

Michael Amico, Class of 2007
Dartmouth College Oral History Project
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
September 21, 2012

DONIN: Okay. So today is Friday, September 21, 2012. My name's Mary Donin, and we're here in Rauner Library with Michael Amico, Dartmouth Class of 2007. And we're going to talk about the questions that we've got pertaining to the Dartmouth Community Oral History Project. Okay, Michael, I think what we'd like to start out with is just to put your life and your presence here at Dartmouth in a little bit of context. I know you were a transfer student. But if you could give us a little background about, you know, where you grew up, what your family situation was, and how you came to Dartmouth as a transfer.

AMICO: I grew up in a suburb of Buffalo, New York. And I, since the fifth grade, have wanted to be an actor. I was so incredibly passionate about the theater. And I used the word "passion" from the beginning. This is my passion. I'm not going to do anything but act. And so I did all these plays in school and professionally, too, in the Buffalo area.

So when I thought about college, it was to go to train as an actor, and preferably [at] a conservatory. So not even a traditional liberal arts college. And my mom was the only person who said throughout this time, "You know, your interests might change. Just be open to other things." I'd say, "No. There's no way. You don't understand. This is a passion! Do you understand what a passion is? It's not changing."

And I have three brothers, no sisters, two older, one younger. And none of my brothers had a similar passion or didn't articulate anything like that. So in some ways, looking back, it was a way to kind of distinguish myself within my family as much as claim sort of an identity for me.

DONIN: So your parents weren't in theater or anything?

AMICO: No, they were not. Except they did take us to theater when we were younger. And that's how I think that it started, was that my mom, you know—they would take us to New York every year and we'd

see Broadway shows. But also in the area, arts events, not just theater, but concerts and things. And if it wasn't for that early exposure, I don't think I would have wanted to do anything with the theater, even know about it.

So I had planned to go to these conservatories, and I auditioned, and I didn't get in, and it was really upsetting to me. It was a major turning point; it's probably still traumatic [laughs] on some level. And I didn't get into all these top conservatories. And at the last minute, you know.... My parents started freaking out a little bit: Where are you going to go to college, Mike? I mean, yes, at the last minute you can enroll in a local college or something like that. It still wasn't a big deal for me. I was still set on the acting thing. I thought, yes, okay, these didn't work out. Auditions, you don't get every show that you audition for. This wasn't the time for me.

But my high school—I went to an all-boys Jesuit high school, and the president of the high school was a little bit pissed off, too, because he thought the guidance office didn't do their job. And my ideas were too lofty of the theater. I should have had another backup plan. So he very quickly made some phone calls, and I put together an application—in the spring of my senior year—for Fordham University, also a Jesuit school. I thought, okay, this might work. It will put me in New York and there was a Lincoln Center campus where the theater program was located at Fordham. So I thought, alright, okay. I can do this. I'll be in New York. I can audition. I can see if I want to get involved with theater at the college.

Started out at Fordham and just hated the city. Everyone thought I would love the city. You know, you're into theater, you want to audition, you're into acting, you're going to love the city. I hated the city. Why did I hate the city? [Sigh] Too many people. You couldn't see the stars. It felt like everyone was on a mission and no one knew what anyone else's mission was. You left one door only to enter another door. Now there's no kind of, let's just walk around. Unless you're a tourist, but everyone knew who the tourists were, and they were even more annoying because they wouldn't walk fast enough. [Laughter]

Central Park—it's nice to sort of escape into Central Park, but the trick of Central Park is that you had to come out of it at some point. You know, you couldn't just keep going into the woods. So I wasn't liking the whole environment.

Meanwhile, I did do theater at Fordham. I did a production of *Twelfth Night*, which I loved. They asked me if I wanted to be a part of the theater program there. It was a very strong undergraduate theater program. So I thought about that. But meanwhile, I had been taking these courses on African-American literature. I had read in high school *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison and just loved the book and thought, this is really interesting. My high school English teacher was really important to me. I'll pursue this. Maybe take some more classes in college.

Had a teacher at Fordham, Yvette Christianse, who was so inspiring—she pushed me. So I would say something—I would answer a question in class, and she would say, “And?” “Yes, and? And? And?” And I'm thinking, and what? I mean like, what else is in my head? But it was the first time someone sort of implied that there was more that I could think that I wasn't even yet aware of. And that was like a magical moment. Like, oh, my God, we can think knowledge into being. So from that class, and then another one that was all about Toni Morrison, the subject of the course, I was bitten by the academic bug.

So here I am taking these very academic classes in African-American literature at Fordham, that were just totally enthralling to me, that spoke to me on so many levels. And doing a little theater and hating New York. So I wanted to get out of New York, and I thought, you know what? If I'm going to go to college for four years, I might as well actually go to college for four years and not think about the acting, is what I mean, not think about the theater. I could do it, but, you know, the kids who were doing theater at Fordham and all these conservatories especially, that's all they were doing. That's all they were doing. They had to rehearse all day and in classes all day, and I thought, my God, I'm never going to be able to take a class on Toni Morrison again.

So those three factors pushed me to want to transfer. And I looked at schools that were more or less completely different from what I was seeing and feeling in New York. So non-city schools mostly and Dartmouth was one of them. I had heard of Dartmouth, but I knew nothing about it. I'd never applied there originally or anything. So I applied—and I applied to about eight schools. I got into four I think.

Got into Dartmouth, so I thought, okay—this is now the spring of my freshman year in college. I'd better go up and just check it out. Took the bus up to Hanover. I remember—this is so strong in my mind—I got out in front of the Hanover Inn, and I had, before I got here, sort of figured out where the English department was in Sanborn because I thought maybe I'd be an English major because I wanted to continue this African-American literature study.

So I literally just walked across the Green. This was about five o'clock in the afternoon, so I didn't know who was going to be around. Walked right into Sanborn Library, right up the stairs, go up to the top floor where the offices are, and there's like no one around. I'm sort of pulling out literature. And all of a sudden, this woman comes down the hallway, and she says, "Oh, hi! Can I help you?" I said, "Sure. I'm just coming up from New York. I just got in as a transfer student. I know nothing about the college. I'm interested in African-American literature." "Oh, come on into my office. Come on in the office. Let's talk." [Laughs]

It was Melissa Zeiger, who is just sort of the most, you know, warmest, friendliest people you'd ever meet. And, you know, she like sits Indian-style, she sits cross-legged on her chair and sort of has her hands in a very sort of welcoming position. And I was just thinking, Wow! Okay, this is very quick in terms of being comfortable in this place. I thought, oh, I don't feel out of place at all. And she seems very engaged and interested in what I have to say and who I am. Started talking. It turns out she actually knew personally this other teacher of mine, Yvette Christianse, at Fordham. She said, "Oh, Yvette. I know Yvette. We had her up here to do a poetry reading last year."

And so I talked to Meli for about an hour or so, and she said, "Oh, yes, and Jonathan Crewe and I are leading the next FSP in Edinburgh. You should come. We want you to come." You know, this is the first time I've arrived on campus. Within two hours, you know, she had invited me to Edinburgh and said, "Oh, and you should come back—" I think it was the next week. They were hosting this feminist conference at Dartmouth. And she said, "We'll put you up, you know. We'll find a place for you to stay. I want you to come back up. Want you to come back up."

So I did. I think I stayed here maybe one night that first weekend. And then I came back up two weeks later. Went to this conference on feminism called Feminism Now, I believe. And they put me up

with a student who lived in East Wheelock, Victor Cazares, who was into theater and close with Meli. Ironically, Victor was planning to transfer out of Dartmouth. And that's a sort of interesting story. He was gay, and he was really interested in theater and didn't feel that Dartmouth had sort of the, I don't know, theatrical infrastructure to allow him to do what he wanted. So he wanted to go to Yale. So he actually transferred out to Yale soon after I transferred into Dartmouth. And I'll come back to that because there's a nice circle to that story. But I stayed with Victor two weeks after. [Note: The story ends again with Victor again hosting Michael about five years later in New Haven when Michael was visiting Yale during his search for graduate programs.]

But when I first stepped on campus and walking across the Green to Sanborn, I knew it, I just knew it: This was the place. I knew nothing else about it. It was simply the place. There was simply something about the feel of it that clicked.

DONIN: Can you—

AMICO: I mean, I can keep going. Okay.

DONIN: What spoke to you as you walked across the Green?

AMICO: The trees—I mean literally. I still say I need to live—You know, I live in New Haven now, and it's fine. But I always say, I want to be surrounded by more trees. I kind of want to be in the outdoors, you know. And obviously Dartmouth has this—is historically associated with the idea of the wilderness. And it still is in many ways. I mean, I still think about it as isolated although you can easily get up to Dartmouth now. But that has—that feeling of isolation, sort of separation, is still here. You can still feel it. And that was part of it. It felt like a home away from home. It felt like a secluded yet kind of perfect spot in so many ways.

So I really appreciated the outdoor feel to it but also just the pace. You know, just watching people walk across the Green leisurely. Like I said, in New York, it was just out one door, into the next, head down, you know, walking quickly. Here it was, you know, looking around, maybe stopping, talking to someone, sitting on the Green, then going to class or to Collis to get food. And just the kind of relaxation, the ability to kind of breathe into your space. And the pace, you know, to have a pace of life and learning that was one in the same. Right? I mean to have a school in New York City, yes,

learning might happen at a slower pace than life around it. In the Lincoln Center campus your campus *was* Manhattan.

Here—and this was so important to me as time went on at Dartmouth—but life and learning became the same thing. They happened at the same pace, and they involved many of the same terms and people. And these are all important ideas for me. But somehow all of this was here when I first arrived. Like the feeling of it, the kernel of it, something yet to germinate. And just the hospitality.

DONIN: That was lucky. That was just a stroke of luck.

AMICO: It was. It certainly felt like that. But, you know, I must say most other professors that I then met after Meli were of that kind. They were very hospitable, you know, if you were looking for that. And this is something else to talk about. As you know some students might not access that during their time at Dartmouth because they might not want it, they might not be looking for it. But the hospitality right away. Meli was so representative of that. The fact that Sanborn was just open, you know. I mean like this is a big thing. All the other schools I've been to, you know, especially libraries, the intense security of other libraries. Dartmouth, no. You can walk into the library, you can walk into the stacks. Even if you're not a Dartmouth student, you can walk into the stacks. This is amazing. People don't understand because unless you've been to other schools, that accessibility, too, was all about what I felt most immediately upon arriving.

DONIN: And it's amazing. You said it was a Friday afternoon at five o'clock, right?

AMICO: Yes. Mm-hmm.

DONIN: And to find people at that hour, you know, there's a lot of staff that leaves at four or five.

AMICO: Yes, I know.

DONIN: And to find this friendly, welcoming face at five o'clock on a Friday is just amazing.

AMICO: Yes. It felt like this schedule...I mean that people weren't as strict in the structure of their day. You know? And of course that's a gross

generalization. It would not apply to maybe most employees at Dartmouth. But nonetheless there is more—and it always has felt—there's more leeway in planning a day here. And this, I think, has to do with, especially for students who live right here, you know, so it's easier to do things at various times of the day because everything else is right here. Their whole life is right here.

DONIN: Right.

AMICO: And that was also very important to me, is that feeling of sort of not containment, but more like rootedness.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And it's interesting. I mean, you see all of this as positive, the whole idea that you walk out of a classroom here and you're still at Dartmouth?

AMICO: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: You know the town of Hanover probably wouldn't like me saying this, but the town is really so closely intermeshed with the college that it's all one.

AMICO: It's all one.

DONIN: But a lot of people would see that as a negative.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: Because they want to walk out of a classroom and—

AMICO: They want removal, yes.

DONIN: Exactly.

AMICO: Yes, I mean that's—you're right. I see it as a positive. I think it is a positive in many ways. I mean, you know Dartmouth is.... Well, of all the colonial colleges, the pre-Revolutionary colleges, I mean it's the only one that really grew up separate from any city. And so that's integral to its identity.

And, you know, community is, has always been, really important to me. When people say, Oh, yes, I'm invested in community or I think that community is important, and I always ask them: What do you mean by community? What does that mean to you? So my answer

to that question is a community for me is a felt experience which means that you actually see the same people every day. You walk by them. And you know their name. Not only might you know their name, you'd know where they work; you might know what they do. And you might even know like their politics in some way. Although you're not the closest of friends, you know. So it's not like you're hanging out with all these people; and, you know, there are a few thousand people around here consistently, around the Dartmouth campus. And I never was friends with everyone. But I kind of had a general understanding of who people were. Oh, yes, he works there; she works there. Oh, I know that she was involved in this event or this issue a few years ago.

This kind of knowledge of your neighbors, that is a community to me. And a comfort of knowing something about someone, even if you don't know them at the most intimate level. And then seeing them on a regular basis, passing, face to face, nodding, Oh, hey. Hi! Nice to see you. Just that. That engenders this feeling of community for me. Like that's simply what it's about. And of course off of that spin all sorts of other understandings of community and the purposes of it and what it can do. But I would never give up that feeling of seeing the same people on a regular basis.

So that goes back to your turning what some people might think of as a negative—a boredom, a repetition, a routine—I see as positive and in so many ways actually helps a liberal arts education. But we can get into that later, too.

DONIN: So how would you have defined, not as an alum, but speaking now as a current student, how would you define who your community was when you got here—initially?

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: Were you in a dorm first of all, when you first came?

AMICO: Yes. I lived in Richardson.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

AMICO: My first year. And I roomed with another transfer student whom I became very close with.

DONIN: How is it as a transfer student? Because, you know, you're sort of behind schedule.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: You're not a first-year. You didn't get to take advantage of all the sort of—be they real or fake—bonding experiences that the college offers in the beginning. You didn't get the advantage of all that.

AMICO: No. It's tough, and you know it. You know that you missed out on something. So my first year, which was my sophomore year in college, was a figuring out of, what did I miss out on, and what does that mean going forward, and where am I now, and how do I get wherever I want to go? In terms of feeling part of the college.

Because I did not feel part of something at first, and that was my class identity. Because you know, obviously at Dartmouth, everyone is '07, '08, '09 on, and that really is solidified the first year. It really is solidified first year. It's about whom you come in with. And then it's marked by the bonfire and these events where you do class activities. I missed all of that. Right? So by the beginning of sophomore year, that is firmly implanted. And by that point, students are sort of breaking away from their kind of freshman cliques and forming their other communities through the activities in which they're involved.

So my first community was transfer students, and they were great. I mean, you know, transfer students are usually very, you know, high-powered. I always say transferring is actually.... People think it's sort of a negative thing. It's like, oh, you have to start over. Or, you know, you're sort of confused about what you want at first. And I guess this is back to me turning what other people think is a negative into a positive.

But actually, I would say transferring is like a really good thing, and I would encourage people to do it, mainly because what it says is not, you don't know what you want; but you now know so much what you want that you will leave one place and go to another place to get it. So that was an animating sort of...the animating energy upon arrival at Dartmouth. I knew what I wanted to do, which was I wanted to join a singing group, a way to continue performance. I wanted to pursue academics in a more rigorous way. I knew all these things. But in terms of the social base, it was the transfer students that I hung out with, at least the first term or so.

DONIN: Did the college offer sort of experiences for you guys/gals to be together?

AMICO: They made sure that we had the opportunity to go on a trip, a freshman trip.

DONIN: Oh, really!

AMICO: So there was a transfer trip. Yes. So we all first met, essentially, on a freshman trip except, you know, we were all sort of.... Some of us were almost juniors because they do admit transfer students after two years. But they put us all on a trip. So we went hiking, and that was wonderful. So we were part of all those incoming Dartmouth traditions, except we were sort of the sophomores among the 2008 freshman class. But we went to Moosilauke. We did all of that. So we didn't miss out on anything. It's just that we were—we had to catch up to our class identity, if we were to choose to negotiate that or want to belong to it. So we did all that, and that was really what brought us together as a transfer group. And we would go to meals together our first term and, you know, hang out and stuff, explore the social scene together. Will Suto was the name of my roommate, and he did crew. But he transferred from USC. And he was wonderful; we became so very close.

But then I quickly got involved with activities such as glee club and The Cords, an a cappella group, which, you know, you auditioned for at the beginning of the year. So I was in those my first term as a sophomore, my first term at Dartmouth. And those started expanding my social group and meeting new people.

And then one day I think maybe over Homecoming or something, I remember being in Tabard, the top room of Tabard, and just hanging out there with some glee club people who were also members of Tabard. And I remember sitting there, and it was sort of—it wasn't too late at night and drinking a little and just for the first time since I was at Dartmouth, feeling like I belonged. It was the first time. I was sitting in the top room of Tabard. I think it was about Homecoming in the fall, it was that fall.

DONIN: That was pretty fast.

AMICO: Yes, it's pretty fast. And I remember I just felt it. It was like, you know what? And the people I was talking to, I was like, I feel—

everything was coming together for me. Sort of the place of Dartmouth as a whole, but also meeting people in then kind of smaller groups and activities, Tabard, the Greek system, different houses being an example of that. And because I had that feeling in Tabard, I thought, okay, maybe I want to join Tabard. So I did. I ended up joining Tabard, I think in the winter, the next term. But, yes. I mean I slowly just got involved with these activities. But then there was that turning point which was I feel at home now at Dartmouth, which was in Tabard. So I joined Tabard, too.

DONIN: Fantastic! So your transition sounds—

AMICO: It sounds so idealistic, doesn't it?

DONIN: It does.

AMICO: It's really true. [Laughs] I'm telling you the truth.

DONIN: You're like the poster child for how to be a transfer.

AMICO: I know. I mean this is...as I began to articulate my feelings about Dartmouth when I was a student here—I mean the college sort of recognized that I somehow embodied sort of this ideal student, and I somewhat became that poster child in different interesting ways throughout my time at Dartmouth. But the reason I flag it is to say it's true. This was my experience. You know I'm not—

DONIN: --You're not sugar-coating it.

AMICO: I'm not sugar-coating it. Look, this is one of three Dartmouth tattoos on my body. So because it's being recorded, we can't see. [Laughs] This is the old pine which is on my right forearm, and it has my graduation year, '07, under it. And I have two other Dartmouth tattoos. So this is serious, man. I mean this is....

DONIN: You're a greenblood.

AMICO: Yes, it's in my—yes, the granite of New Hampshire is in my veins.

DONIN: That's amazing.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: So how would you characterize the—when did you exit the safety, so to speak, of your initial group of friends being other transfers? How did that come about? I mean, you alluded to the fact that being in the singing groups helped you—

AMICO: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: —sort of spread your wings a little bit. And joining obviously—participating in Greek life was a huge step for you.

AMICO: Yes. I think it was sort of a slow, you know, transition over that first year. But I never lost—I mean I was still friends with two or three of the transfer students and have remained in contact with them.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

AMICO: Only a few of them now I guess. After I graduated—you know it lessens off for everyone. So there were all these other activities that helped the transition. And, you know, we.... And all the transfer students like got involved in their own things. We all knew what we wanted to do and things like that.

But then there was, you know, this whole academic side, too, that came pretty quickly—came on strongly for me pretty quickly once I got here. I took, I think it was Contemporary Issues in Lesbian and Gay Studies or Introduction to Lesbian and Gay Studies with Michael Bronski. And it was co-taught by Michelle Meyers who at that point was working in the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. Yes, that's what it was. And I think I took that because I thought, okay, I'm gay, I'm sort of interested in, you know, marginalized identities. It kind of came out of my interest in African-American Studies, but totally was taken with this material once I started the class.

Became very interested in Michael Bronski as someone who was experienced as an activist who was actually involved in the history that he was teaching. And also seemed to have just a wide-ranging knowledge of most everything, especially cultural. And I remember just going to his office, and we'd chat about theater, I think largely, at first because, like I said, I mean I was really interested in theater; I knew a lot about theater.

So the academic piece started growing very quickly as well. And it wasn't African-American Studies. It became Gay and Lesbian

Studies. And of course they're very related in obvious ways. But I think they're related on a very personal level. I mean, we don't have to talk about this, but why I was interested in African-American Studies, there was something personal about that. And of course there was something personal about Gay and Lesbian Studies in the most obvious way of my identification as gay.

So this sort of brought out, I think, also, the activist in me again. Now in high school, like I said, I went to a Jesuit high school. You know the Jesuits, one of their central messages is social justice. And, you know, we had to do community service as seniors. One day a week we wouldn't be at school; we'd be out in the community. I chose to work at AIDS Community Services of Western New York. This was kind of different, you know, and my mom was not really okay with it. But it was—

DONIN: She was not okay.

AMICO: No, no. I mean, you know people are just sort of, when you say I'm going to work around, you know, with people with HIV and AIDS—

DONIN: Sick people.

AMICO: Yes. They go like hmm, be careful. So I had been involved with activist issues around gay and lesbian lives.

DONIN: Just to put this in context, so you were out to your family from an early age?

AMICO: Oh, right. Yes. Okay. So I came out at 16 or 17 in high school. So I was out to everyone in the world essentially about halfway through high school. And then before that, a few people moving into everyone. And I wanted to write articles about being gay in the high school newspaper. They wouldn't let me publish it. So I was very vocal. I wanted to think critically about sexuality. I was really interested in answering my fellow students' questions about what it was like to be gay. This is all obviously very psychically, emotionally complicated. [Laughs] Why was I interested in taking that position?

But this is all just to set up that when I got to Dartmouth and got involved with Gay and Lesbian Studies, the activism piece followed very quickly. And this is another point I feel was important to me about the success of activism at Dartmouth. And I think activism at

Dartmouth...you know it's hard for me to compare it to other schools because I didn't go to other schools. But people are actually heard here. Now they might not be responded to in the way that, you know, the demands of an activist call for. But we know when someone is making a stink. We know when someone is raising their voice. This is because it's a small enough community.

Back to the sort of definition of community here; well, you actually just see it. [Laughs] You're going to work, and you'll see, okay, there's a demonstration happening. And one thing that I quickly realized when I got to Dartmouth was that it was a small enough community to raise your voice and be heard and this is, again, for people to know what you're talking about, to know where you sit with ideas and things. That is to say, you could actually make a difference in this community, right? So it's small enough, yet diverse enough, where different issues can pop up, and then people can actually act on those issues, and you could see some kind of change. That might just be, you know, in someone's knowledge of something. It might not be a structural change. It might just be a change of hearts and minds or something like that.

But the point is, actually, that activism becomes more powerful when you're in a community where it's small enough to make waves. So I realized that very quickly, and I got involved in some issues around *The D*, the Dartmouth newspaper. Jewelle Gomez was an activist that Michael brought to campus to give the annual Stonewall Lecture. And *The Dartmouth* covered her talk and they really misrepresented what she was saying or didn't understand or something. So I took this opportunity to write an op ed piece saying you didn't cover this story correctly. Here's really what she said. They didn't print my letter, and then this spiraled on to, you know, they were—I sort of claimed that they were, they didn't want to admit their mistakes, and they didn't want to get involved in larger issues of representation, especially around issues of gender and sexuality.

So I formed this little group called D-Watch. [Laughs] Now you have to imagine Michael Bronski sort of behind the scenes here, because like he's sort of advising me a little bit, and I'm asking questions. Okay, I want to get this message out. How do you think I should craft it? How do you think I should write the email? I want to send an email to all of campus. I want them to know. The D did not.... I think the headline was: THIS IS WHAT THE D DID NOT WANT YOU TO READ. I mean this kind of—this pointed activist rhetoric

that really makes people's ears perk. He was really instrumental in kind of helping me develop strategies of communicating with the public on activist issues. So it was *The D* and misrepresentation.

So I got a name—my name was first known around campus.... Now this is probably, even the fall of my sophomore year or the spring [Michael's first year at Dartmouth]. But very quickly my name became sort of synonymous with like anti-D. And there's always anti-D sentiment. You know, they didn't cover this right, they didn't do this; you know, this goes on and on; every college has this issue.

So I was known as that person for a while. And that was like my first big sort of activist issue at Dartmouth. And we developed this whole list of what *The D* needed to do to change. So they needed to have an ombudsperson to take in complaints and look at the paper from the inside as an outsider. What could change to make it better and stuff like that.

DONIN: How did your colleagues, your peers, react to you when you developed this activist stance? Did you get pushback?

AMICO: No. I think—that's a really interesting question, because everyone, you know, even from the transfer students I met right away, to the people in glee club, to the Cords a cappella group—you know I was the only, you know, out gay member of the Cords. There's definitely, being in an all-male group, there was some masculinity on display. And then, you know, Tabard was a little bit different because they're a little more open to queer, social justice issues.

But no matter what the community was, I think people just sort of expected it from me. I don't know why, but maybe my personality is such that I'm just already very out there—not in a crazy way but like in a— I'm forthright and I want to be direct with people. And so my simply extending that into kind of the public realm around an issue certainly felt natural to me, and maybe it did to most people. And let's just imagine people thinking, you know, when they see me involved with this all of a sudden: I guess I could see Mike, you know, taking this lead. And everyone was really supportive of it. Oh, yeah, this is a good issue!

And then of course, there are those that are activists on campus. And so this is when I kind of got involved with this more activist community that really was comprised—and probably still is—of a lot

of minority students. So African-American students, Asian-American students, gay students, this was the activist community, people who were involved with, you know, C&G, Casque & Gauntlet, as a senior society has become over the years very much associated with that community.

DONIN: Let me ask you a question.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: Can you substitute a different term for activist? It sounds to me like these are sort of the outlier groups.

AMICO: Yes. Well, that's a really interesting avenue to explore. Because—yes, they are outlier groups, but it obviously depends on how we are defining insider. But what happens actually at Dartmouth and maybe most other colleges is, yes, it's the outlier groups that we would, you know, these underrepresented or simply underpopulated groups that become that. But these are the groups, yes, that are more aware of social justice issues because they might be more affected by them.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

AMICO: But because of that and because of their awareness, they actually kind of circle back around and become the very center of the community in really interesting ways. And I don't think this is theorized enough. But basically I—yes, in some ways I was an outsider as gay and in some ways I'm not an outsider which is interesting. I mean I'm a white man, you know, and I can assert myself. And so I am not an outsider in some ways.

But I was articulating myself against the establishment, whether that was *The D* or problems with the Greek system. I saw probably the Greek system right away and stuff, and Tabard is somewhat of an outlier within the Greek system. Okay. But we and my fellow activists and other marginalized people, because we felt so strongly about these issues, we were the most public about them certainly, but also just the most public voices on campus.

So people just knew who I was. And thus you come to have kind of like a central place in the kind of contemporary mythology of Dartmouth, right? So, you know, are you on the outside or are you on the inside? Well, you're probably— Well, you're certainly on the

outside in some ways. But you're probably more on the inside than you think, in really powerful ways. And this actually comes through.

So I eventually became a member of Palaeopitus Senior Society which is a group of campus leaders that are chosen by the previous class of Palaeopitus members from all parts of the campus in different activities. And, you know, if you look at that group, yes, they try to have an athlete and someone from *The D* and someone from different fraternities and sororities. But most of that group is composed of—or has been composed of—underrepresented students, you know. Like African-American students or Latino students.

And this goes back to because their voice was so loud and clear and developed and articulated issues. They became the voice of Dartmouth. These outsiders became the voice of Dartmouth. I mean it was certainly the case for me. And they're the ones who meet with the administration. You know they're the ones then that the administration asks to be spokespersons for the college in some way.

DONIN: Are they the ones that run for, say, student body offices?

AMICO: Well, that's.... Yes. I mean these are all really complicated issues, because, you know, my junior year was involved with the election of Tim Andreadis as student body president. Now, Tim was elected. I would say I got him elected and so would he. And he was the first—well, me actually and one other woman, Marie Choi; she was an Asian-American student, class of '06 and really an invested activist on campus, and someone that was able to tap into sort of different communities, build coalitions that really helped us get out the vote essentially to elect Tim.

Now, Tim became the first openly gay student assembly president. But the additional challenge actually was he was elected as a write-in candidate; he wasn't even on the ballot. So our whole campaign was not simply choose him from the ballot, but, oh, you actually have to write his name down. And he won. [Laughs] So talk about being an outsider, yes. And then he became student body president.

So, yes, sometimes people did become student body president or involved with student senate. But, you know, if you look at, say, who wins; you know these awards at the end of the four years, like

the Dean's Prize and things like this. They tend to be minority students or at least students who are interested in causes that pertain to marginalized groups. They may actually be white, privileged people. But they might actually have been working for issues that involve others.

So there's something about the outsider knowing that this can be a community for them as well and almost better recognizing that than the people on the inside. Whereas the people on the inside just sort of have what they want. I don't know what it is. But that outsiders can see the resources and use them to their benefit even more. I mean this was certainly the case for me. It was like I realized, you know, okay, small enough community to make a difference. Faculty very engaged with students. I could become friends with them. I could, in activities such as the music groups I was involved in, really shape them and say, I have a special talent; I can do this or that. Whatever was moving me to do this, I think it was partly just simply the impetus of, this is my world. I'm going to make it what I want it to be. And it was as simple as that.

DONIN: Amazing!

AMICO: I know. It sounds simple. I guess it's complicated at some level. Some negotiations going on, and why I felt like I needed to assert myself and all that, certainly complicated.

DONIN: So you come here. I think it's valid to describe you as an outsider when you arrived because you were—

AMICO: Yes, totally.

DONIN: (A) you were a transfer student, (B) you were an openly gay male, and you're coming into a community that has not always been known as being friendly towards minorities. Let's face it.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: It's a long history that they're still trying to get beyond.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: But you've conquered it, you've mastered it.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: And you in some ways become the ultimate insider.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: Because of the power that seems to have flowed toward you because you've mastered these various inroads to being an insider by engaging faculty and being, as you say, being forthright and able to express your opinions well. And convince other people that your causes are valid and that they should join you in these activities.

AMICO: Mm-hmm.

DONIN: So having said that, that you successfully transitioned from an outsider to an insider, how has that impacted you in developing your sense of belonging or not belonging as you move through life as a graduate? I mean you're gone from this, the Dartmouth Bubble, now, essentially. You're now an alumnus who—that's another whole group that we can talk about. But how has that success that you've had here in the Dartmouth Bubble impacted you now that you're on the outside, so to speak?

AMICO: Well, it took me a while to leave Dartmouth, let's start with, because I graduated and didn't want to go.

DONIN: Right.

AMICO: You know the presumption is that—and the college can rightfully presume this and should—that, okay, once you graduate, you have to go. In other words, there's not enough room to accommodate students. We have more students coming in. You've just gotta go. Yes, we support you. Fine, you've got a job. Go, go! Get out. You know. And I sort of felt this kind of push out, and, like I said, perfectly justifiable on the college's part. And I just said, no. No, I'm not ready to go. I'm not ready to go because I actually don't know where else to go that would make me feel better than where I am right now. And I knew things would have to change. I wasn't going to be a student anymore although that was a slow transition, too.

But I wanted to stay in this community. You see, I think the success I had as a student was because I tapped into as large a community as possible. So Dartmouth was not simply the classes that I took and the activities that I did. It was this place, and it was the town of

Hanover, and it was the faculty who lived even outside of Hanover in Vermont. So it was this world.

So it took me a while to adjust from being a student into not being—to being a post-college student—and to leave Dartmouth. Because I just had no reason to—I was like, I'm not going to make up a reason to go somewhere or act like I'd rather be doing something else. I wouldn't. So, you know, I spent, I think, the spring of my senior year...I think I went around to almost all the offices in the college, and I said, "I want to work for Dartmouth. Can we find a way to make this happen?" And a lot of offices were very responsive. And Jeff James at the HOP said, "Great! Let's create a position for you." So that was the beginning of—yes, there's still a position there. They called me student marketing coordinator. I don't know what it's called now. And I did all sorts of stuff for the HOP. And we could talk about that.

But I just wanted to go back briefly and just say throughout my time at Dartmouth, I became very interested in the history of Dartmouth, too, and I think partly this was because maybe there was a disjunction between when I first arrived and feeling part of my class. And knowing that the class identity, the '07 class identity, was so important. And then eventually feeling part of it by my junior year, which would be my second year at Dartmouth. I think I always wondered, well, wait a minute. Why is class identity so powerful here? Why do I feel a pull to be a part of it? Why do I feel a disjunction? Why do I feel connection is connected to class in some way? Class year.

So I think that sort of got me thinking about the history of Dartmouth and what it was like here before, and was I somehow feeling this history in the very comfort I had with the place, all this. And I think the outdoors is a huge part of this because, you know, I went to summer camp for about nine years when I was younger, at a canoe-tripping camp, Camp Pathfinder, in Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. And it was an all-boys camp, and I fell in love with the boys. Maybe I fell in love with the woods. I don't know what it was.

But when I got here, I think maybe part of the initial comfort was it felt like I was at camp. [Laughter] Now obviously we could go all on about how Camp Dartmouth has this name during Sophomore Summer. And I think this is a really important subject to develop at

another time. But maybe I felt some of that. Maybe I felt like this sort of camp aesthetic.

You know, a community at camp is very much like what I described: It's you see the same people every day, you know. You have breakfast with them every day. Very important to me. Okay. So maybe that jibed with something back in my mind, in my memory, as a child.

But, you know, when you were sort of summarizing my kind of individuality of Dartmouth, sort of like conquering, mastering, whatever it was; that is the wilderness aesthetic. And if you go back—and I've been working on this project of the history of Dartmouth that I've had to let go for a little bit as I write my dissertation now for a Ph.D. in American Studies—but you know the identity of the student at Dartmouth since its founding has been so intertwined with the outdoors. But it's in a way a kind of saying, we are individuals in a larger world of nature that's more powerful than us. But we become more individual within that by having to survive it. By having to, you know, outwit the elements, right? I mean this is what the Old Pine, the Lone Pine, which is on my arm, that's what that means essentially, is it survived as an individual within a group.

So this idea of kind of taking control and sort of mastering and whatever words you want to use, this is—that's a wilderness aesthetic. It could easily be stereotyped, it could easily be caricatured. And we need to be careful about that because there is a real truth, emotional truth, in it. And I will at some point publish my statement about that and the history of that.

But anyway, just now back to having graduated. I wasn't ready to leave. And I knew that I wanted to stay within an academic environment. So I wanted to find another academic environment because I thought grad school would be a perfect way to continue this kind of community that I love so much, intellectual community; but also, you know, continuing my academic studies that have become so important to me. And I still considered going back into the theater after I graduated.

But then I thought, well, actually maybe getting a graduate degree such as a Ph.D. would be more open to different ways of, I don't know, performing and being creative later on life. Whereas if I pursued a professional acting degree, that actually would close off more than open up. So I thought, okay, there's going to be more

opportunity with a graduate degree. But it just took me two years to figure what I'd want to study. And eventually I arrived on American Studies because it's interdisciplinary. And I was a senior fellow here at Dartmouth—my senior year—which meant I didn't have to take classes. I didn't have to have a major. You designed your own curriculum.

Now, you know, this was started by President Hopkins. And the ideology behind the senior fellowship is actually the ideology behind what I was just saying in terms of the wilderness, which is you have mastered—you've mastered the curriculum, so now you can educate yourself. And, you know, self-education is what liberal arts are about. That's what it teaches you: how to live in the world for yourself.

So back to your animating question. The last one was, you know, what does Dartmouth—how does Dartmouth teach you about communities outside of Dartmouth? What did you learn here that is applicable elsewhere? To me, it was simply how to connect with the locality, how to connect with the here and now, how to connect with a place and make that all-important. Make specificity, locality, mean something universal. And that's, you know, living in the woods. In so many ways, camping is about is about that.

So I would say that the community of Dartmouth has never really left me because it's simply replicated in any kind of intimate connection I have with people wherever I go, even if they're not Dartmouth-related. The way I interact—the world in which I see us participating—is one that is in, you know, I want to say bubble, but it's not. Because obviously, I would define—turning a negative into a positive again.

What the Dartmouth Bubble is, is to say it's not a closing off from the world; it's an opening out onto a different world. And that's a world that is natural. It's a world that's not about, you know, a nine-to-five day job. It's not about a city. It's not about business, you know. And I only say that because so many students go into corporate recruiting now. That's another interesting history for Dartmouth. But, no, for me the Dartmouth Bubble opens out onto a world. And that world is natural, but it's also intellectual, you see. I mean I think that Dartmouth is a perfect place to study—or was for me because, you know, go read a book in a cathedral. Somehow you think loftier thoughts because literally the space, the

architectural space, can contain it. That's the outdoors. The outdoors is the same thing; it's a natural cathedral.

So, you know, like I say, I live in New Haven, but I wish I could be surrounded by more trees. See, that's what I mean by like there's a little bit of Dartmouth in everything—in how I look at the world. Because Dartmouth is about a way of looking at the world. It's not that I look at the world as Dartmouth. But that Dartmouth facilitated a mode of looking and being in the world that was both specific and general, that was, you know, local yet universal. And these ideals have stayed with me. I mean they informed what I'm working on.

So I'm getting a Ph.D. in American Studies. I'm writing about the love between two men during the Civil War. And I'm really interested in the connection between the individual and the world. So what does their story, their love for each other, tell us about the Civil War, tell us about the 19th century, tell us about sexuality? Connection between the individual and the world. That was something that I think I really felt at Dartmouth, is the connection between the individual and the world.

You know, I was just talking with someone yesterday about the Great Issues course. And there's been a lot of talk about this around Dartmouth now. Let's resurrect the Great Issues course. Blah de blah de blah. Everyone forgets this, but, you know, when that course was developed, when Dickey developed that course, he also developed another course called the Individual and the College, for freshmen. So as seniors were getting this course about entering the world, freshmen were getting a course about entering college as the new world. How to be an individual in a college community. So these things go together. We've sort of forgotten that part of it. But they go together and, you know, Dartmouth is very forward-looking now, concerned about its future, its place in a global world. Everyone is.

What it's lost, I feel, and what I would enjoy talking about the most, maybe this comes through, is its past, its history actually. I don't think you can move forward unless you have a firm understanding of where you were. And unfortunately—to put one sour note on our interview—I don't think Dartmouth has a clear understanding of its past. I think it's lost it. I really do. I think that the history we tell at Dartmouth is a history that actually probably started in 1960, you know. When we talk about Dartmouth conservatism, when we talk about minorities and all that, insider/outsider, our understanding is

really shaped by the last 50 years. It's a very short history. Very little has actually changed in that time, unfortunately.

But when you take the whole of Dartmouth, so much has changed. In some ways Dartmouth has gotten more conservative. Dartmouth is in some ways a very progressive school, you know. I mean we had the first African-American student 40 years before any other Ivy League school. Edward Mitchell, I believe his name was. Dartmouth students in the early years were founding colleges for women around the United States. You know a Dartmouth medical student wrote the first book on contraceptives for married couples. I mean there's all this stuff. I mean Edward Noyes [John Humphrey Noyes], the person who coined the term "free love," who started the Oneida Community of what would you say? Polygamy or whatever it was. He went to Dartmouth. [Laughs] I mean there's just so many things to talk about, these connections.

So the insider/ outsider question is really interesting. But we need to understand how it's been shaped sort of in terms of a larger history. And I really think that everyone's feeling of connection to Dartmouth....

And I'm probably going overtime now, but I have to say this: In my experience, you know, especially as an alum, coming back for reunions and for some DGALA reunions as well, and hearing students say, God, yes, my time here—alums say, My time here was kind of horrible. It was kind of horrible. I was, you know, harassed or whatever. But, you know what? I'm back. Back, and looking back on it now, it really was a special time for me. And, you know, they go on and on and on. And I've been thinking about this for five years now. And when I was a student, I went to these alumni events, too, and I'm thinking, okay, wait a minute, wait, just stop: You just said you hated it here and then you just said you loved it here. How are these reconciled? How can we explain this?

I think we can explain it because in some way—and this is back to how the outsiders become the insiders—but the outsiders can feel at home here by tapping into some kind of timeless—I mean I don't mean to speak in clichés. But essentially this is what I mean: But like they're tapping into a feeling. Their sensibility of belonging or of saying, okay, I hated it, but I loved it.

DONIN:

Mm-hmm.

AMICO: It's because their love is not necessarily about, oh, because I got everything I wanted and, you know, it was a perfect social scene. That's how the insiders might mark their time. Oh, it was great! I have the fraternity, I have the sports, and I got a job. And it was great. Okay. That's a fine way of marking your experience. But the people who can hate it and love it, their love or their connection, let's just say, is informed by something that is above any kind of structural changes or conditions at Dartmouth.

This is what I mean by the past as alive today. The reason they're able to tap into something else is because something about Dartmouth, from the 1760s onward, is still here. And that's what they're feeling. It literally is. I mean I really feel it's like a kind of a—some kind of a transcendence. And it's helped by the place; it's helped by the trees; it's helped by the sense of community; it's helped by familiarity; it's helped by routine; it's helped by all of this. But what that is is a—it's very religious. And that's something we should talk about. It's like religion is still very present in a much more general way. This is a very sacred place. And I think people tap into its sacredness, and somehow that is what redeems their experience. Its meaning might not come until five, ten, 15 years later, as most meaning does. But it's the redemption of something. There's something that was felt above and beyond any kind of conditions or structural organization that actually made them feel at home here.

DONIN: But there are plenty of alums out there who still have very raw feelings—

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: —about how they were not welcomed here through various experiences, whether it's academically or socially.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: And yet they're able to get past that and come back here.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: And be welcomed in ways they certainly weren't welcomed when they were an undergrad.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: And, you know, whether it's because we now recognize these various minority groups, be they people of color or sexual orientation, people who are first-generation college students, whatever.... I mean the list goes on forever.

AMICO: Yes.

DONIN: So, I think everybody's got a different take on what it is that allows them to return here with that funny, as you described, this sort of dichotomy between, you know, it was horrible for me when I was an undergraduate. And yet they have this affection for this place.

AMICO: Yes, yes. I mean I just tried to explain it in my way, you know. Some people might not buy that. But I also, you know, I haven't heard any other reason.

DONIN: No.

AMICO: And so I think there's something to what I'm saying. And, you know, I just summarized it very quickly, and it just popped into my head.

DONIN: Yes.

AMICO: So it'd have to be thought through. But, yes, I think that the fact that there is DGALA now and there are all these organizations and ways that the college does explicitly reach out, I think that's definitely part of it.

DONIN: Yes.

AMICO: But there's got to be something else there. You know that's what I'm saying. It's like it's not simply—that's facilitating what is there to be facilitated. So that's a really interesting—you know that's why I.... That really troubles insider/outsider in a very complicated way. I mean that's why I think there are multiple levels of feeling at home in a place. And one of them is a transcendent feeling. So one of them is not actually about, oh, there was this group or there was this.... That's all part of it. But there's something else. And it's that something else that needs to be really thought through.

DONIN: And hopefully discovered in these interviews.

- AMICO: Hopefully, yes. Yes. It's unfortunate we didn't get to the more intimate side of my Dartmouth experience. [Laughter] But we could do a....
- DONIN: I've got another hour.
- AMICO: [Laughs] What time do we have right now? Because I just...
- DONIN: What time do you have to—it's about five after eleven.
- AMICO: Okay. I have like ten more minutes or so.
- DONIN: Okay, okay.
- AMICO: So are there any other questions that you wanted me to get at? Because I probably—
- DONIN: We've done pretty well.
- AMICO: —talking too much.
- DONIN: Can you talk a little bit about.... Well, and I'm not looking for you to share negative experiences. But did you ever experience—
- AMICO: [Laughs] Yes, right.
- DONIN: —any pushback from...? I mean you've painted this incredibly rosy picture for me.
- AMICO: I know. I know. And I feel—I'm listening to myself and seeing you listening to me and imagining people listening to this in the future, thinking, okay, tell us the real story, Mike.
- DONIN: Yes. Let's just get on the record here: You're not being paid for this. [Laughter]
- AMICO: No, I'm not being paid for this. I'm not—I don't.... I mean this is how I feel. And one could say, well, you're maybe just forgetting other things. But I'm not.
- DONIN: Okay. Let me put the question a different way. Did you witness other people experiencing the pain of being—not always the pain—but the experience of being someone feeling not like they belonged?

AMICO: Yes, of course. I mean being involved with a lot of activist issues on campus. You know there was a big Native American—remember when the *Dartmouth Review* printed a cover of an Indian being scalped, or an Indian scalping or something like this. And, you know, I think I was a senior that year. It was a big to-do, and we had this rally outside of Dartmouth Hall. And Jim Wright told everyone to stop working and come out, which was really great. So I was very aware of all that. And in Greek houses, for example—did I witness things? It's hard for me to remember. I mean I remember all sorts of, you know, incidents especially around sexuality of just slurs like, you know, fag or you don't belong here or beer being thrown. I mean it never happened to me, but I did know of it, and I did hear of it.

DONIN: How do you justify personally belonging to such an innately exclusionary group, the whole Greek thing.

AMICO: Well, okay. It's a complicated one, too. So I was a member of Tabard which is a coed house. And anybody can rush; it's open to anyone—more or less. I mean, you know, they don't want like dangerous people there. And I was really into its sort of inclusivity in that way. So, you know, Tabard stands for inclusivity within a system that is somewhat prefaced on exclusivity.

But I must say like this is a modern, very recent understanding of the Greek system. Essentially it evolved at Dartmouth as a way to include all students. You know first it was two literary societies. Then students wanted more intimate contact with each other. So smaller societies started forming. And at one point in the late 19th century, almost everyone belonged to a Greek house. It was supposed to accommodate everyone. That was the idea.

Now things are a little bit different. We think about them differently. But one thing to remember about the Greek system now is that we think about it as the Greek system. But, you know, every house has a slightly different identity.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

AMICO: Some of them are closer than others. Some of them are more, you know, say, white. Or some of them are more composed of athletes, or some of them are more composed of musicians, or some of them are more whatever. But they all have different identities. So that's

really important to recognize because certain people are attracted to different identities, and they belong, they feel like they belong, in those places. So in this way, in that example, exclusivity facilitates inclusivity in a way. In other words, different groups fit different people better than others. And I think that's a good thing. Now it could lead to problems because they might not let in the people who want to belong to those, and that definitely is a problem. And, you know, the college has tried to orchestrate rush activities in a way that is fair and all this. But it's still an interesting question of like, why didn't I join a fraternity? And I didn't. Would I have joined a fraternity, would I have felt comfortable there? I don't know. I mean I felt comfortable at a coed house.

I was involved in a project called the Lambda Ten Project, and that was about being gay in fraternities and sororities. And I went into—I remember going into Psi U and maybe Tri Kap. I forget which other houses. And did sessions with the brothers there about gay issues and what to say and what not to say. How to make people feel comfortable? So I'm obviously conscious of people not feeling comfortable. But I'm also saying, you know, well, I'm not going to be scared about these other houses. I'm going to go in there and say, "Yo, guys, that's a problem. You can't say that. This is why." You know did it make an impact? I don't know. Maybe on one person it did.

So I'm not one to ignore negative issues. And certainly more recently with all the hazing stuff that's been going on. I think the hazing stuff is so much more complicated than we can talk about it. The problem is that we don't have a language—the administration especially doesn't have a language, but even students—don't have a language that captures the emotional nuance of our belonging. And so there's a problem in translation. So when we say this is bad, this is good, that's resulting from a problem in translation, not an accurate description of the problem. Because, you know, some people, I mean want to be hazed, and some.... I mean like it's a—it's really complicated; it's not so simple. And so all these issues and abuse does happen. Sexual assault happens. I mean the whole—Tim Andreadis' whole campaign for student assembly president was about sexual assault. I mean we put together these statistics about, you know, like a woman had a 17 percent chance of being raped before she graduated from Dartmouth. That's what we figured out. So not that I wasn't aware of this.

But also at the same time in more and more over time, now that I'm in grad school and am a historian and interested in the complications of everyday life, that I don't think anything is as simple as we make it out to be. So, you know, when it comes to hazing, when it comes to just talking about exclusivity in the Greek system, these are really, really complicated issues that are best talked about, you know, through individual experience. And, you know, when we try to make like sort of aggregate claims about groups and systems, it doesn't really work. So it's there, but I think the problem is we don't have a language to move from the complications, nuances, emotional and psychological, of the individual, to sort of an understanding of the community level.

DONIN: Group level.

AMICO: Yes. So I must say that's the administration. It's a leadership question, and I don't think that we've had leaders really who have been able to articulate that connection in a way that's.... See, you have to honor students' experiences. You can't dismiss them. You can't say, oh, yes, you enjoyed that? Well, sorry, it's wrong. You know. That's not going to do anything. I have never heard since I've been at Dartmouth, a leader who—in the administration—who's been able to sort of get students on his or her side, but also push them and push the college and the administration, and have a vision. And, you know, yes, everyone has a vision. But the visions that have been articulated at Dartmouth are visions like sort of to compete with other schools. We need to have a global presence and all this.

Like I said, what's missing is the historical piece. And what that would do would inform the vision in a way that understands what's specific to Dartmouth...not now but what has been specific to Dartmouth and how those specificities have continued to this day. Like I said, there's a history of the Greek system that actually is...you know when people say, well, the Greek system should be this. Really it should be better, it should be—we need to change it. Okay. That's not to say that it wasn't this—it *was* that way before. In some ways, like some of the things that we want to move towards, the positivity that we see in the Greek system has already happened. Like there are—it's germinated in Dartmouth for years. Then came a time where it became much more restrictive and conservative. And this, I think, is a direct result of coeducation. I mean when women came here, I mean the backlash—talk about backlash, right? So backlash builds, and all of a sudden, yes, these

houses become really bad places for minoritized people: for women, for non-straight men. So that's what I mean by our history starts at—well, 1970s, right? And coeducation. Because we're reading it from that point. And we're correct in reading it from that point. But why don't we say—why don't we redeem what was before that, too? So complications of the past and the individual I think are important in talking about experiences of exclusion, oppression, you know, minoritization, outsider status, stuff like that.

DONIN: You need to finish that book.

AMICO: I know. [Laughs] That's what everyone says. I know. I was actually going through my notes and just reminding myself of some of my own experiences. And I was thinking one way to structure this book is actually to do it around some contentious issues now at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Yes.

AMICO: So talk about hazing historically. Another one is, you know, we talk about work hard, play hard. I think that's a really interesting history of Dartmouth. So the idea of work hard, play hard. The idea of the Dartmouth Bubble, you know. Is this a good thing? Is this a bad thing? You know. The idea of—well, alumni involvement in athletics have a really interesting connection.

DONIN: Yes.

AMICO: So like what if you— Oh, the Indian symbol, like that. And I think that—I mean in the 19th century, the Indian symbol didn't mean what it meant now. I mean for students in the 19th century, the Indian was—I believe that it formed as a coming together of the sacred and the secular. Because you see the administration in the 19th century was very religious, very orthodox. And a lot of students were rebelling against it. They didn't want to be that religious. And I see the Native American as somehow negotiating the territory between kind of a sacred sort of religiosity of the school and a more secular identity for students. And it kind of allowed both of those to be expressed in ways that sort of honored this past of people who were here before. Even before, you know, the college was here. Not before—oh, you hear people say, it's just about these first Dartmouth students who were Native Americans. Well, yes, but it's also about Native Americans who were here before that. So it's so complicated. And, you know, that history, it remains here, but we

have to be attuned to it. We have to be perceptive to it. And it would take storytelling and the book to guide people. [Laughs] But, yes, I will finish it soon.

DONIN: You need to do that.

AMICO: [Laughs] Okay.

DONIN Finish the Ph.D., then you finish the book.

AMICO: I know. My next project.

DONIN: Okay, Mike, I'm going to turn this off.

[End of Interview]