

Interviewee: Virginia Swain
Interviewer: Cara Joyce
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Abstract: Virginia Swain grew up in West Hartford and is the oldest of four children. She lived in Cambridge, MA before moving to Worcester, MA with her husband in 1999. In this interview she relates the impact of her younger brother's unexpected death, followed by her father's death, on her life. After college, she spent two years in the Peace Corps which she describes as changing her life as she developed a deep respect for other cultures. After her return to the United States she was a teacher before entering the corporate world. She discusses gender and power struggles in the workplace and the difficulty balancing family and career while she was a human resources manager. After switching to the non-profit sector, she took a sabbatical in California, studied to be a spiritual director, and worked with Bernie Segal. She describes herself as an activist and her work with the United Nations has taken her to five continents. Some of the projects she initiated include the Center for Global Community and World Law and the Institute for Global Leadership. Her latest project involves bringing the UN's Culture of Peace Initiative to Worcester and she believes that she can help raise the consciousness of members of the Worcester community to become global citizens in their own city and spread the message of peace. She also published a memoir about learning to find her own voice and teaches at area colleges.

Cara Joyce: So first I just want to get consent on tape. So you agree to be part of the Worcester Women's Oral History project and this interview?

Virginia Swain: I do.

CJ: Ok, wonderful. So this is basically just a conversation, there is nothing specific I need to know about you at all; it's just kind of to get a feel of how you've come to be who you are. Referring to what I sent you in the email, just take me through the basics of your life. So where are you from and how have you come to be here in Worcester?

VS: So that's the question?

CJ: Yes that's the question!

VS: I am in Worcester because my husband accepted a job at Worcester State College as a professor. We had been living in Cambridge and we moved here in 1999 and we've been here ever since.

CJ: So were you born in Cambridge?

VS: No I was born in Hartford, Connecticut—West Hartford.

CJ: OK, so wonderful. So you were born in West Hartford and you ended up in Cambridge. So how did your career fit into that? Can you take me through the steps of how you ended up being who you are today? In your position?

VS: Well that's a hard question because I don't consider myself as having a position. But I can answer it as from a place of calling that I had. I grew up in West Hartford in a very ordinary upper middle class family, went to private school and college and it started out when I spent two years as a Peace Corps volunteer and that completely changed my life. I was educated to think that the United States was the center of the world and all of a sudden I was in Africa in Liberia and all of a sudden I realized that we weren't the center of the world and that was such a rude awakening for me. It was a total consciousness shift because in my Peace Corps training I was one of the first ones to go into the Peace Corps and they taught us that we were supposed to tell people what to do and I knew that was wrong, I knew I couldn't do that, that wasn't me. So, I decided to go into a different place and learn from the African people and have it be more mutual, like a citizens-exchange kind of thing so I sort of revamped---I was a teacher, high school, and a preschool teacher in Liberia. And what I learned from that experience was not only that other cultures have a lot to teach you, but also that it was during the Vietnam years and I was just so appalled at my country, I felt like we had gone mad, so I was aware that because I stepped aside into another place for two years I was able to gear my education, my upbringing, my perspective--everything was challenged by my being overseas for two years between 20 and 22. And I traveled all over Africa in a way that totally opened my eyes to other ways of doing things, other ways of being, I was like a sponge too, I was incredibly open to learning. The biggest thing I learned, if I could generalize, is that most African countries have communal cultures which are not individual cultures—very different from the United States. So I learned about how people can live together very different and support each other. Even though they're very poor in many of the countries, they don't step over the poor like they do, they just invite them into their homes and it was such a shock to see that, in a nice way, that people really care for one another. So I brought that home with me and it formed my whole life, those two years. So it's amazing how two years can effect someone's life like that and it was so long ago, it was 45 years ago that I went and so now I'm looking back on my life and realizing that I was forever changed by that experience. After I came back I taught kindergarten and continued teaching for a while and I had a child who is now an economics professor at a college in New York. And I'm a grandmother now, he and his wife have two children, they both have Ph.D.'s, and anyway, then I went into the business world and I was an HR manager. I'm the oldest of four children, from West Hartford, and the youngest was a young man named Bobby, we called him Bobby, I was 10 when he was 4. And we were very close. I was his second mother because my parents were very social and they were always out and so I was

always babysitting, and I was old enough to baby sit. So I rocked him to sleep as a child and it was quite an amazing experience at ten to have a closeness... I wasn't just a sister, I was more than a sister. But, I was in the business going back to the chronology of my career, and working my way up, so I was an HR manager of a company called Pepperidge Farm, which is a division of Campbell Soup, quite high up. And he called me one day to say that he was in a real emotional crisis, his girlfriend wouldn't see him and he was really upset and could I have lunch with him. And right at that moment my boss came in and said that he needed to see me right away and it was lunchtime and I couldn't manage both. And so I just put him off and said I can't and can we do it another day.

CJ: To your boss or to your brother?

VS: To my brother. I went to meet my boss, and my brother and I agreed to meet another day but the next day I got a call from my mother at 5:30 in the morning and she said that my brother had been killed in a car accident. So a very formative experience for me, too, because I was putting my career over my family and my priorities were all mixed up so it took me awhile to forgive myself, probably seven - eight years but that started me on a different journey in my life, a different trajectory. I ended up leaving the corporate world thinking that my values had changed so much, my values had changed so much, I didn't think that they could be consistent with the values of corporate world because they always want you to put career before family. So I thought that I would try non-profit and so I was an executive in the non-profit world for a long time and that same thing happened where it was totally out of whack.

CJ: What non-profit?

VS: I worked for two. One was Mercy Center in Connecticut and one was the Wainwright House in New York. So during that time, after my brother's death, besides the fact that I was having a really hard time forgiving myself, I really felt something else shift in me that was like something deeper happening beside learning to cope with my brother's death. My father died right after and my first marriage ended and I was really quite low, as a matter of fact I even planned my suicide. But I had this amazing experience, I lived on the Connecticut shore and I had this experience where I had the light on the water, when I was walking on the beach, differently and it felt like some kind of intervention. So I was aware that there was a light in me that I didn't see. That began a different journey for me where I began to see, -- I lost my desire to kill myself -- I began to see that there was some value in me that I hadn't seen. I was raised very traditionally, in an Episcopal church, and not believing but believing that God was out there not inside of me and I think that that was the turning point realizing that God was inside of me. And that I could live a very different life and find resources to deal with the horrible things that had happened to me. I started realizing that I could manage my life and that I could make lemonade out of lemons and that my brother's death could teach me how to live in a different way and my father's death, and my divorce and so on. So I think that I learned how to live much more proactively than reactively as I had the first few years. I started to realize that I needed to get off the treadmill so I took a sabbatical and moved to

California, San Francisco, the northern part of California, and spent a lot of time in a mountain. And when I did that was just after I had learned that I had a calling to some sort of ministry but I explored being a priest in the Episcopal church and I really didn't think that was right for me. But I did hear about something else and that is being a spiritual director, I don't know if you've heard about that...it's when you guide someone else on their journey. So I decided I would go through training and that's what I was doing when I felt the need to go on sabbatical. So I went on sabbatical for 18 months in California after I learned about spiritual direction and how to guide someone on that spiritual journey. I decided to really listen, I spent a lot of time on a mountain, to this new resource which was cultivating that place inside of me which as a woman, I found it really hard to cultivate this, what I call my inner voice, and have the confidence to live by that inner voice because there are so many voices beside my inner voice inside of me, forces of my parents and teachers and other people that told me what to do in my life, you know? So all of those years of preparation and emptiness from my brother's death, my father's death, I spent a lot of time crying and emptying...purging—I spent about six months crying. And I just wanted to find out what was at my core. And the spiritual direction training helped me because I learned about the Christian mystics, I never knew about them before. So anyway I went away for about a year and a half, at the time I thought I was going forever, but I did come back. At the time I was going to just live in this mountain to listen, just listen, and see where God was in my life and see if I could make sense of all this and just take reflection time because in our society there's just no encouragement for reflection time. I had some amazing experiences out there. I did a lot of volunteering for more organizations and groups that were more similar to my new values that I was cultivating in myself which was a lot about work balance and life priorities that I had never considered before, like putting my family first, which was something I had never considered before. By that time my son was in prep school and so I didn't have the need to have him, be around for him. He was at Andover and I did miss him and he came out and visited and stuff but I didn't have the day-to-day responsibilities. So it gave me a lot of freedom, I think that was the most creative time of my life. Something I never imagined myself doing, was taking risks like that and resting myself, really it was a sabbatical. So I spent this time on a mountain in northern California and I realized one day after about 18 months that the mountain was within me...I learned something from the mountain about myself and about the mountain that would be forever with me and I didn't have to go back anymore and that was when I came home. And it was about that time that my son said, "Mom aren't you coming home?" So it felt right, something confirmed that. So I did come home and then I started...I guess there was one more thing that happened, have you ever heard of Bernie Segal? He's a physician at Yale. He started something called Exceptional Cancer Patients, he was a very famous doctor, he wrote *Love, Medicine and Miracles*, well he worked with cancer patients and learned a lot about the power of forgiveness in their lives and how they can improve the quality of lives even if they lived for just a little bit longer. So he was working with them and having groups and his office was contacting me while I was still in California and said that they were having a crisis in their organization and they needed someone to help and that they had been watching me for two years and

that I was the only person. And so that was a career direction for me, and something I didn't expect but it was organic, you know it was all part of the flow so I came back and worked with them for a number of months and helped them get back on track and realized that there was a consulting opportunity for me that combined my spiritual direction practice that I didn't have to be articulate about in the non-profit and corporate worlds because obviously they don't talk about God, at least back then, they do more now, anyway and then my HR experience and my training experience and then in about five years one client led to another after Bernie Segal and it was a really interesting life because I found out I was helping people glorify their values, helping organizations move through stress and conflict. And then after five years, the Persian Gulf Resolution had passed and the Security Council and the United Nations, for some reason I heard about it. I wasn't that attuned to the UN at all at that time, but somehow that news came to me. Because I had spent that time on a mountain and because I was so aware of my inner responses to things I had a profound reaction to that. What happened in that resolution, this was in the early 90's, was that the UN Security Council decided to invade Kuwait, ah, to stop Iraq invading Kuwait, and that was called the Persian Gulf Resolution. I just knew at the core of my being that that resolution was wrong but I didn't know why, I had no information. So I get on the train, I got to the UN; I had no fear it was the most amazing thing, I felt this force leading me to the UN. A woman sits next to me on the train who works at the UN, she had been there about fifty years, she has the same birthday I do, I mean different year she was a lot older, I was I think in my late thirties, maybe early forties, but anyway she was quite a help to me and we started talking, she became my mentor and teacher at the UN, it was the most amazing thing. So I feel like this is an example for other women of how when you get in touch with your purpose and vision and what's going on at your inner self and you follow it, all the doors are open for you to end up doing it. It's sort of like when you say yes to life, everything follows. And so in that time period I ended up going to the UN, I worked there now for 18 years. I met my husband through the United Nations, he also had worked there. I have a very strong calling to redefine leadership for the United Nations and for the States especially and in terms of helping people that the expert model no longer works---people telling other people what to do. So for a number of years I've implemented my leadership models and I've also instituted new development models which are different from the silver bullet approach to development. The silver bullet approach very typical for America, we go in and tell people in other countries what to do and then we leave. As one example, in Africa, in my country, there was an AIDS project where they didn't ask the Liberians if they eat fish, but they decided that they didn't have enough protein so they made a fish pond for the people without asking them if they eat fish and the country spent millions of dollars doing that. So I'm just aware that this happens all the time so that's why they call it the silver bullet approach to development. So I realized that I had a contribution to make from my Peace Corps experience. I also attended the Earth Summit the first year of my UN involvement and I learned at the Earth Summit about the climate change crisis which even then was quite well known that the current leadership and development models weren't working, that north and south, east and west, all divisions of the world were not working. So I set it upon myself to study that and find some solution that would

help humanity evolve and I don't mean to say that this comes from me thinking that I'm the only one that has this answer, it's just that I wanted to provide some kind of input into this project. So I did find a secretary general who would support my work and he has been doing that ever since I began. I also did my masters work there in my early years. So I learned a lot about how to innovate in a large system with something very positive and create change. So when you ask me what my position is, yes I guess I have a position because I have two institutions that I started—the Institute for Global Leadership and the Center for Global Community and World Law which I co-founded with my husband, but I don't consider myself as having positions in that it's more about that I stand for a new way of looking at things, a new leadership and development model that could provide new releases for people to talk to one another and create change, especially among people who do not actually meet each other. In the United States, even though we have a lot of people who are new to our country now, we don't have the relationships with other countries because we don't live like Europeans do where the countries are much smaller and we have a lot of interchange, so a lot of people in the United States are very isolated in terms of having relationships with other countries. So I'm concerned that we don't understand the cultures. I've worked on five continents now. So because I've worked in so many places I have a deep respect for the way they operate and a deep respect for supporting them to find their own interests. There is a way that the United States has intimidated other countries and their governments and their people to believe that they are not worthy and they don't have rights. Some don't believe it, some do and they've done some awful things like bribing countries that don't vote with us on the Security Council. But I tend to focus on the proactive rather than the reactive. I tend to focus on what we can do and try to help Americans see how they can find what I've found---my own contribution--- and help them find their contribution so that we can all work together to create a much stronger country that would actually respect each other and heal our division. Many people will blame the UN for things and they should be focusing on their own countries rather than the UN because the UN is made up a group of sovereign nations working in their own self-interest, that's the definition of the UN, most people think "Oh the UN is not doing this, the UN is not doing that," it's not about that. It's about how the UN has to be strengthened through its own countries and because we're the only superpower and since we have so much power in the UN, we can change the UN by changing our country. And so that's what I've set about doing as a very committed American who has a strong connection to the UN. The way I'm doing it is something I'm starting in a couple of weeks and it's a new initiative that I'm starting here in Worcester. It's called the Culture of Peace Initiative and actually it was started by the Nobel Peace Prize winners in the 1990's and I've been working with it at the UN for a number of years but I decided I would bring it to Worcester because there's so much potential here for hope people don't see that we can get beyond our divisions that this isn't possible without seeing a larger vision that the Nobel Peace Prize winners bring. It's called the International Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for Children of the World. It's a ten-year program and we're in the last three years and so this is a three-year project that we're getting started. And the ambassador of the program that I've been working

with at the UN is coming here in two weeks and he's going to launch it with me and it's just a lot of events going on and maybe you'd like to come.

CJ: Sure, of course.

VS: And maybe you'd like to invite others. It's going to be a three-year project where we'll invite Worcester individuals, citizens, groups, coalitions to collaborate differently and work together for a common goal. For instance, many people think that peace groups and human rights groups and environmental groups and social change groups, all these other groups, should all work separately toward different issues and I believe we should work together because there's so many different aspects of peace that come together in this culture of peace with the Nobel Peace Prize winners. There's human rights, justice, climate change issues, and I think the climate change issues is the doorway for us to make peace differently. So yes we are mobilized now by climate changes but you may not see the possibilities for sustainable peace. And I'm still taking people to the UN; I have a course planned for February, where I invite people. Anyone could come, you could come, your friends. You'd spend three days with me there and learn a little bit about how the doorway of climate change could impact the sustainable peace at the world level, the global level. But what's even more important is the Worcester project because I'm hoping to develop a template for Worcester that could go from city to city.

CJ: So what would the structure of that be?

VS: We would focus on respect, solidarity, tolerance, and the environment. How we can unite all of those efforts. So we'll be working with the interfaith community, the colleges, and so forth. Now concretely what's happening those first few days of the launching is that Worcester State College is having a presentation and the public is invited, it's free, with the ambassador, from 1-3 on Tuesday November 13. And then the evening the Worcester Club, which is a private club that they have, is inviting anyone that wants to come to a dinner with Ambassador Chowdhury for a special presentation and he's going to speak about the UN aspect. And the next day Anna Maria is having a conference and that is free as well, from 1-4. So those are the first few events, we have follow-up events planned for the next few months, I have a presentation at the end of the month called *Why Mission Statements Matter for a Culture of Peace*, so why writing a personal mission statement would be important. I have a partnership with the Fallon Clinic to look at how men can come together and cook for sustainable peace. This one man at Fallon has agreed to... Have you ever heard of the World Café model? It's a conversational café where you go from table to table and talk. So men will come together and talk about this neat idea. In a few months we'll have this event where men are going to cook for women. And it's going to be so cool; it's going to be great! We'll have chefs there, all these Worcester chefs, and it's going to be a big event. And the idea of that is men who cook for sustainable peace. They're going to cook and try to get other men involved because usually it's the women that are involved in these projects.

CJ: Why do you think that is?

VS: I don't know. I do know a lot of men who are involved, my husband's very involved. A lot of it might be time but I do know that because we are in a crisis now with climate change it is a good time to invite men to be more involved and I've been slowly inviting them to join me in this project and I've been so touched. Everyone who I've asked has said yes so it was really neat, it's great. Another idea I have is, this is for the religious community, is to have a conference on religion and conflict and interfaith...why religions are so conflicted and why people who say they're religious fight each other. So that was one idea that I had. That's going to be part of the first year. That's track one with the adults. Track two is with the youth and I have a project going on with some non-profits who are African to do a collaboration. The girls in the community who bring their world with them often come and are very traumatized by the war in their country and they come to Worcester and they bring their world with them. A lot of cultures just don't like each other. Communities suspect each other when they aren't in a relationship with each other. So without establishing relationships it's very difficult. So that's one of the purposes of this initiative is that people establish relationships with each other across their divisions—men and women, rich and poor, young and old, I see two Worcesters. The Worcesters that experience drive-by shootings, which is not my experience, but kids face that every day. I don't worry about that, you probably don't worry about that, and yet this still exists in this city. I'm also looking for physical, artistic contributions like a mural—we're looking at lots of different ways that people can contribute to this. We're just at the beginning of forming a strategic plan as a board of advisors. But we've got the launch all set. The Worcester Community on International Relations, Worcester State College, Anna Maria, have all agreed to participate and I was lucky enough last May to have Ambassador Chowdhury come and I gave a conference on leadership at the Beechmont and a lot of people came to that, including some from Holy Cross, I should talk to them about that actually. It's been good because no one ever saw how relational he is. He's very open to meeting people and learning more about Worcester. And at the time he agreed to speak more to the college-aged students. We'll do this launch and go from there. But in the meantime, because it's such a critical time in our history, the history of this planet, and because Al Gore just won the Nobel Peace Prize where the Nobel Prize committee recognized him for obtaining peace in the environment. I've seen in the environmental groups that I've been involved with, that they argue a lot. And it just feels like there's a lot of conflict skills could be introduced to people to learn how to manage conflict differently, learn how to respect each other. I've developed a whole template of what behaviors constitute respect and what behaviors constitute disrespect and I'm going to help them in introducing that to people. A lot of people don't realize how they disrespect; it's something that they don't mean to. I think that's where it has to begin, peace begins with respect. So the Institute for Global Leadership I've been developing leadership programs in reflective leadership and reconciliation leadership—reflective leadership for Worcester and reconciliation leadership for the United Nations. And I started a Global Mediation and Reconciliation Service where I've been working conferences around the world helping refugees from Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and all the

African countries who are having such a hard time in this country to acclimate. I find that my Peace Corps experience, my UN experience helps me a lot. I have developed skills that are teaching people after they find that mission, that build their skills on that mission instead of building their skills on what other people tell them to do, so it's a very different approach to leadership. A lot of people have a calling, they feel like they'd like to make a difference but they don't know how. So my mission is to service these people, people who have a prompting, a sense of mission. My whole project has been to develop community among those people who feel a sense of mission, that they want to make a difference but they don't know how and how to form a community of support so we can bring this country to a different direction, not in opposition to something else, but in a sense of right relationship to oneself and others and a right relationship the world and to the earth.

CJ: Is your goal to start this with the youth? Because I've noticed that you're going to colleges...Do you believe it starts with them?

VS: I think it starts with both. A lot of you have a sense of mission but a lot of adults do too. And we have this track one and track two...so I'm pretty excited about this and I feel a little bit more intentional here in Worcester because it's taken me all this time to realize how I can contribute. In Worcester, it's a very unusual and wondrous community of people who, when I first came, always asked me, why would I come here from Cambridge? I keep feeling that they don't know the potential, there's so much here that's possible for Worcester. I gave a lot and I put legs under my dreams and then I helped other people put legs under their dreams so that they can act on them. So in that way I'm an activist, I'm not a traditional activist. When I first came, they had the Worcester fire. It was a profound experience to have just moved here and had that city crisis where five men were killed in this fire. It had a profound effect on me. It helped me to first become a part of it, and then see how I could contribute over the years. I taught at Clark, Quinsigomond Community College, Salve Regina outside of the city... and this Institute for Global Leadership has offered certificates programs in leadership. And now our Center will be offering educational programs as well as this cultural peace initiative, my husband and I are working together on that one. So I've realized that a lot of this is still unfolding but I feel that because I'm excited about this bringing the Nobel Peace Prize winner's vision to Worcester, that there's maybe something more concrete than I ever thought.

CJ: So you touched a little bit upon your role as an activist. So how would you define yourself as an activist?

VS: Just in that way, that I act after reflection. I always feel very centered when I act because I take so much time to reflect. I don't act quickly like a lot of people who just decide to do something. I'm very reflective and I think a lot about it. I want to make sure that my ego isn't in there. I have to make sure I'm not doing it for my own self-aggrandizement; I'm doing it from the place of ego-strength, which is different, and ego-

self-aggrandizement. In my master's thesis at the UN I redefine politics because I can't say that I'm really interested in being part of the political system in this country, the way it is now. I redefine politics as the peacemaker and raising consciousness about how each person can contribute to bringing peace. It's a very different framework that I act from. That's why I don't get involved in local... It's not that I don't support the people because I think that they're great people, but I can't abide the politics of self-aggrandizement. I work for a different kind of political framework which is the consciousness-raising, peaceful evolution. The political leader is a servant of the people but I think of it as a reconciliation leader. I changed the name from servant to reconciliation leader because of the negative overtones of servant on women's history and people of color. I don't use that term at all actually. My concern is that people feel that they have not only the sense of mission but the skill to reconcile severely conflicted situations. And I believe that they are a very special group of people. Paul Ray is a sociologist at Stanford who identified a subgroup of the Cultural Creatives—people who have an incredible sense of mission and purpose and interest in recycling and taking care of the earth, interest in foreign, but don't have a sense of community, don't have a sense that they are part of something bigger. They're very lonely people, they feel like they're out of place and that they don't belong. And they do belong. And I feel like it's my purpose to make them feel like they belong. Maybe it doesn't exist yet but it can exist. I see these people like a patchwork quilt. They all have their places on the quilt, all next to each other; it's not a hierarchical model. That's what makes me different, as a woman, than the masculine hierarchal/patriarchal model. This is a very difference approach to leadership and peace, it's a model where we're all next to each other, and we all have our own place. My fear is that their stitch will be dropped if they don't find their place and the quilt won't work, if one person drops their stitch. So I'm here along with others to help them find their stitch and their place and to support them because it takes a lot of work for people who have not been able to develop the confidence and their own voice.

CJ: Do you think being a woman has been influential in making this happen?

VS: Absolutely. I think that as a woman who has struggled to find her own voice...I wrote my memoir, published a few years ago, about how I learned to find my voice. It's very hard, very challenging, in the culture that disavowed women's voice. There were a lot of women, like myself, who seemed very angry and we acted from that place rather than from a sense of our own confidence, our own power and inner-knowing. You don't have to be mad at people to accomplish your work. I think that is our work is to own our anger and look it through. I had incredible rage. It took a long time. I think it's really been important for me to do that. I'm also a therapist by the way—I'm a therapist and a career counselor. I work at different levels. But I think it has really helped me to own my rage because I used to march on the streets because I was so mad.

CJ: Mad?

VS: Mad at the world and for not having a voice. I don't march anymore and even though I respect people who march I just don't do it. I find it can be very divisive to march. I want to find people to reconcile. There are other people who have jobs to confront, I don't anymore. I reconcile divisions. I listen to everyone's opinion and I find common ground.

CJ: I guess this will be my last question but what struggles have you encountered in regard to being a woman?

VS: Oh my gosh. Huge question. I became very aware of it when I was in the corporate world. Women were vying for men's attention because men had all the power. We all fought each other for that power. I probably was part of that in a way that was unintentional. But I just had to get out and reflect on that and look at it and I still see it going on so I'm worried that there's so many issues about gender that go beyond. I think that men and women need to work together very differently. We're different pieces of the puzzle and I see ways for us to work collaboratively. A lot of it came from my husband and our journey together because we have such a strong sense of mission together and we work very well to work through our own issues that we brought to this marriage and saw that they were the past stuff and that this was an opportunity to face them and work them through. Before we were both incredibly aware of the need for global citizenship awareness among everyone in this country; a need for three levels of citizenship—a citizen of our city or town, a citizen of our nation, and a citizen of our world. But, the citizen of the world informs the way we act nationally and locally and that is a big part of our center, is to help people move beyond that rigid nationalism that rules our country right now. It's almost become a religion in our country, this nationalism, it's very scary. Instead I don't dwell on that fear, I sort of move to this place of hope and believe that this latent power and that group with 44 million people, and I believe it's growing daily, that we can be mobilized to work very differently with one another in a new political framework which would come to bring forth a new level of awareness and also would effect our foreign policy, the way we act with other countries, and address the climate change issue, an immediate crisis, but see that as a doorway to sustainable peace.

CJ: Well thank you, and before we end is there anything else you'd like to add?

VS: I feel incredibly grateful to be a woman and for the opportunity and challenges that that presents in this world. It's been a very hard journey and I had a very challenging life, in my early life. I've always known, in some level, that I had this sense of purpose and calling but it's been very difficult for me, especially at the beginning of my life, to find a way to live in a very traditional family that wasn't so supportive. But I have a completely different view of my family now, I have a great relationship with them, and they see me and I see them differently, we all work well together and they respect me and I accept them. So there's been a way that I've been accepted through these challenges and through my first being very alienated from them and then working that through, and then alienated from my church and then working that through, and realizing that I have to have

deep respect for the other and the way people are instead of being alienated. So I think that it's been a great lesson for me, knowing that I still fall down but I can get up. I had some tremendous help from research from a man named John Bargh, who did research on the percentage of unconsciousness there is in our psyche, it's 99% unconscious. Our job is to wake up to what is possible and to become conscious of our unconscious. So I'm still waking up. I take a lot of solace in that even though I'm more awake than I was a few years ago, I'm still waking up. I believe in that collaboration and that balance between teaching and learning. I won't pretend to be an expert in a traditional sense because I find that being an expert is a very lonely place. I have expertise. So because of all my journey and because I have expertise and I because I have understanding of what being a global citizen is in my own city, I feel that I can make a contribution.

CJ: Well thank you, this was wonderful.