

AN: You'd have to Google it later because it's like so, like I feel like young people now are like, why would you even have a store like that. Like that's so random.

BM: [laughs]

AN: It would be like if you walked into Target, but like …

JJJ: Like the Bodega store?

AN: No, like, like, it's like Target, except not. [laughs] Like, I think you should just Google it.

JJJ: In a corner store .

AN: No, no, no, it's like a real department store.

JJJ: Oh

AN: But I'm trying to think of one that's like, like Sears kind of was I don't even know if Sears is in business anymore, but like you'd walk in and kind of be like, okay, so I can buy a handbag, but also a vacuum. And Target's like that except Target's fashionable. This wasn't fashionable. [laughs]

BM: [laughs]

AN: It was fun, though, but it wasn't fashionable.

BM: That's so funny. [laughs] So our next question is, we could talk about both, like, what has your prior work meant to you, like when you're saying the Boulevard and Lady Foot Locker, and all that, and then what being a lawyer means to you now?

AN: I mean I think it's the same skill set. So it's like, I've done really well at jobs that require me to listen and gauge what a person needs me to say. Or, I'm like a people person in that way where it's like you make a lot of money when you're a bartender that can hear people and talk to them. And I think for being a lawyer, it's the people. It's like helping the clients get to point A to point B, and they're relying on me because I'm smart, you know? It is rewarding in that way. And I'm proud of how far I've come and I'm just very happy, grateful that I selected a job that is not the same every day. You know like it would—I didn't realize it because nobody realizes it when you're like 18,19 years old—there are lawyers who just do the same thing, the same four things all the time. And I'm thankful that that's just not what my life is. And when I say it is my life, so I don't think of it as a job. It's not like I can't wait to get home today and have my real life. It's like all meshed together. So it's like I've made friends through work, I consider my colleagues family, and it's like, I don't have much going on after where—I don't have hobbies where I'm skiing, I keep going back to skiing.

BM: [laughs]

AN: I don't ski, I don't really golf. You know, it's work and social kind of smooshed together. So, for lots of reasons, like I would say I'm not one of those people that my work is my life, because I'm not obsessed with the work. My life very much is defined by my job because that's my most access to people, most access to social stuff, friends, and the community. So it, it feels nice to have a job that you can do both. Like, right now, I'm at work. You know, it's not work, but I didn't have to ask anybody, can I leave? I didn't have to, it's just nice to have an independent life. And my day is my day, but I have work tasks like clients to deal with and court to go to, but it's not like clock in at eight, clock out at five. It's just sort of an organic. So I'm just grateful and I think it's privilege. I just remember poor people don't get to do that. Poor people have to live lives that are controlled by their bosses. Right? And I just am grateful to have a career that is rewarding. My parents are very proud. I make good money and I kind of get to come and go as I please, like as long as you're not screwing up the cases, you do whatever you want during the day. And that's like a goal that I don't think—so if I'm 38 years old, I don't think little kids, when I was a little kid, we ever had freedom of life as a box to check off. But I think younger people do not like, younger people are much better about being like, "I'm not doing that, why would I do that?" But my parents or my parents' generation are like, "You do it because you have to because it's work." Like you have to sacrifice for your family. So I think I've found that happy—I'm not bohemian at all, like I'm not. I still am a high achiever and I want to be the best at things, but it's much more organic, I think, for my generation, where it's like, I still like rules, but I like to work from home too.

BM: Right.

AN: I think we're the—I think my generation is the first generation of being like, "I think happiness does matter like at your job." [laughs] And I think the next generation is like, "It matters 100%," so I don't know if it'll change. You know, time always changes, generations are always different from the next, but.

BM: Yeah, that makes sense. Our next question is what are your primary responsibilities in terms of house work, like, outside of your lawyering job?

AN: So I own a—so it's my house. My boyfriend and I have been together nine years. He lives with me and I say it like we live together, but it was—it is my house.

BM: [laughs]

AN: We don't have kids. We have a dog, and we share, thankfully we share housework. Right? And he loves to cook, so he does all that stuff, like he snowblows or whatever, but I shovel. It's just like I maintain a house, with my boyfriend and we don't have hired help or anything to do anything, but the house is small, so it's not like, don't think it's like a palace, and it's dusty, so it's not like I can't keep a pristine house. But he does all the grocery shopping and those are the things that before I was with him, I just didn't do. Like my job really takes up my mental—I hate the grocery store. Something about it, I just hate going there.

BM: [laughs]

AN: And some people are like, "Oh, my God, I love it. I like to like mosey down the aisles real slow and like look at things." I'm like, "Oh, God, [laughs] that's my worst nightmare. My boyfriend will say, "Can you pick up cilantro on the way home?" And I'm like, "No, God." Meanwhile, I cut through the grocery parking lot on my way home every day, and I'm like, "I ain't stopping, no. Like can't we just Instacart this?"

BM: [laughs]

AN: I think I'm not a traditional woman in that way, but luckily, it's totally a generation, part of the generation where it's expected that it's shared men and women. So it's not you're the girl, so you have to do most of the housework. You know?

JJJ: Right

AN: If anything, I do a lot of housework because it's my, it's my friggin house…

BM: [laughs]

AN: … you know what I mean? Because you can't claim, like if anything were to happen and we split, you get none of this. [laughs] So that's the only reason I'm like possessive about stuff in the house. But, there's no expectation, and I don't—I used to before Max, I would just hire someone to do this. Then like leaves fall on the ground and you have to blow them and I'm like, "You can't wait because the city comes to collect the leaves." And he's like, "I'll do it." And I said, "Why can't we just hire someone?" And he's like, "Why would you pay someone?" And I'm like, "I always did it before you and at least then I could check it off my box."

BM: [laughs]

AN: Before Max and now, my primary responsibility is sort of ensuring that stuff gets done. But I'm not the one doing all the stuff. Like I like folding laundry. That's about it.

BM: Mm, got you.

AN: I like tidying up, but that's about it. The rest, I'm like you do it, or we could just live in filth, it's fine.

BM: [laughs] All right.

JJJ: That's interesting.

BM: How has this changed for you over time, like, when you were younger and you were living with your parents?

AN: I used to, you know, it's interesting because I think, I feel like if you talk to anybody who knew me throughout like my childhood, nobody would necessarily know I was poor unless there were kids from the neighborhood, right? But even then, I don't think we knew we were poor, because it wasn't until you meet someone that's not poor that you're like, "Oh, this is what your house looks like." So I grew up embarrassed of—I had two friends that I would have over, but they were my trusted friends, and I was very close to my cousin, so I always had friendship. But over time, I've realized nobody cares. I've never been to someone's house and been like, "You're poor. "Never. I think my sort of confidence in the socioeconomic scale has changed where I'm not embarrassed, but it's also by choice. So my house is very modest. People call it like a starter house, like my neighbors are so cute, they're like teachers, married with two little kids or something. It's like the perfect house to have if you're starting out on your adult life. I have younger associates at my firm whose houses are, like, gorgeous, massive, right. And sometimes I'm like, "Am I embarrassed about my house?" But I think that I'm like, that's just you. That's like a trigger from childhood, you know, because in real life, I probably could afford to buy, you

know. It's different now because I have the option, and I choose to have a house that I like, it's very easy for me to keep up with the bill, very easy, so that I can have 100 pairs of shoes if I want. If I want, if I want this car, I'm having this car. If we want to eat expensive dinners five times a week, it's just nice to have flexibility of choice. So it's like, before, when I had no choice, I was embarrassed about my living situation. But you know, if I was slumming it to save money because whatever, today, I don't, I wouldn't be embarrassed because I'm like, "Well, this is, I don't, I'm opting for this." So I think that that's changed for me, and I think that lots of people I grew up with, who like grew up and came out of the hood, have that same weird thing about how other people perceive their house to be. But meanwhile, I have friends who grew up rich who I'm like, "Your roof is falling down." They're like," I don't really care." And I don't judge them, right? It's so interesting how we grow up and the things that like we were embarrassed about follow you kind of forever, and then you have to talk yourself out of it. When you grow up, you're like, no, like just relax. One, nobody's thinking about it. And two, you're good, like you're fine. If I wanted a different house, I'd have a different house. I don't know. I'm rambling about it a little, but growing up in Worcester, it's just I meet people now that live in Great Brook Valley. So it's just weird that they don't consider themselves in the same, like we're not the same to them. And I'm like, "W not?" So it's sort of a complicated when you staying the same small city and you see people who didn't leave the hood, later on in life it's just like a weird dichotomy. Because I'm like, "I'm just like you, what do you mean?" And they're like, "You're not." I mean, some things don't change. I guess there are new generations of kids in the projects. But the hope is that it'll be easier for them to transition out, like to grow up to be like me. That's the hope. I mean, that's part of the reason I am so dedicated to the city is that at a very young age, I had the ability to take leadership roles. Like you work at Bowditch and Dewey and Mike Angelini introduces you to people, suddenly you're on boards and you're making decisions about nonprofit organizations and stuff. And you have the ability to effectuate change outside of the law firm, which is hard to explain to people who can't conceptualize, especially like lawyers in Boston. My lawyer friends in Boston are like, "How do you find the time to go to board meetings?" I'm like, "My firm insists on it. My firm very deeply cares about the community. I get pay raises because of how involved I am in the community." So you get to parlay this job, this "prestigious" job. I'm using air quotes so that you can transcribe it.

BM: [laughs]

AN: This "prestigious" job gets you into places where you can do things that fill your soul. I'm not a criminal attorney, I'm not a nonprofit attorney, I'm not pro bono. I am a for profit attorney who represents very wealthy people, fighting. Sometimes it doesn't feed your soul, right, to just see two businesses fighting each other for money, oftentimes for very stupid petty reasons. And you're like, "Is this important? How is this fulfilling?" Except intellectually, academically, it's fulfilling or just your sense of competition. But if you work at a job that allows you clout to step into other rooms and have a say in something, you can end up really feeding your soul. Which I

think that’s another Worcester thing that I think doesn't exist everywhere else, where you could be a 27-year-old kid sitting in a boardroom making decisions about millions of dollars for a nonprofit, how they're going to distribute it.

BM: Yeah.

JJJ: Right.

BM: You had mentioned that there was like a specific valley in Worcester, can you repeat it? Sorry.

AN: Great,Brook.

BM: Great, oh, this, okay, got you. Okay, so how have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your life? Very broad question. [laughs]

AN: Honestly, I think it is a decision, a conscious decision to not have children. I think, luckily or not luckily, like I didn’t have or don't have a biological clock. I’m not, I have not, at 38 years old, I don't regret it, you know. And I know a lot of people who do who are like, “Oh, God, I wish we would have had kids. I think for women having kids, no matter how progressive or supportive your husband is, that significantly limits your time. To do the things that I do, I would have had to carry my kids with me everywhere. Like they would have been those kids that like go to board, which I think people should embrace to some extent. If you want women to continue to excel. But life is busy, right? So it's like, I was frazzled driving here, and I left my office. I said, “You better leave at 1:22 at the latest.” It's 1:24. And I'm like, “Shit.”

BM: [laughs]

AN: And I'm booked minute to minute to minute. I do it to myself, right? But there's no way that I could do that if I had to care for family, and I, for better or for worse, I don't—thank God, my parents are still healthy, you know, but no one will care for them but me. I'm an only child, in a very, very traditional Vietnamese household. Like we, I only speak Vietnamese to my parents. If there comes a time that they need care, they're not going into nursing homes. Unless you told me there's this awesome bougie, high-end nursing home with Vietnamese people that run it, Vietnamese food, Vietnamese culture. I just couldn't put them in a place where everybody speaks English and you eat spaghetti. That's something I worry about because it'll be hard to manage my time. I'm imagining it would be the same as if you have a kid. It's like you have to cut time out of the day to care for family. And, that’s the, honestly I hate to say it, the only way I'm able to

balance it is because I don't have to worry about—I made a conscious decision, that it's just me. Like my joy comes from just me. [laughs] So, it's a decision that people make.

BM: Yeah.

JJJ: So, your decision to not have kids is because of …

AN: It's a little selfish. I don't like to use the word, but I think it's the easiest way for people to understand it is at some point, I was like, I kind of want to do, I only want to do stuff for me. I can't imagine when people say, I believe it, you know, I love my parents, and they love me. Once you have a kid, your priorities shift, as they should. But I'm like, well, why even set myself up for that? Like I just want stuff for myself, you know what I mean? Like it sounds so selfish, but it would be more selfish if I had the kid and didn't care about the kid. [laughs] But if I want to go on whatever trip, I want to go on whatever trip. If I want to buy 60 million handbags and not worry about this kid's college education, you just have to make that choice. And it was also, like, carrying, like, being pregnant, like there's those years where literally, the child relies on you to like hold their head up. I just, I have no interest in doing that. I mean now, I think I'd be a great mom, a wonderful mom. But there are plenty of babies that exist already who don't have parents, like we could just adopt, if I ever really was like, "Uh oh, I really think I want to raise a child." I don't have to bear children to raise them right, so that door is always open. But it was a very, it's just not—selfish is not the right word. It's Buddhist in my mind, like, in Buddhism, the only thing that can make you happy is you. And all this other stuff, you curate it around you, but someone else's joy can't be the source of your happiness. Unless you have a thing where it's like, I like chocolate. you like making people happy, it's still a selfish thing. Like, you're doing it not because you want them happy, it's, so I learned from a young age it's like, do it if it makes you happy. And I've met …

JJJ: So your lifestyle and your parents are just, was that instilled in your decision?

AN: Yeah, well, so, the parents thing, that was deeply ingrained culturally you know. So it's like if my parents like, if I had it anyway, it would, I would be, I would have parents that you know, like, some people have parents and they're like, "Oh, my God, they're off in Aruba. Like they're having the time of their life, they don't need me." It's just, that's not how it works in like Vietnamese culture, right? So it's like, the one obligation I feel in my life is to ensure that my parents age comfortably and gracefully forever. And the one obligation I feel in my life is, no matter what, my parents have to be taken care of. But that, I think that's cultural.

JJJ: Right, right.

BM: Yeah.

AN: I feel like I'm like a dude, you know, Wolf of Wall Street style. I feel it's just weird that it's a woman, you know? But I'm like, “Why would I want kids? What do you mean.”

BM: Right.

AN: I think more and more women are like that. But …

JJJ: Yeah. I've seen a couple articles about the rise of single women opting out not to have children.

AN: Yeah, it's an option, right? So, it's like we empower women. However, we empower them and I feel bad for—there's hundreds of women, hundreds of millions of women who are trying to have kids and can't have kids. Right? We should just let people go for the thing that'll make them happy. And people have stopped asking me, like it used to be, “When are you going to have kids?” Now I'm like, “Never.” But I also think as the times change, people don't ask anymore. People are not wondering. But ten years ago people were wondering, “When are you going to start your family?” I don’t think people wonder that much anymore because I think they've seen, they probably met so many other women who are like, “No, I'm good.”

JJJ: How did that make you feel at the time, like when you were like starting out your career?

AN: I feel like honestly, maybe when I was 31, 32 [years old]. I would just be like, “You know, I'm not ready yet. When the time comes, it comes,” because maybe I'm glad I didn't commit. So it grew over time. It wasn't like I had boyfriends when I was in my twenties that I'd be like, “Oh my God, we'll get married and have kids.” But I was just saying the things that I thought like, we'll be happy, like this is what you do. But once I turned 30, once I turned 30, 31, 32 and started really making money, spending money, doing whatever the heck I wanted, it's hard to go back. It's hard to go back. So I think that with my friends either they all had kids when they were 24 or 25, or the other half is like they started to have kids when they were 38, 39, 40. Because it's really when you make money and you're in position of power, and you get to do important work, it's really hard during that window of time to be like, “Let's stop and have kids.” So it's like, let's wait. And I think, you know, modern medicine allows—it's not weird now, if you meet a 40 year old who is pregnant, like that's not weird. Back in the day it would be like, “Oh my God, is this a high-risk pregnancy?” Like, no. But I have friends who have one year olds who I grew up with and ones who are have like 22 year olds, you know? I don't think I don't think it's going to … I don't think one day I'm going to be like, “Oh, I'm ready for kids.” I just don't, I think the window has passed. But, I would definitely think that. One day I would be open to fostering or adopting a

kid, not because of some sense of yearning to be a mother, but like there are a lot of injustices. And I just think I would probably I would give a kid a good chance of being a successful human adult, expose them to things they wouldn't otherwise. You know, like it's almost a waste to not use my resources and my experience to help like kids. Not infants. I mean, I need them to be pooping, All right? You know, I don't need a diaper. But I'd be open to that.

JJJ: There's definitely a shift in the culture. Yeah. Now, nowadays.

AN: Like, my mom is one of 14 kids.

JJJ: Wow.

AN: Her oldest—but it's like my grandma was smart, I guess, and was like, "Well, the oldest one can just raise these the last five." You know? Your big sister will just be like, "Go to her if you need anything." And I think our genera …, my generation too, is like, how do you afford it? But people say, "Well, you always afford it. You always find a way." But because I've been so accustomed to the way I spend my money, do things … I'm like, "How do you, how do you buy clothes for and feed another human for 18 years?" But obviously people afford it, you know?

BM: Right. I know those are like real realities. So you have to take time to think about. Yeah, those are huge. Sorry. Just a few more questions regarding work. What do you think are the pros and cons of the path you've chosen?

AN: I mean, the pros are I just get to be independent. It's a career choice that has no—I don't have a boss, you know? I mean I'm a partner of a law firm. I don't have anybody that's like, "Where are you?" And if they are, it's just because they're nosy, you know, like it's not because I'm going to get in trouble. So just the freedom to come and go as I please and to do really good intellectual work. The con is for better or for worse, it's not a job, right? So it's like it never really is. I'm turning off my—I'm not going to look at my email for two weeks like that just doesn't really exist in this space of career world. Sure, I am not a slave to emails when I'm on vacation, but you always kind of have to be ready to answer the phone if there's emergency. And when I say an emergency, it's never a real emergency. It's some, you know, when people are suing each other, this is the most important thing to them right now. So, it's their emergency. But you just—I'm like, "You know, I have 50 of you. It's not a real emergency," but you just have to handle it. So the con is you never end the work day. And being known sort of in the community it's like you have to be on all the time, right? So it's like, I can't be like a drunk hot mess at Target. Like, just by definition Worcester is big, but it's small enough that you can't. You have to worry about your reputation, always. So there's never anonymity. You don't get to have that anymore when

you sort of strive to be a community leader. But I'm old enough now and tired enough that it's so fine, you know,

All Together: [Laughter]

AN: I'm not doing anything. I got that out of my system in college. And I encourage you ladies to do that as well.

JJJ: All right. So you mentioned being a partner at the firm did that happen, like, right after, like, law school or did you, like, work your way up?

AN: So partnership is tricky at law firms because they don't really tell you what it … like, because its other partners have to vote you in. You know so I hustled, I hustled, and I just advocated for myself. So I became a partner. I was the youngest partner ever at this firm. And I think about it now and at the time I was like, "Obviously you should make me a partner duh." You know, like I was young and really green and I just played my cards right where I was giving back in my first five years of the lawyer, like I gave my whole life. I was there all the time. There was never like a thing I would say no to. I would work all the cases with the partners and I was sitting on really important boards in the city. And then at one point I was like, I want to be a partner. And they were like, "Well, okay. You're a little young, but I guess we could talk about it," you know? And so I became partner in 2016, but I was like a sixth year associate which is young. I have ninth year associates who we're not even talking about partnership with them yet, you know? So I think I've slowed down in recent years, but I was looking back like I was just a go getter kid. If that's the next best thing, I want it right now. Like just strive to do, like strive to go to an Ivy League school, strive to go to the best law school, strive to get a firm job right out—there was like an adrenaline with the achievement. But now, luckily, once you become partner, there's not much more so I'm like sitting pretty. So now I'm much more concerned about my day to day. I want to do good cases. I don't take cases from—I don't represent people I don't like. I don't sign up for things that are going to be seven hundred million hours right now because it's an emergency right now, because this client has ignored a problem for whatever. So it's really flexible for me to be able to determine my day to day life and like the type of quick cases I want, the type of clients I want, the type of book of business I want to build. But usually that comes before partnership. I just jumped the gun and they said yes. And I said, okay. But it was accelerated I think. We don't right now—if a six year came to me and was like, "I'm ready for partnership," I'd be like, "No, you're not, you're not." And I wasn't ready. I look at them and I'm like, You know, it's really fun to be an associate come partnership. There's all this weird paperwork, responsibility, decisions about the firm that you have to make. I really miss the nerdy. Like when you're just an associate, it's like research this, draft something. And let's talk about the argument. Like, worry about the cases, not the business, you know? But now it's like

another meeting with other partners to talk about like the budget, like, that's boring. But, nobody told me that.

BM: Right. Um, and then our last question is how do you feel about the choices you've made in your life? And do you have any regrets?

AN: I regret not studying abroad. When I was in college I, again, I had—I have a weird thing about achievement. So I remember thinking, "Oh, well, I'm not going to be able to double major if I take a semester somewhere. And I regret not taking time off between law school and between college and law school. I don't know how, like my brain, I know I would have felt guilty, but, once you're grown up, I'm using air quotes again. It's really hard to do anything but the thing you're doing, like your job. So it's really hard for me to be like, I'd like to just maybe backpack around Europe for six months. You don't get to make that, decision, without worrying about how all these other things are going to work while you're doing that. So I regret that before I jumped into a career, I didn't just do fun stuff. Live in California for a year for no reason. Like I was racing to something that I'm well, what do you get when you get there? And like what do you get when you get there early? Not much, you know. So it's just, sure, I'm very comfortable now, but the time, I can't take huge blocks of time to explore things that I wish I had done that, even if it was to solidify that. Yeah, you definitely want to go to law school. You definitely want to be a lawyer. Just take six months off, try to get a job somewhere and see how it goes. I regret not having any lens to look through. I'm grateful just because I'm grateful for how things played out. But I'm not as grateful as someone who's has seen what it looks like if it wasn't this today, you know. So it's like to some degree and privileged where it's like, you know, you just sort of floated through to the goal. But I have no concept of like relaxation or travel or, you know, like, I don't, that's why I'm like, I don't have a hobby. But I think it's healthy to have hobbies. It's healthy to not always be. Racing to something. So I'm like to the extent you can do things that are not achievement related, you know, like study abroad, take a summer somewhere random like, you know, Teach for America for a year. Like, those are the things that it's, I regret not doing that or like back in the day. Kaplan. Was paying a bunch of money for people to go abroad to teach English. Like a bunch of money you know? And I was coming out of college and I'm like, "I wish I"—I think it was like Korea. Maybe I could have lived in Korea to teach English, right? And I'm like, "Why didn't I do that?" Oh, right. Because I thought I had to go to law school right away. And I didn't really have to. And I wish I had lived in Korea, you know, and taught English and did a bunch of cool new things that it'll be hard for me to do that now without actually saying, I'm changing my life now, like I'm stopping this lawyer thing because I need to do this other thing. There's like a window of time. You get to do stuff before you are forever grown up. For one case, stuff kicks in, you know?

JJJ: right.

AN: That's my only regret is like, I went too fast thinking there was something to get to faster than I needed to think. Needed to.

BM: Yeah.

JJJ: Right.

JJJ: Before we start, like the next set of question, what were your undergrad and like, what was your …

AN: I majored in U.S. history and American Literature and Culture and took a minor in Asian-American studies.

BM: Wow. That's awesome.

AN: A lot of reading.

JJJ: That's a lot.

All together: [laughter]

BM: Yeah.

AN: A lot of reading. I mean, law school's a lot of reading.

BM: Yeah.

JJJ: All right, so this next set of questions we're going to be talking about, like your community involvement in politics, what you've been talking about all along. But do you actively consider yourself to be like, political?

AN: No. No. I mean, I lean left, but I try to stay out of like, political. I don't love to campaign. I'll host an event for whoever, if they're a friend and I don't have to do anything. And by host, I mean I'll put my name on something that it clearly aligns with my left leaning views, but I find that so. I'm not sure of it, but I'd like to keep the door open to becoming a judge someday. And usually it's just easier if you don't do too much politically because you never know who's going to be the one that needs to appoint you, who's going to be sitting in office or who's going to what party is going to be currently the one that like picks the judges. So I try to be really quiet about

the icky political stuff, but I guess my involvement is like. You call it Democratic only because it's access to justice, access to health care. That stuff falls under like left leaning, touchy feely Democratic stuff. So I'm active in causes that I think by definition people consider them Democratic, but I'm not campaigning for people, you know, I don't participate in that way. Like school—like for local government, there are some folks who are like, "I'm going to run for school committee." And I'm like, "I don't care what affiliation you are. I think you'd be great. I'll support you, I'll publicly support you for this position," but I'm not political in terms of party politics. But I think people would guess that I'm like sort of with my left leaning attitude that I'm Democratic, but who knows? Sometimes, you know, party politics changes over the years.

BM: true.

JJJ: Have you been involved in volunteer or community work with like an organization or something like that.

AN: Yeah, Yeah. So part of, I think part of the reason I'm so successful at work or people even know who I am is the community aspect. So right now I'm chair for the chair of the Board of Directors for Kennedy Community Health Center.

JJJ: Kennedy like.

AN: Kennedy Yeah.

JJJ: Kennedy Oh, not Kennedy.

AN: And that's like there's community health center. So acess to quality health care for people whether or not you can afford it. Right? So it's people who don't have health insurance or people who, you know, don't like, they go to the E.R. because they don't know any better. It's like actually providing primary care. Like you have a doctor who checks up on you and you get your blood checked, like the things we take for granted, like "my doctor." You say "my doctor." Lots of poor people don't have that. They don't say my doctor. They don't have a doctor. So it's like the community health centers in Worcester are very good about just creating the same type of care that people who have health insurance and who are just accustomed to care like that, giving them access. So, sitting on that, being chair of that board is kind of a big deal in the city of Worcester. Right. And I was previously just before this chair for the United Way of Central Massachusetts, which they do such good work and they have been the go-to sort of pillar of nonprofits forever because they do it right. You know when you give them money it's going to the right stuff, you know, but being Chair of a board of directors like of an organization. It's like I remember thinking, "Do you guys know? I have no idea what I'm doing. I have no idea what I'm

doing. What do you mean?" And it's like, you know, the president of, like, St Vincent's is on the board, of the president of Fallon Health is on the board. I'm like. Okay. I'm going to call this meeting to order. I guess, you know, but it's … I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of other leaders in those spaces, and it is a lot of work, if you think about it. I'm like. Kind of doing this for free? Well, I'm definitely doing it for free, but I'm like, this is actually a job. Like, it's weird that I'm doing this as volunteer work, but like, I'm sitting making decisions about who to hire, who to fire. Like in terms of like the president of Kennedy Community Health Center, we went through a whole search committee, found him. But I'm like, Who am I to be picking the CEO of a major health organization? But you just, you know, I guess you just roll with it. Like, if they invite you, say, yes, just go. And you you'll never learn unless you do it right. But … **JJJ**: right.

AN: I, I was like 25 years old when I was invited to be on the board for Quinsigamond Community College. And I was like, What the heck is even a board like? What do you mean?

And I remember my first meetings, like there would be financials you look at, and I'm like. Like, am I checking the math? Like what? I don't understand what this means, but nobody understood. Like, you don't know until you do it, So. Ever since then, it's like I've never not sat on a board for the last 15 years or whatever.

JJJ: And the invite just like, come, It's like. How does that …

AN: Well, now. So once you, now it's like once you become that person where it was like, you think AiVi will sit on the board. I, I just tell people no, cause it's like, not fair to what I'm doing. Like I'm chair of the Kennedy right now. It just I can't spread my time like that. It's not fair to me sort of mental health wise, but. You find that it's like when you do a good job, people always ask you to, like they always find a way to ask you. Or if you're really busy, people ask you for help and you're like, Why is it only me that, you just. I think I am very interesting for Worcester leadership where they're like. There's not many Asian women, you know. And I'm young-ish. I'm getting older now. But like, you know, I show up looking the way I look, like in outfits, you know, and, like, bust into the room. So I think the energy people are drawn to that and they want that on their board. So it's like you, once you get on one and you do good, I feel like people come out of the woodwork and they're like, Hi, we heard about you from this. And we're looking for new board members. Would you like to join? I'm like. Can you call me in like 2024 or whenever you know ?

BM: Could you mention the community college one more time?

AN: Quinsigamond, q-u-i-n-s-i-g-a-m-o-n-d

BM: Perfect, Thank you.

JJJ: All right. What role has religion played in your life?

AN: so, I'm Buddhist, but, and I would say I'm like, deeply Buddhist. But Buddhists don't do anything like that. We don't. It's like when I … you know, when people say I'm really religious, I go to church a lot. I'm like, we don't … there's no practice, Like there's no obligations. It's just the way I think, I think. And the way I live life. And I think Buddhism, it's like. Karma based everything, like the energy that you put out into the world is the energy you get back. Whether it's true or whether it's just your mindset allows you to receive the world in a more optimistic way. It doesn't matter. It makes you like, it makes you happier, whether you're. It's really energy. Like, I'm not like some, I don't believe in, like, sorcery, you know? It's just like I find that when you approach things with a positive attitude, it ends up being. Positive. like. So, that's how it's been influenced my life. But there's no like, like I don't go to temple really, unless there's like. A funeral. And we have to pay respect to an ancestor or something, but …

JJJ: All right.

AN: I went to Catholic high school. So I love religion, but I treat it like history. So I'm like, I really like history. So, anytime I learn about another religion, it's more of me just thinking about it in a, like sociology history way, not a faith way. Like … **JJJ:** What school is that, the high school you went to?

AN: I went to Holy Name, Central Catholic.

BM: Anything else? You good.

JJJ: No, that's it.

BM: Okay. So the next topic we're going to talk about is health. And so we were wondering, how have health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

AN: I think generally I've been lucky, just like I was a healthy kid. I recently last year actually, I was, got really sick with pneumonia, was in the hospital for like 16 days. It was awful. And it wasn't COVID, it was just regular pneumonia. But I think that it was. That was the first time in

my life that I'm like, Wow. You could die … like people could, you could die from pneumonia. But in general, like, I don't have asthma. I was never one of those kids that, like, had strep throat. I never had, I'd never had the flu before. I've never broken a bone, you know like, just generally healthy and lucky and my parents are generally, you know, as far as health goes, there's nothing about them that's worrisome. You know, where it's like they're just getting older, but it's not like heart disease or cancer or, you know, diabetes. They don't, you know. So it hasn't really luckily, affected me, at all. My teeth, I have really bad teeth, you know, so that like, I feel like dental health is one of those things where I'm like people need access to good dental health because when your teeth suck, either you're in pain or you're, like, really self-conscious about your teeth. When like, when I was growing up, rich friends got braces and they got their teeth straightened. You know, I had to. Over the years, I probably have like five root canals. My teeth were just really weak. So eventually I just got them all. Like I got all of my root canals, like, like all of my crowns redone, reshaped recently, not recently, like three years ago, because I was like, I'm tired of eating a bagel and like, this crown falling off. Like, I'm just done with this. And this is when I got like, I make too much money to be worried about my teeth hurting or falling out. But that I mean, that didn't really affect my life per se, except it was an inconvenience for like 35 years. But now I'm happy to report that I'm like, this is what it's like to have teeth that don't hurt. Like, this is what it's like. Yeah. I mean, that's the only thing that I would say health wise was like really annoying. Mhm. Teeth are expensive and health insurance doesn't cover much. So it's like.

Poor people, again. I'm like, I keep going back to poor people. Just live with the pain or get your tooth pulled, you know, like there's no other choice. You can't get an implant. You can't pay for the crown, like. So, that's another … if I could. If I could change. Another thing, it would be like everybody should have the same exact access to good dental health from a young, young age.

BM: Yeah, Um, so what are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable health care?

AN: We were. I mean, I grew up poor, so it wasn't until I got my job that I wasn't on, like, a medicare medicaid, you know, like, I was, you know, we grew up on, I grew up on welfare, like. But the thing about Massachusetts, which is amazing, is if you're on MassHealth, you get good health care, you like you are, you do have access. It's just the extras that I think like, like when I say we were poor, I didn't have access to summer camp. It's like I really would have liked braces. I wouldn't have liked them. I know I wouldn't have liked them, but like, I really would have all the extra stuff that. Kids get to make them, make it more comfortable for them as adults. But, I'm lucky. I think we just live in a state where. If you know how to get to where you're going or someone helps you, you can get good health care like the health center, right? It. Anybody can go there. But you need someone to tell you that it exists.

BM: Right. Whose health are you responsible for besides your own?

AN: My dog. My mom and dad. But not really, like mom and dad. No, but yes. You know like, I'm not responsible. For, like. Like they have their own health insurance and they go to their own appointments. But like, ultimately, if anything were to happen and we needed to come up with money, it would be me handling it. Or if they needed like a ride anywhere, it would be me not necessarily giving them the ride, but, me being the one to like, get it all organized for them. But again, I'm lucky they're in like relatively normal health for … I guess they're in their seventies now.

BM: Yeah.

AN: And my dog like, getting. Driving my dog to the vet. I'm like, Damn, this is a lot. Like, this is really going to interrupt my day, so.

BM: Yeah.

AN: Yeah. The kid thing, I'm like, How often do you do it?

JJJ: All right, so we're coming toward the end. Um, and some more question. How do you get through? Tough time.

AN: Drink. Um, like, I mean, I have a good network of friends that, usually it's like, let's go get a drink and eat, like having dinner, like a nice dinner. And I have a dog. Honestly, it's so weird that. So I had a dog for 15 years and he passed away in September and it was like, heartbreaking. And I was like, I can't get another dog. Like, I just, you know, let's grieve for a while. But then I'm like, I hate this. Like, this house sucks without a dog. I had the dog when I bought the … it just life. It could be humdrum if you don't have. Something else that like. So, I guess it's what people feel about kids, where I'm like, something else that loves you relies on you, and there is a reason to go home, right? There's a reason. Cause the dog, we. You know, I'd like to see my dog, so. And like, we got the dog in January. He's a puppy. So it's like, welcome commotion. You know, where I'm like, who has eyes on the dog. He's peeing, he's pooping, you know, like, that's. He's not a therapy dog, but it is therapeutic.
JJJ: Hmm.

AN: In ways that I think people have hobbies. And like I don't have. Like. I don't. I used to run outside a lot, right? But like, I just got real lazy about that, so I don't know. It's usually talking to friends and being and sometimes, like, griping. Griping. But like. Like. I guess maybe times haven't been that tough.

JJJ: Hmm. So what kind of thoughts keep you going, I guess is like sort of the same question, similar. So it would be like your dog?

AN: Well, I think it's like. It doesn't last forever. Right. So when something sucks really bad, it just doesn't last forever. And just like, when something's awesome, it doesn't last forever. So it's like, no matter what. Just. Wait, like, just wait it out, suck it up because it's not going to be forever. And to the same degree, it's like when things are really fun, enjoy yourself because it's just not going to last forever. So I think that's like a Buddhist thing to where it's today is today. Right? Like, like the sky could fall tomorrow. We could all die. So I'm not really worried about tomorrow. And yesterday is like, well, you're not going to be able to like, oh, that was really bonehead thing I said yesterday. It's like, Well, it's yesterday, so.

JJJ: right.

AN: So move it along. So I think that that's. Helpful in life to just be like. Sometimes worrying. What, usually worrying doesn't change what it is. Just like, like I don't plan for when I book a vacation. I'm not one of those people that's like. Thinking about it six months in advance and like doing countdowns because somehow you lose. You don't enjoy today if you keep looking forward to like this thing tomorrow. So just assume. What if I drop dead tomorrow? Like, let's just live right now, like this today. And I think that that's a healthy way to approach life, because I find that it's helped me just sort of let go of the things that other people would, I think, overthink or worry about or regret. Like, I don't really like when I say I didn't travel. Study abroad is my only regret. That's true. Like I don't have regrets. But I think I've done regretful things. I just don't think about them anymore.

BM: Yeah.

JJJ: How do you define success in your life and has this definition change over time?

AN: Yes, So I used to success used to be tangible, like it used to be money. Not cause I was greedy, but like I could measure it by my ability to buy a car, my ability to buy a house. Now it's like, you know, you make a certain amount of money and it doesn't matter anymore. So it's not like I need to make $1,000,000. You don't, in real life comfort. You hit a number. And generally for people it's like if you make this much, everything else is extra, cause you're, if you make this much, it means you're going to be able to pay for, Food, shelter, like without worry, without having to like, budget too much. So now it's more like. Success is happiness because it's like you have to think, Why am I doing this? Like, whenever I say that to myself, like, why am I putting myself through this? Just stop. Just don't do it then. Like, successful for me would be going home today and being like, it was a good day like. That's nice, Ladies, like, got some work done.

You know, it is a, peacefulness that I control. So for me, being able to control my life and what I want to do, that's success. I don't, I'm not nobody. I don't, I'm not scared of anybody saying or influencing what I have to do. So that's, I'm like, but first, money had to come. So it's like, I still want money to, like, I still want to be rich, but it's something more complicated now because once you get to the level of, like, yeah I make fine money. Then it's like, Well, I'd like to be happy. So that's like the measure.

JJJ: All right. Based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generation?

AN: I think you should always be asking yourself, Do I really want to do this? Or What do I really want? And it's like, not. I find that women and this is over generalizing, but. We spin in our own heads where it's like, But what about this? What about this? What about this? And we're always factoring in someone who's expecting me to do this. Or what will they think, if you just have to be honest with yourself? Like, just ask yourself that, you don't have to have a conversation with anybody else, whether you do like a journaling or just in your mind. Why am I doing this? Do I want this? Do I like … Will I be happy with this tomorrow, five years from now? Ten years from now? So. That's and I think you walk away from things you don't like. Relationships cut your losses. It's always like if the if the job sucks, you don't need to suck it up. Like if your boyfriend sucks and he's never gonna change, it doesn't matter that you've been together five years. Cut your losses. Can you? Will this be … will you be happy tomorrow? Do you see? Do you see yourself doing this forever? I think that about relationships a lot, where it's like, you know, people are stuck at jobs that they hate. And I'm like, So what's going to change?

Nothing. Why are you still here? Sometimes people lie to themselves and they're like, Well, it'll get better when. But a lot of times it's just like, I don't know why. And I'm like, Well, you got to start making moves then, you know? So. Like relationships with women. I'm like, God, stop staying with people that suck. You know, they suck. They're not going to change. You know what I mean? So it's like, it doesn't matter. Your, your time has not been wasted. I have a lot of friends who are like, we've been together so long. But I'm like. And what, like. So I think you have to really be honest with what … and. Outside the box is not. It never stays outside the box for that long. Like I, ten years ago, people would think that like, that's, like I'm atypical, but I'm not now, you know, come to find out lots of people are like me, so they're all. You're not the only one thinking something. You're not the only woman who ever has wondered, What if I don't want to have kids? What if I don't? You know, like, want to get married ever? You're not the only one. And it's okay to, like, sort of explore. Outside of what you think the next thing is.

JJJ: Right? We are working on telling. We are working to tell a fuller story of the history of women that has been recorded in the past. What should we be sure to include? Like.

All together: laughter.

AN: Wear whatever you want. Hmm. I'm very like, Listen, I'll give you my Instagram account for you guys to … I'm, for women, especially if you're aspiring to sit in rooms that women are not typically, you're not gonna look like everybody else. So if you already don't look like everybody else, stop trying to look like everybody else. Like for me, I used to feel like. I want to emulate this, but I'm like, But I'll never be a 70 year old white man. Right? So it's like, I love Mike Angelini. I'm never gonna be him or look like him or have the experiences as him. So stop mimicking him or like just roll up the way you want to roll up and like, I don't wear like. Like a man is not wearing a purple silky shirt with, like, a vest anymore, you know, but like, I will. Take advantage of. If you're going to stand out. Stand out. That's. I think that that's my whole, like, life story where it's like, look, if they're going to notice you anyways, make sure that you leave a good impression.

JJJ: Right on this journey of, you know, telling the fuller story. Is there anyone else you would suggest we talk to?

AN: Is it? So is it. Worcester women who live in Worcester or Worcester … People who have …

JJJ: Worcester women.

AN: Have influence in Worcester.

JJJ: I think it's like women who has impacted Worcester.

AN: So I have a very good friend, she's not a good friend, she's … her name is Kim Miner and she is general counsel to the Woosox. **JJJ:** How do you spell that ?

AN: M-I-N-E-R. She lives in Quincy, I think. But she's the reason that was like she's a lawyer. She's been in baseball for her career, basically. And she's not like she's younger than me and she's just the most. Down to earth. Fun, cool woman. And she negotiated like she, it's a ball club that she, you know, she negotiated with Worcester leadership and she helped the Woosox leadership, which is like just a bunch of men. And she just. It's impressive. And this is like, she's fearless in a way that I very much admire, because when I say I'm in an industry with a bunch of men, I'm not in baseball, though, you know? So it's like she's and she'd just be would be fun because she's younger, too, like so. But I'm imagining that I should only be naming people that are like new ish to Worcester and that way because I'm sure that you've captured all the like. Well respective women of Worcester who've been here making change for a long time. Kim Miner, It would be. And that's a lot of women who are in … have leadership positions in breweries. So I represent

like a lot of beer breweries that, they're fun to. So it's like a different spin on, you know, it's not just the president of, you know, Girls Inc, although she's awesome, too, and she's retiring soon. I don't know if you you probably already I feel like this she would be someone that. The project has already talked to. Kim Minor Yeah.

All together: laughter.

JJJ: Do you have time for any more questions or.

AN: I'm good.

JJJ: I'm like, okay.

AN: Unlike, unless you have a question you're dying to ask.

JJJ: We've covered, like, all the topics like education, um, community, political involvement, but these are just kind of like additional, like, extra. Um, I'm just going to pick this one cause I really like it. How old were you when you were allowed to date, and where did you go? Like, on dates?

AN: Uh. I was not. I don't think I was ever allowed. I think I just started dating. And my parents were like, What the hell do these American kids think they're doing? I was, 14 and my boyfriend was 16 and he just got his driver's license. And back then it was like. Cute, In terms of we actually went on dates where I don't think people do it anymore. Like, to the movies hang out with friends at the mall. I don't think kissing at the mall anymore, but like, you know, go out to Friendly's, really wholesome stuff. But I was young and my parents were like. What are you doing, like? But again, I was an only child, so. And I was at a young age, like the only, person in the house that could speak English, like so. It was as if I was one of three adults where it's like I was managing things for my parents. And I had a streak in me that I was like, What are you going to do? I get straight A's. Like, What are you going to do? You know, honestly, what? How you're not gonna. And my parents were like, yeah, What are we going to do? And they, they, basically were like, Just don't get pregnant. And I said, Cool. And now my mom's like, We made a mistake by drilling that into your head because they used to be like, Where are our grandkids? I'm like. That. Sorry.

All together: laughter.

BM: Oh, my Gosh.

JJJ: All right. Do you have any more questions?

BM: Um, I think I'm good. Thank you so much for coming. This was awesome.

AN: And if you have any trouble hearing parts of it, I'm like, just if you can clip it and send it to me, I can tell you what it is I'm saying. You know, like, sometimes you're listening. You're like, what is …

BM: right, right.

AN: Or if you want me to look over the transcript before you submit it.

BM: Yeah, we could. Yeah, we'll, definitely …

JJJ: You, you put your email in the paper.

AN: Mm hmm.

BM: Yeah, We have her email.

JJJ: And we have email, too.

AN: Yeah. So, like, in depositions, the sonographer always sends you the thing cause she's like. Like I'm not allowed to change testimony, but sometimes you mishear something, you know, and it's like.
BM: yeah

AN: Or it's something's misspelled. I can. So don't worry about all that if you have the time to. Between having to submit whatever it is you have to submit.

BM: Yeah. Okay. That's awesome. Thank you so much for …

JJJ: Well, make sure to double check it. But, I'm pretty sure you're supposed to get, like, a copy of everything.

BM: Yeah. So, we'll definitely send that.

AN: You just like making up… Some if you make my life sound more interesting than have at it, but.

BM: This was awesome. Thank you so much.

AN: You're welcome. And I'm going to go home, play with my dog, and probably check my email.