

Interviewee: Robyn Kennedy
Interviewers: Stacia Tympanic and Kylie Zurn
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Abstract: Robyn Kennedy, a state house employee and political activist, spent her childhood in Worcester, Massachusetts and still resides in Worcester today. Robyn was born in 1980, and at 32 years of age has found herself in many leadership positions including the Board of Directors of the YWCA, the National Board of the YWCA, and a political adviser to many campaigns including Lt. Governor U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Kennedy was inspired by her volunteering on political campaigns throughout her college career at Assumption College, where she opened doors to opportunities that led her to where she stands today. Currently, Robyn involves herself in the efforts of support for domestically abused women, as well as dedicating her time to attend political rallies. Although very busy in politics, Robyn notes that she enjoys training for marathons and is devoted to living in Worcester despite a two-hour commute to work each morning because she believes that great cities like Worcester need to encourage families to stay in the city and invest in Worcester's future.

KZ: What is your full maiden name?

RK: Robyn Kathleen Kennedy.

KZ: Where were you born?

RK: In Worcester.

KZ: Have you ever been married?

RK: I have not, no.

KZ: Do you have any children?

RK: I do not.

KZ: What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

RK: I'm white.

KZ: Could you tell me about your parents?

RK: Sure, my mom's name is Patty Kennedy. She was born in Worcester as well and was raised mostly in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. My father's name is Jack Kennedy. He was born in Holyoke, Massachusetts but moved to Worcester post college and my parents still reside here in the city.

KZ: Where have you lived during your life?

RK: I've lived in Worcester almost my entire life aside from a few years where I lived in Somerville and Medford.

KZ: So you grew up in Worcester?

RK: Born and raised here, yup.

KZ: What was your neighborhood that you grew up in like?

RK: I grew up on Airport Hill, the street is Timrod drive but off of Airport Hill.

KZ: Where do you live in the city now?

RK: Right now I live on Pleasant Street right near Tatnuck Square.

KZ: What challenges do you think the city still faces? Would you change anything?

RK: I think we, the city, one of the major challenges is retaining a lot of our young people that graduate from our many colleges here and I know that one of our – one of the challenges that they face too remaining here and one of the cities challenges overall is public transportation. One of the things we lack is a transportation system similar to a Boston or even a smaller city where there's trolleys or something where folks can jump on and very easily get around the city and get off without having to park and drive.

KZ: So living in Worcester your whole life basically, have you seen changes over time?

RK: Absolutely. I've seen many changes even in the last few years. I think Worcester is in many ways – as cliché as it sounds – kind of going through a rebirth right now. Especially downtown where the old mall, which destroyed the city, is really coming back. With it being torn down now [that] is really bringing downtown back to life. There's a lot of development going on down there and you see with a lot of colleges starting to move down there that students and young people and post-grads are starting to move in down to the area and have jobs down there and hopefully the nightlife and activities will soon get there and get a little bit more robust so that there's more activity post 5 o'clock there as well. [Laughter] With Hanover it's somewhat there but it's still growing.

ST: And is there anything that you saw when you were younger that you think is still retained like popularity throughout time that still exists here today?

RK: I don't know about pop – in the city as a whole? [ST head nods] The only thing that-I don't know what this just came to mind- but the only thing that I can think of that is amazing to me that it still exists is there's this place on Park Ave called Skylite Roller Skating. [Laughter] It's a roller skating rink where I had like five of my birthdays as a kid and then I drove by the other day and just saw a bunch of kids outside. I'm like I cannot believe- I mean they must be rollerblading in there now I haven't been for years but so that's got to be still popular. It has to be at least 25 years old.

KZ: Are there any distinct characteristics that make Worcester the city that it is?

RK: I think there's a lot of really unique things. I think we have a lot of college students, which is really unique, you know, compared only to Boston. I think Worcester is really unique too that it has a lot of distinctive neighborhoods, and which bring different dynamics, different life. Like Shrewsbury Street we have a lot of good restaurants; you'll get Elm Park you have a nice neighborhood park and a whole, you know, a big residential neighborhood built around that. So I think that's really unique to Worcester that you can drive through Worcester and almost feel like you're in different towns, different cities, different place all within one square mileage.

KZ: What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been like generally?

RK: I think it's interesting. I think politically speaking I think women have not had a great experience. There's not a lot of women in politics in Worcester, particularly not in local government. Well now that I say it, there's two women in the state delegation, two women, but I think Worcester for a very long time in the political climate has been thought of as the old boys' network. I think a lot of that has changed. I think a lot of the more recent elected officials, especially I guess male elected officials, have been a lot better about engaging women, especially engaging young women and getting them involved and supporting female candidates. So I think it's changing, but I think that is something that certainly sticks out for a woman's experience in the city.

ST: Why do you think women have stayed away from politics in Worcester? Because I know you said there were low numbers.

RK: Yeah, I don't know that it's necessarily even that women have stayed away from it more than there just hadn't been a way in, in the past. Again, in the political world you kind of have your network and that network or the network that is kind of in power has some control over that and I don't think that in the past it had been so inviting to women. Which, like I said, I think even in my political experience – not too long [laughter] -- it's changed drastically so I think that's good. I think there are a lot of women running. I see there's more females candidates. I would add that particularly women of color have a hard – have even more of a challenge with that than white women do in the city of Worcester. We don't see as many women of color in elected office so I think there's still some lingering of that old mentality. I think it's come a long way but obviously a ways to go.

KZ: Back to education, could you tell us the schools you went to in Worcester?

RK: Sure, I went to St. Spyridon preschool, which is off of Elm Park. [Laughter] I went to Our Lady the Angels Elementary School, Holy Name High School and Assumption College. So a lot of Catholic schools.

ST: And how did you like Assumption? What did you think about it?

RK: I really enjoyed my time here. When I was a student here I had a great time and some of my best friends are still my college roommates. So there's that long after you graduate. I had great classes; I was very much involved in history and political science course work so I really enjoyed my classes. I think in hindsight I maybe, you know putting all that aside, hindsight probably would have moved to a different school. Assumption College I think is a very conservative school and I think for someone who is very much on the other end of the spectrum, thinking back and seeing some – and I also think it's kind of changed somewhat or kind of gone more so since I've graduated as well. So I think you know that aspect. It's hard to say, I mean I loved my time here, I wouldn't trade my time here, I wouldn't. So it's hard to say I would have gone somewhere else. And that upsets me, I think that I want to be proud of Assumption and I love, like I said, I've loved the experience I've had, but in some ways I see the things that they're doing and just – and as a small Catholic college they have the right and should be doing that and they're not hiding it or anything like that. It's not like they're shy about that, but it's just that there's big questions for me.

KZ: Were there experiences you had in high school or previous schooling that kind of led you toward the political field?

RK: I really actually didn't get involved in politics until I was in college. And it was I think actually kind of good for me, or helpful I should say to be in what would -- it was interesting I what I saw here I was – it was a very interesting dynamic. The administration and I think when I was here at least the student body was very conservative but the faculty was very liberal. I was also here through 2001 and 9/11 a lot of leading into the war. So that was very much the focal point. So to be with a student body that, like I said, was pretty conservative and to be with faculty that was more liberal, at least in my experience, that kind of got me thinking and more engaged. I started to get more active and I had the benefit of being from Worcester so a lot of the folks that I would work with on campaigns during summer, when everyone else went back to school, I was here. [Laughter] Back to school was here, so I had that benefit. But my family was never really politically active and I wasn't really before college.

ST: And you mentioned before that there were some things that Assumption was doing that you said kind of recently that made a big assumption that we were conservative, do you mind bringing up a few of those things that they've done recently?

RK: Well I think – and these aren't things that I've ever raised so it's not necessarily – there could be a good argument, but I know that one thing that seems questionable, one of the groups I was somewhat involved with, but not so much, was AC Allies and I know that in recent years they've moved that under campus ministry. Now to me, gay straight alliance under campus ministry – again there could be an argument [Laughter] to be made that's a decision that I wasn't certainly a part of but would certainly raise some flags for me. That's one thing. And I know that when they hired on – I'm totally blanking on the president's name, Francesco?

KZ: Cesareo?

RK: Cesareo, that's what it is. That they did so very much and that they were public about doing so with the intent of getting back to the Catholic roots and again it is a Catholic college with the very public intent to be so, but again with someone that views often differ with the Catholic church I was kind of – just not something I would have looked for if I was going to college now. And I actually enjoyed my Catholic experience. When I was here I very much involved in candlelight prayer, the masses and things like that so I wouldn't say that it wasn't a Catholic College when I was here so the idea of being more Catholic – again there's probably good reason and intent behind it and I certainly leave those that to the powers that be, but just things that don't necessarily [align] with my experience now or my perspective now.

ST: And what made you lean toward one side rather than other like would you say in your future was it working the governors' office?

RK: What do you mean lean towards?

ST: Like being more liberal, what experiences helped you to gain more insight to what you felt?

RK: Well I think, it's funny because I can – you know I think it's a lot of my belief system – which is interesting with 16 years of Catholic education – a lot of my belief system is just more progressive mentality. But a lot of things like I said when we went into war and I was very much against that. I've worked a lot for women in women's causes. I'm very pro-choice, pro-marriage equality and things that. You know, it's funny when I was a freshman or maybe even sophomore there was the 2000 presidential election I think and they had a debate, kind of a mock debate with two different students and one represented the Democrat and one the Republican and I just remember – and it's funny because certain things, certain experiences put you on a path – just listening to the person that represented the Republican I was just like I don't agree with anything he's saying and that was my catalyst to be like okay well I really disagree and certainly I've become – the older I've gotten I've become more active and certainly put some of that belief into practice. But I just remember sitting there and from gun rights to, to again abortion rights to marriage rights it was just like I completely disagree with this and more so agreed with Democrats. I do have to say that because I know that in years past my graduation that Assumption kind of struggled or disagreed with kind of bringing some of that debate onto campus and I think it was helpful. Especially it's a liberal arts college still and being Catholic, for me it wasn't what they were hoping for, but it certainly enlightened me and kind of helped me get a sense of where my beliefs were and really appreciate the difference between a

Democrat and a Republican. Certainly my work since college has been more geared toward supporting Democrats.

KZ: So you mentioned that you were more progressive you felt like, are there any other challenges you had in your education at Assumption or high school or anything?

RK: I think, challenges? It's funny because looking back now I wish I was more vocal when I was a college student and more like leader raised, but it was definitely – to me it was a challenge like I said with my student body – that when you step out of Assumption you can see how very – it's a great school it has – again I wouldn't trade the experience I think you both are getting an incredible education, my diploma is very valuable. But it often times can be especially with the student body can be, can be very – I don't want to say a bubble but very – you're on this campus and sometimes a lot of students don't come out. Where you look at Clark [University] where the students are very much integrated into the community and they're – and, I know, don't get me wrong, I know that there are a lot of programs through Assumption that are out in the community and doing great work so I certainly don't want to belittle any of that. But for me it was a challenge, I don't feel like I did that much outside. You know I did the political stuff and was involved in some campaigns more so my junior and senior year. But I wish I did more of that because I think, at least when I was here, it could have changed, but it was certainly very, very much predominately a white, upper class student body. So it didn't in many ways didn't open my perspective and broaden my – interestingly it very much modeled my high school, which was a Catholic high school that was small and pretty much made up of all upper class, white students.

KZ: So on graduation from Assumption College what did you see as your options after college?

RK: For work?

KZ: Yes.

RK: So I actually already had a job lined up before I graduated. My sister who's a year ahead of me in school had returned – she went to Providence College – had returned to Worcester and she was working as a shelter advocate at a shelter for battered women in Worcester. And my senior year I worked – she used to do support groups with the women that were in the shelter and so the nights she did the support group I ran a playgroup with the kids – basically I babysat. [Laughter] I babysat, I played with the kids and then during that experience and my time there I got very much interested – I still do a lot of work around domestic violence and so around the time I was graduating the children's advocate was leaving so it worked out that they offered me that position. So I already had a job lined up. We already talked about, and I try to say this as much and to as many students as I can, how getting out there and internships and getting involved is so critical because – so my senior year – so first I was very much involved in the the mayoral candidate campaigns in my times here. My senior year in college I got involved in gubernatorial race. I got very much involved in that and ended up my second semester senior year taking an internship in Congressman [Jim] McGovern's office. So worked really hard there. So just about a year working at the shelter I ran into the Congressman's chief of staff who was running [wh] decided to run for State Senate and it was the same election cycle for the Congressman so he

offered me a position on the campaign. I worked on the campaign for the two of them and then they both won. He went to Boston, he offered me a job in his office there. About four years later the the-mayor of Worcester, Tim Murray, decided to run for Lieutenant Governor. He became Lieutenant Governor offered me a job because like I said, I had been very involved in his campaign, so got to know him in my time here. He got elected with Governor Patrick and then they offered me a position in the administration. So I worked in the governor's office for a year and then went over to the Lieutenant Governor's office where I was for five years, five and a half years just about. Certainly by having those opportunities while I was in college certainly opened up my opportunities post-grad. That was very helpful.

ST: And then what year did you graduate from Assumption?

RK: '03

ST: You obviously just explained your work and going from place to place and kind of jumping from – so did you follow one campaign all the way through or did you kind of switch around from campaign to campaign and what was different from each body of people that you worked with?

RK: I actually worked – the state senator that I worked for was [Ed] Augustus, the congressman, the former Lieutenant Governor now are very much kind of the same political unit in Worcester. They're all very friendly and so I worked on all of their campaigns throughout so I was very much working with a lot of the same people. I think probably the congressman is the person I've worked for the longest just because he's been in elected office the longest and I've actually had the experience of interning in his office before kinds getting fully involved or at least having full time employment with them. I mean I think the one thing that kind of sticks out to me about Ed is that when he – at least in the beginning he – as he was starting to run for state senate he was also kind of running the congressman's campaign as well and he was deliberate about bringing on a lot of young inexperienced people. I mean both he and the congressman didn't have necessarily the strongest opponent so he I think he use that to an opportunity to bring on some young people and give folks that experience. I can say just about every one of the people that I work with on that campaign are somehow now involved and have evolved over the years but are somewhat involved in government in some level in some area. So I think that was unique to him but other than that I think they are very similar campaigns.

ST: And what have they thought about the recent government shut down? What have you been involved in? I'm guessing there has been some conversation there.

RK: Sure, what do they think of it?

ST: Yes.

RK: I think they probably all think it's horrific, it's so – I can't even find the right word to say how terrible it is. Certainly Congressman McGovern I know has spoken on the floor of congress many times, encouraging his colleagues the best he can to get back and settle this. It's scary I

mean working in government still at the state level and just knowing a lot of the programs I work on receive federal funding. Like food stamps for example, very close to hundreds of thousands of families just being left without food. Literally telling a child there's no meal for you to come home to tonight. I mean it's just, it's just – and the fact that one small faction can use this and that they would use this as a device to get what they want so to speak because that's really what it is. They're against the law of the land and there's a right avenue to do that, there's a right avenue they could always take it up legislatively. But to hold the government hostage, to essentially get their way, which they didn't at the end of the day thankfully, is just – it's very frightening that's the path that government and our representatives that we elect to go there to work for us. And again you know nothing's perfect – Obamacare I think is great – it's probably not perfect, but this isn't the way to make the changes you want to see. So I'm very much opposed to it [shutdown] and I think that they certainly – I know that they certainly all are as well. I don't know if anyone's said that – I haven't met anyone that's said this was a good thing.

ST: And are there any other- you mentioned food stamps- are there any other programs that you saw a crucial impact on that you've work with?

RK: That's the biggest one- they were able to get the government up and running before it would have gone into effect. It wouldn't have gone into effect until November. And that's the biggest one because that's where there's the most direct impact that I would have seen. I think another one is veteran's affairs. People don't – there was such a huge – for years there's been such a huge backlog for veterans being able to access their benefits and they were starting to make progress and they were starting to be able to kind of – I think at one point there was literally a 365-day waiting list to get even a response to tell whether you're eligible for benefits. And they had made good progress towards that and then with this [shutdown] veterans affairs just shut down. So I think we'll see a little residual impact from that. And I think in small ways too, things that people expect [like] people that inspect food, that's government. Things like that that just-luckily they came – they were able to figure this all out before a lot of that really went into full effect. Even our parks – a perfect example, it's funny and I kept saying if I hear one more story about how the parks are shut down. But then you don't realize for a lot of states its income. It's revenue for states to have the fees, then there are services that are rendered at the park itself that are all shut down. You know, parking, paying for parking is revenue that states become accustomed to or programs become accustomed to and that's gone when the states shut down. So there are all these residual effects that just it's, it's horrific that they would do this.

ST: And kind of going off of ... the subject of work as far as your house - like housework , what do you like participate in like housewise because we do know that you work out of the home so you are kind of a superwoman in your own way.

RK : (laughing) Why thank you you're so sweet. What kind of housework do I do like cleaning and stuff?

ST: Yeah

RK: ... Well I live alone (laughs) so I do all of it, ... so, it is not fun, I hate it all but I do it all (laughs)

ST: And you do all of it, so you don't hire anyone to do any of it for you (_____???)

RK: Mhm

ST: And how have you been able to balance like your priorities, responsibilities, and interests like in your life, especially with working and living on your own?

RK: Well, I think that the biggest challenge for me has always been my commute. I mean that's always been – you know, if they moved the State House to Worcester I'd be so happy because – I also think you know – I love living in Worcester, I think that not only Worcester, but all of our smaller cities around the state, you know we talk about all of the challenges, but I really believe in order for these cities to ever be great you need young professionals, young families to move into them, to put their kids through the schools, to invest in the community. So, you know I really just try to hold the line and not move back into Boston [laughs], but that also means it took me just about two hours to get in this morning and just about two hours to get home so that is definitely a challenge. I try to do as much as I can. I guess it's a benefit that I am not a big TV watcher fan. I can't sit still so sitting on the couch for hours is not my thing. So I try to keep myself busy. I take a sign language class through Worcester Nightlife Program. I am running the marathons, I am going to the gym to train after work to train for it. I try to get involved. I am still involved in campaigns. I was just most recently involved – we just had an election for a state rep in Worcester and it was actually a friend of mine who ran so I was very much involved with his campaign. So I try to kind of balance out the hours that I just sit behind the wheel of the car. It does work out well. I just got a new car it has the hands-free system so I can now do a lot of phone calls in the car which is nice so I get to catch up with some friends, but it's still a challenge to kind of at the end of the week the last thing I want to do is get in a car and go anywhere, but I definitely do a pretty good job balancing it.

ST: And what exactly did you do on the campaign? Well, on this most recent campaign, what exactly did you do?

RK: So on this most recent campaign I did, a little bit more revising. I've kind of run the gamut. Aside from the first campaign I mentioned I've always been just a volunteer so I have done just about everything a volunteer job can do. For Elizabeth Warren's campaign I worked with a friend of mine who works for Congressman McGovern now and we were the Worcester County GOTV coordinators, so we kind of set up the plans for the get out the vote plan and all of Worcester County – actually aside from Worcester because I had a different plan – and then more on this most recent campaign I did a little bit more of the behind-the-scenes advising to the candidate working on setting up different events for him to go to, helping him, come up with the plan for utilizing volunteers on election day, decisions about ordering signs, that kind of stuff -- advice on his mailings, things like that. So I'm more so not necessarily in the (_____???) but

ST: That's really interesting. And, just moving into health-wise, how have health issues impacted your life or those in your family? Do you have anything that runs in the family health-wise or...

RK: Diabetes runs in the family and I've had no particular stream but I've had a lot of family members who have had cancer and a few that have passed away specifically from cancer, but nothing, nothing else. I certainly haven't had any [laughs] major health issues that have really impeded my life or really impacted me drastically.

ST: And what are your experiences in accessing healthcare- affordable health care?

RK: I've always, I mean I've always been fortunate enough to have coverage. I think for two months when I first started in state government I didn't have coverage, but aside from that I've been really fortunate to always have coverage and being in Worcester, I've always been a part of the Fallon system, and it's – I think I've had the same doctor now for 10 years so I've always had pretty much the same copay [laughs] for the last ten years so I've had a pretty good experience. And I certainly can appreciate in that sense how important that primary care is – that preventive care is – which is personally why I'm so supportive. And then working in government I see how successful it is here. Ninety-eight percent of our [Massachusetts] residents have health insurance and that's pretty impressive and something we should try to emulate across the country

ST: And then just for some- additional...some kind of funner questions

RK: [laughs]

ST: ...so when you were in school how ... were you allowed to date especially going to a conservative school, how was that?

RK: In high school?

ST: Yeah

RK: Yeah, I mean I don't know that my high school was necessarily so conservative my parents certainly aren't so [laughs] ... with that being said I wasn't too much really of a wild child but I certainly went to parties and dated in high school so...

ST: And what was considered fashionable when you guys were...

RK: [laughs] Oh my gosh, In high school? I can't even... well it was the nineties so it was like a lot of flannel shirts, plaid shirts, jeans – this is more of elementary school we did the roll up, roll up jeans, but really baggy clothes were fashionable when I was in high school even for girls which is a huge shift from today [laughs]. It was the complete opposite, but I can picture a lot of flannel

ST: [Laughs] And do you have any hobbies or regular leisure activities that you do?

RK: I'm a big runner, I love running so I do that. I love – like I said, anything that's politically related [like] campaigns or finding ways to yell. I've gone down to DC a few times to participate in rallies and anything I can do that's helping to move a cause along. Right now running is kind of my – especially when I start officially training it becomes my whole life [laughs]

ST: And based on your life experience, what advice would you give to women of today and future generations?

RK: I would say get involved and speak up. I think even as far as society has come, society still teaches us to take a back seat, to sit on the outsides of a meeting table. You'll see the men all come sit at the table and you'll often still see women sit around the outsides. So I would say sit at the table. It's still going to be very rare that somebody invites you in, so sometimes as uncomfortable as it may be you have to invite yourself in. And then I would say something certainly that I have tried to do is pay it forward. You're given an opportunity, pay it forward to someone behind you because we're our best allies and our best advocates so it's our responsibility to bring other women along with us.

ST: And is there anything else you want to tell us? About yourself or anything from your history?

RK: I mean the other thing I haven't mentioned because I'm not now – well I guess this would be a hobby maybe? But for the past six years I've been on the Board of Directors at the YWCA in Worcester which was very much at the time a hobby. And I was actually for a few years on the National YWCA board, which was an incredible experience. I got to go all over the country for meetings and meet incredible women from all over the country and YWCAs are doing different programming all over the place so I get to kind of learn what the folks are doing and all with the goal of serving women and improving the lives of women and girls and eliminating racism which is our mission so that's kind of a big piece of who I am [laughs] and what I've been doing since graduating. That's really important because I worked there for a year and then even once I moved on I still stayed engaged and went onto the board and it was an incredible experience.

ST: And are there certain things that that group has implemented like into areas around here that you grabbed from traveling so much?

RK: [pause] Well I'm not biased or anything but our YW is very much ahead of the curb in a lot of the work that we are doing. They're a major domestic violence provider, not just shelter provider for families fleeing in need of emergency services, but a lot of community education, a lot of counseling support for women who may be experiencing something, but not ready to leave. So an incredible program. They do a ton of work around racial justice. They're involved in a lot of other community groups that are working on that. A lot of those groups have actually held meetings at the YWCA so I'm trying to think if there's anything that – I know I'm not involved with it because I'm not on the board anymore. I'm ten years out, but they just implemented this fundraising program called the Purple Purse and the idea is you pass this purse along to different

work places etc. and people make donations so I know they implemented that [laughs] but post my time there so

KZ: Would you say you would like to become involved again? Or...

RK: Absolutely, absolutely. You have to take a year off but I'm hoping.

KZ: Ok

RK: [Laughs] yeah I served – I think it's three two-year terms or two three-year terms, but that's the bylaw so my time expired, but I hope that I will. And I actually, that being said I am very much involved with the YW, and do a lot of programming with them. In a couple weeks they are hosting a young women's conference and I'm going to be speaking on the panel there so I still try to stay engaged even though I'm not directly on the board..

KZ: Mhm

ST: And you said you worked with a lot of like domestic abuse or relationships. How do those like – how do you encourage women to leave those relationships, what process do you go through?

RK: So, I don't do any direct service so I can't say that I necessarily work so much with women directly, but I think you know that the important thing that I would say is that as tough as it seems on the outside it's up to the woman when she's ready to leave and it's our role in government and as the provider to be able to give that woman as much flexibility, as much room, as much resources as she needs to be able to get out. So it's a lot of where they're at – help them see themselves beyond the current situation to get safe to get there

KZ: Do you think the government supplies enough support for women or do you think that there's more things that can be done?

RK: I think there's always more. I think the shelter beds are always at capacity. There's certainly a need that's not being met, but I also think you know, as things change – I think our society changes, the world changes, certainly the thinking's change and I think a lot of you know the past way of thinking was that the woman's being abused at home so we need to get her kids out we need to put them in a hidden, confidential shelter, away from their community and actually that was very much a part of it. A lot of programs won't accept women from their own community because of fear. But I think a lot of that has kind of changed and it's more now – the thinking is more towards the government programs haven't always necessarily caught up yet – but around how do we keep the woman safe in her community where her supports are, where likely her job is, or where her kids are in school. Get the abuser out and get her safe. You aren't supposed to let the kids stay in the house while she is hiding somewhere else so I think those kinds of shifts are always hard, but I think that government is certainly starting to think in that way and the fact is it's actually been both for the Lieutenant Governor and now for the Secretary of Health and Human Services one of the projects and the portfolio so to speak. There's a

Governor's Council on Sexual and Domestic Violence that the Lieutenant Governor used to chair and now the Secretary of Health and Human Services chairs so I've been their staff point person reaching out. So I've gotten to work a lot on policy around domestic and sexual violence that's coming into government so I can certainly say government has taken a lot of strides to make not just services available because, again I think we can always do more, but to make the experience that women are going through easier for them and less of a burden. In fact there was legislation – I don't know if it just passed the House, but it just had some movement today in the legislature – that would make some major changes to law to better protect and better serve women. Things from requiring that employers give women who are fleeing domestic violence time off to be able to address it without the risk of losing their job, so if they have to go to a court date, so that if they have to spend some time trying to find an apartment – a new apartment or spend some time at the doctors whatever the case may be, that they don't have to risk losing their job to be able to do that. So I think government slowly but surely is getting there.

KZ: As a woman living in Worcester, have you felt safe?

RK: I have – I mean I wouldn't necessarily advise going out running by yourself or walking by yourself at night, but I also haven't ever felt that there is any place in the city that I wouldn't want to be. Even some of the neighborhoods that have stereotypically been that way. I mean I've been there and I've never felt unsafe. I mean there is violence in the city you know, there's not many to say there's not but I've certainly always felt very safe going out in public or going out to bars and things like that. I've never felt nervous.

ST: Anything else?

RK: I think that's it. That's all I have.