

Marián Gutiérrez '13  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World  
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AL-JABER: Today is Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. I'm here at Rauner Library with Marián Gutiérrez. Is that right?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yes.

AL-JABER: Okay, who's a '13. And just to get us started, could you please tell me about your life before you came to Dartmouth?

GUTIÉRREZ: Of course. I'm from Los Angeles, California. And, to be more specific, Southeast Los Angeles, California. And so my life before Dartmouth was very different from what my life is here at Dartmouth. I come from a family that's very close knit. An immigrant family, Mexican, low-income, working-class family. And basically it was—and my community was Mexican as well, for the most part, Latino, to be inclusive of Central American families there.

For the most part, it was, like, a Mexican home transplanted onto the U.S. and kind of reimagined in what I guess an American lifestyle would be. I came from a home where it was very important to work really hard. As an immigrant family, I think that's something that was stressed a lot. And it was also home of a lot of dreams, a lot of hopes, a lot of expectations because my parents had come here not necessarily for a better life but just for an actual life. Because that's something that they couldn't have back in Mexico.

And so with coming to the U.S. with those dreams—that was something that was kind of expected of me, too, to have that better life or to live that life that they couldn't live in Mexico. And so that's kind of where I came from, from that type of community where everybody had big dreams and hopes,

AL-JABER: What was high school like for you?

GUTIÉRREZ: So high school was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it. It was a place where you had very defined groups of students, if that makes any sense. We were tracked. We were all tracked. I mean, I luckily was tracked into the gifted and talented students, right?—because you needed a sticker on your transcript to tell you whether you were gifted or not.

In middle school, in sixth grade, I remember taking a math class, and I was with the regular kids, “regular” in quotations. I was with the “regular” kids, and my math teacher in sixth grade was, like,—you know, one time she spoke to me after class, and she was, like, “What are you doing here with all of these other kids? You don’t belong in this classroom. You need to be with the more advanced students.”

And so she actually was the one who set up everything for me, because my parents, I mean, wouldn’t have known any better, not knowing the American educational system, and so she set up testing, and my mom signed papers, and I was tested, and then, because of my score, I was able to move to, like, gifted and talented.

The difference from sixth grade to seventh grade was huge. The types of people I hung out with, the types of teachers I had, the types of classroom environments I was in. The types of textbooks were different. And so from seventh grade on, I was gifted and talented.

And so when I came to high school, I was on that track, so I was taking classes with the same group of students, most of my classes, and we all kind of were on that track to go to college or at least to prepare to in some ways go to college, right? And I say “in some ways” because compared to what I see students here do to prepare for college, it’s very different from what I did in high school. But anyway, our group was that group, was the group that was going to make it, the group that was different from the rest, which now I see so many problems in that, but back in the day, I remember thinking, *Yeah, I’m better than these other Latinos*, because that’s what they make you think, right?—when they say, “You’re different. You don’t belong in this classroom with the regular kids.” So, yeah, that’s what high school was like.

AL-JABER: Do you feel like it prepared you for—

GUTIÉRREZ: For what? I'm sorry?

AL-JABER: Did it prepare you for Dartmouth?

GUTIÉRREZ: [Laughs.] My education, I think,—I mean, overall the education, the type of education I received in my high school was very—wasn't high quality. I think that the teachers did the best that they could with what they had. And, I mean, I had amazing teachers and a support system, which is why I'm here. So I think they did the best they could.

In terms of me feeling prepared for this environment and this culture and the classes here, no, I don't think I was prepared at all.

AL-JABER: How did you hear about Dartmouth? Are you the first person in your family to go to college?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah. I'm the first person in my family to go to college, and I'm also the first person from my high school to come to Dartmouth. And I haven't—[Chuckles.] So the way I heard about it was—so I think the first time I heard about it was through a postcard that I received, but I had no idea. I mean, senior year you receive so much mailings, it's like school after school, it really—it was just a postcard. There was a nice building on it. There were, like, trees and—I don't know. I think the Green was on it. It was just a postcard.

So it was kind of like, *Oh. Dartmouth. I don't know where it's at*—kind of throw it in the recycle bin. And then the way I came to apply was because I had seen *Super Bad*—

AL-JABER: Oh, yeah, I saw it, too.

GUTIÉRREZ: And they mentioned Dartmouth [chuckles].

AL-JABER: I love that movie.

GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so I had seen *Super Bad*, and as I, like, finished my Common App, I decided to go through all the schools that receive the Common App, that accept it, and then, as I was looking through the schools— —in alphabetic order. And I was just scrolling down the list to see what schools I could

maybe just apply to. And Dartmouth rung a bell because I had seen *Super Bad*.

AL-JABER: One of the characters applied, right?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yes. I actually did not know anything about Dartmouth, and so it was, like, *Super Bad*—*Oh, wait! I also got a postcard from them.* And then that's how it, like, stood out from the rest. And then, I mean, obviously I did research after that, but it was really a very uninformed decision.

AL-JABER: But did that take the pressure off? Did you know that Dartmouth was an Ivy League institution?

GUTIÉRREZ: I didn't know what Ivy League meant at the time.

AL-JABER: Did that take the pressure off? Like, you went in not knowing—

GUTIÉRREZ: I guess. Applying?

AL-JABER: Yeah.

GUTIÉRREZ: I mean, I guess, yeah, you could say because I didn't know what I had—I mean, I want to say, what I had to lose if I didn't get in—I mean, had I not gotten in, I would have not gotten in; it wouldn't have been the end of the world. It wasn't, like, my dream school that I had dreamed about as a five-year-old. I don't know. So I guess so, it did take some pressure off, not knowing.

AL-JABER: What was your parents' reactions? Because, like you said, they emphasized, like, you following your dreams and so on. Did they—I would imagine that they were very proud that you not only were, like, the first person in your family to go to college but that you got into, like, Dartmouth.

GUTIÉRREZ: When I got in?

AL-JABER: Mmm.

GUTIÉRREZ: I don't think they understood. I don't think they understood, just like I didn't understand what it meant, what Dartmouth meant. I really don't think that my parents or myself included

knew what I was getting into. [Laughs.] I mean, they were very proud that I had gotten into college, period, the first letter I got of acceptance was from USC, University of Southern California, which is very well known in Southern California, in Los Angeles especially. And so I remember I got it, and my mom and I just cried. We cried and cried and cried, because in our eyes, we had made it, right? Like, [Makes exclamation of happiness.] After all that work, we had finally made it, because that's the only thing, I think, I, like, had ever dreamed of,

And then the rest came, the rest of them. And then they were, like, "Okay, good job!" Like, you know, this just shows that—I don't know, you have, like, options. But I don't think we were really thinking about the type, the caliber of the schools more than just, like, "You made it. You're going to a school, regardless of what school it is."

I mean, it wasn't—I remember my sophomore year here at Dartmouth, my mom called me, and she congratulated me. And I asked her, like, "Why are you congratulating me, Ma?" She was, like, "Well, I was just having a conversation with this lady at school"—my sister's high school—"and she told me that Dartmouth was a really good school. And when I told her that you went there, like, her mouth dropped." And she was, like, "I didn't realize how big of a deal it was until this lady was, in awe." And she congratulated me. [Chuckles.] She's, like, "I felt so proud. I mean, not that I don't, but I felt so proud." So I don't think she understood when I got in what it meant.

AL-JABER: When did you realize that you were part of this elite institution?

GUTIÉRREZ: Ahh. [Laughs.] You know, it wasn't really until I got here, and that's kind of what made me want to come. Not that it was elite but that I think I was just mesmerized by this place. It was so completely different from where I came from. I mean, the architecture, the environment—like, the actual, physical environment, the fact that there are open spaces and that there are trees and there's grass.

I remember in particular—like, I remember being so surprised that there was no graffiti. Like, *There's no graffiti.*

Not that graffiti is bad; it's just, like, one thing that was different. And so I was just really fascinated by the wealth of resources. I mean, walking into the library—like, this was just a completely different world, and I think that's when I realized that, *Wow, this is a big deal*. Like, the way people spoke, their mannerisms, how knowledgeable everybody was. I mean, on Dimensions, when I came to visit, meeting, like, other students that had been accepted, I was just completely fascinated. And so that's when I realized that this was a big deal.

AL-JABER: Could you talk to me more about the process of you coming into Dartmouth? What was it like integrating into the community initially?

GUTIÉRREZ: Right. It was very difficult. I think that, I don't know that I necessarily integrated, honestly. I mean, it was hard because I came in thinking that this was gonna be—this is my school, right? This is the college I chose, the college that chose me, in essence, right? they accepted me, and I was reciprocating that interest by coming.

And so I expected to be welcomed, and coming to Dimensions, I felt like that welcome had happened, because Dimensions—they put on this huge show, and everybody's happy and excited. I came in expecting that, and that didn't necessarily happen. It was hard to feel, like, I could claim this place and I had ownership and that I belonged when I was so different from the rest, And not that—I don't want to say that it's just me being different or that some students don't feel at home because they're different, but—it's not just that; it's the way in which others constantly made me feel inadequate—you know, based on, their judgments of the way I presented myself.

And this, like, having to constantly validate myself. Like, my presence here, my body being here on this campus wasn't enough to prove that I belonged. It's, like, through some means or another, I have to show you that there's a reason why I'm here.

AL-JABER: Yeah, like you have to prove that you belong here.

GUTIÉRREZ: Right. Right. So I have to prove it through conversation, or through my movements, my actions. And it just wasn't enough to *be*, if that makes sense. And so it was difficult. It was very, very difficult when—you know, when people asked me what I did in high school because they didn't see how I could have gotten here. When people were so surprised that a girl from Southeast L.A. was here—like, why are you so surprised? And so in their surprise, I could tell that they didn't expect me here because in their eyes, I didn't belong here, right? Like, I was crossing a boundary or, like, a threshold that people like me don't or aren't supposed to cross.

It was difficult. I mean, it was very, very difficult. And so I think that in trying to find something that was similar to me, I looked for the Latino community on campus. And that's kind of the first community—I wouldn't say integrated, but that's the first community I, like, sought, sought out. And so, like, that's—from the Latino community, I, from that—which I needed to kind of ground me, I kind of sought out other—not communities but other individuals, and I think that now—I mean, in these four years I've created a community for myself

AL-JABER: Mm-hm.

GUTIÉRREZ: So I don't know that I've integrated into a community more than built it. [Laughs.] I, like, added person after person, added individuals who brought with them their own communities and kind of made that network.

AL-JABER: So would you say that the Latino community on campus is your primary source of community?

GUTIÉRREZ: No, no, not necessarily, actually. The thing is, like,—no, not necessarily. I think that now my immediate community—I would describe it as a community of people that are, like, a community of critical consciousness, right, of people that—many different people that are critical about Dartmouth, are critical about many other things, and not necessarily that don't like Dartmouth, because you can like it and still be critical of it.

AL-JABER: Yeah.

GUTIÉRREZ: But people that are critical. [Laughs.] I guess that's it—I don't even know how else to put it, most of my friends are people that I can have conversations about identity and about community and about things that don't usually have a space at Dartmouth—like, things that people don't usually talk about. So I guess that's one of my communities. I wouldn't even say Latino because some are Latinos, but not all. So, yeah.

AL-JABER: So what is it like being a minority on campus? Because you were quoted in *The D* saying that when you came here, you experienced, like, a culture shock because of the lack of diversity here?

GUTIÉRREZ: Definitely. Like I said, it was an extreme culture shock. I had never been—I mean, I had come from a homogenous Latino community. It was an enclave, a Mexican-American—for the most part—but Latino enclave in Los Angeles. And so I didn't—so many things were different. Everything really was different. The way people had fun was different. Like, the types of activities people considered to be fun, activities that I didn't understand. And I think that's one of the things that made me realize how—what type of world I had come into. Like, the fact that we didn't even consider fun to be the same thing, right? Like, fine, we don't speak the same way, we don't eat the same way or whatever, but we can't even have fun the same way? That just seemed to me, like, universal, you know, and, no, it was completely different. You know, like walking into a space—I mean, the basement space—I was so taken aback [chuckles] by the way people here interacted with one another, so taken aback. I'm still taken aback. [Laughs.]

AL-JABER: So, like, in terms of fun, are you talking about, like, the Greek presence on campus?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yes. Yes, it involves that. It involves the Greek community—or not Greek community. I'm sorry, I don't want to say that. But some of the activities that come from that life. And I guess I want to be clear and not—by the Greek community, I—I guess I shouldn't say Greek community because I'm not referring to, like, the minority Greek community or activities or whatever, because that's—I feel different about that.

But for, like, Frat Row—like, going there, right? And socializing there. It was just so different from what I was used to. I don't even know if it's need, but this state of—I mean, just the drinking here, right?—almost as a means to be able to interact with others, as if we couldn't have a conversation without that or have interactions without alcohol as a mediator. That was just so strange to me. Like, can't you—why do you have to present yourself through alcohol instead of—like, can't we just have a conversation? I don't know. There were just so many things that I didn't understand.

And so it was very shocking. It was shocking to me to see people eat salad as a meal. [Both chuckle.] It was shocking to me, like, just the exaggeration of exercise on this campus, just the amount of exercise people engage in here., that was shocking to me. There were a lot of things that were shocking. The entitlement—the way people treated others with such lack of respect. That was shocking to me.

And I don't know, there was just a lot that I had to try and process coming here, try to understand. And so that's what made it, I think, very difficult.

AL-JABER: Yeah. As you were going through this, like, period of transition, trying to internalize all these different things on campus, what was it like also dealing with the academic side of things?

GUTIÉRREZ: Whoo! Well, academics. I came here for the academics, right?

AL-JABER: Mm-hm.

GUTIÉRREZ: And I think that unfortunately I wasn't able to excel in academics because there were so many other things that I had to dedicate time and energy to, like my survival here, right? I mean, it's hard to engage in class when you feel X, Y and—like, you feel so—I don't even want to say homesick, but when you've been, like, for example, involved in an experience of microaggression, Like, when somebody says something to you to invalidate you, to dismiss you, to deny you of your reality, it's hard to just be, like, *Okay, well, somebody just told me I was part of a quota. Now I'm just*

*going to go back and do work*, right? And they kind of feed each other. It's kind of a dialogue, too, because—because I wasn't doing so well in my academics or as well as I thought I should or would, you know, and that completely messed with my self-confidence.

And then that seeped and leaked onto every other arena. I mean, I guess I felt inferior in the classroom. It kind of went elsewhere, and because I was feeling inferior elsewhere, it also came back into the classroom. And so I wasn't prepared. I didn't know—I mean, I remember being in a biology class, Bio 11, and having everybody—you know, having people next to me, like, saying things like, “Oh, this class is so boring. It's like my AP bio class,” And, like, falling asleep in class while I literally was scrambling to write every word down because I didn't just have to study what we were learning, but I had to study, like, the very basic concepts so that I could build from that., I didn't have that basic knowledge that I could continue to learn from, so I had to, like, learn both at the same time, which was almost impossible for me.

And so instead of learning, I spent a lot of my time fighting, struggling to preserve myself and to be, like, mentally healthy and stable in a place that was so toxic. So, yeah, my academics [chuckles] weren't—it just wasn't something that I was able to engage in as much as I would have liked to. And it's unfortunate because I came here to learn, right?

AL-JABER: Mm-hm.

GUTIÉRREZ: I came here for the academics but then found it impossible to just focus on that.

AL-JABER: Did you reach out to other people about, like, your struggles here on campus?

GUTIÉRREZ: I did. I did. And it was very helpful. I mean, I considered transferring at one point and then decided not to.

AL-JABER: Back home, to a school back home?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, to USC, the school that I was going to go to before deciding to come here. But in the end, I spoke to a couple of

people and decided to stay here. But I considered it many times. I considered just getting out, leaving this place.

AL-JABER: Has it gotten easier over time? Have you come to, like, accept the different parts that you find problematic in the Dartmouth community?

GUTIÉRREZ: I've had—it hasn't become easier because people's attitudes towards me have changed, but more so because I can better express and speak of my experience. And I think that has been completely monumental in, , being here and—I don't want to say thriving, but doing better than I did freshman year, for example. I think that it wasn't until I learned how to speak of my experiences and relate them to a collective experience—it wasn't until that happened then that I really kind of started digging myself out of this hole that I had fallen into, because before, it was just a personal struggle. I was just Marián, who for some reason or another, was not integrating well. Like, I myself—*There's something wrong with me. I'm not doing something right. Why is everybody else happy? Why am I the only one struggling?* It was a personal, personal struggle. And so it was, like, personal blame.

And then I started speaking to others, and I started reading, and I started learning about things and about experiences of students of color in elite institutions like this one and realizing, *Whoa! I belong—my experience—yes, it's going to be different and it's going to be nuanced, but my experience belongs to a more—a collective. There are words to talk about this.* You know, and, I mean, it was just, like, this lexicon that I had no access to before that came to me through conversations with women here, women of color in particular, and in classes, some classes, and in readings that I learned that it wasn't that I was doing something wrong, right? It was that there is a system that is in place that isn't benefiting students of color, that isn't promoting their wellness

And so I was, like, *Whoa!* It just completely changed me, because before, I was silent. And even if I was—I was asking for—I was meeting with different people and asking for their help, but it was still a very, personal and silent struggle. And once I was validated and once I felt affirmed,

that's kind of when I started gaining a voice, getting the voice that I did not have freshman year at all, and talking to people and taking action, and trying to make this place a more inclusive, welcoming space, which is what I've dedicated all my time here to—or at least I've tried to make it a better place.

AL-JABER: Was that in part why you're involved in FYSEP?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yes. It has to do a lot with a lot of the things I'm involved in here: how to make this—how to keep students like myself from experiencing what I experienced, 'cause it was just so terrible. And so FYSEP is one of them. Unfortunately, I was involved in FYSEP very briefly, more briefly than I would have hoped, because I had been off in the falls, and the fall is when you get paired with your mentee. But, no, I think being a part of FYSEP was very important for me.

AL-JABER: So what other organizations are you part of on campus?

GUTIÉRREZ: I'm also part of the Women of Color Collective, which has also been—like, I said, women of color really helped me come into myself and, in doing so, radicalizing myself. I became radical. I was radicalized when I decided that I was going to be myself in this place, when I decided I no longer was going to water myself down, right, or alter or modify myself in order to make other people feel comfortable, in order to appease them.

AL-JABER: No. Really, it's not your job to do that.

GUTIÉRREZ: Right! Because this is who I am, so this is how I—right! And so Women of Color Collective was very important in that sense in connecting me to other women of color and allowing for that space, for a safe space. And so that was something that—and that organization wasn't here my freshman or sophomore year. It was through the help of two other women that helped bring it back, Afia [Owusu Obeng '12] and Aleschia Hyde ['12] that we kind of got it rolling again, and so—it happened my junior year, and that was very, very important to me, and that's something that I've been very involved in. I mean, La Alianza Latina is another group. Not so much anymore, just because I don't know that it provides me a space to voice my opinions. It's more of a

social space, which I think is completely necessary. It was necessary for me. But I would like it also to explore the politics of Latinidad, the politics of being a Latina here on campus, and I don't know that it does that, to be critical, as I was saying.

So I haven't been as involved as I have been in other years, just because I really want to develop that critical thought, within me. I want to be able to have the language to do this, to criticize—not to critique these systems. I want to have the language to speak about and reconcile my experiences, my identity, and that isn't a space where I can do that, so I try to—I don't know. I try to engage in spaces where I can, if that makes sense.

AL-JABER: So you never considered joining a sorority, I would imagine, if it doesn't allow you to be critical and sort of tap into your cultural identity in the Dartmouth community.

GUTIÉRREZ: I actually—I did. I did consider it, and my sophomore winter I rushed, and it was because [chuckles] my sophomore winter was a—my freshman and sophomore years—because a lot of aggression that I was feeling and hostility came from white students on this campus, I completely disassociated myself from white students. So I basically had—all my friends were minori—like, in some ways or another, were minority students, whether it was because they were black or Latino or Asian or maybe, like, when we think about sexuality, they were—they didn't identify as heterosexual, whatever.

So I didn't really [chuckles] have any white friends or know white people in a school that is majority white! And so I started to think about what that meant, and then I did something called the Diversity Peer Program [DPP] through the Office of Pluralism and Leadership [OPAL], and I met this white woman and a couple of other white people that proved—not proved me wrong... but that were different, that were different from the other people I had met before, that were willing to listen to me.

And so that's kind of the moment where I realized that [chuckles] not all white people are the same. And it sounds silly, but honestly, it wasn't whiteness; it was symbolic of something. It had—because of all the experiences I had, it

came to symbolize hostility and prejudice, and so that's why I kept myself from meeting white people, because I was trying to protect myself, because I never knew who would say something offensive or hurtful, right? Because even the nicest people were capable of doing that.

And so I kept myself from meeting white people for that reason, and then DPP happened, and I met this amazing woman, and so I was like, *Well, if I'm not meeting white people outside of the classroom, because nothing that I do on this campus would place me with white students, like, outside of school, then maybe the Greek system is a way for me to meet them*, right? If that's where they're concentrated, many of them. And so I decided to rush for that reason.

And I rushed sophomore winter. I actually pledged and became affiliated with a sorority on campus, and that was the first time when I got the chance to meet white women and be part of their space, and I actually—I felt pretty comfortable there. So, yeah, I did do it, even though it sounds like I didn't. [Chuckles.]

AL-JABER: You're still part of a sorority, then.

GUTIÉRREZ: I am. But I haven't been active for quite a while, and I think—I didn't—I mean, it's not a place where I was made to feel like an outsider, but I also didn't know that I could claim that space my own. I feel like it made me more open to realizing why having female spaces on campus is important, because I had never really thought of myself as a woman on this campus, mostly because I thought of myself as Latina, right? And so it was that intersection between ethnicity and gender, but mostly just ethnicity. Gender was something that was on the back burner, I think. I just felt like more of my interactions revolved around what it meant to be a Latina and the preconceptions that came with that, with Latinidad.

And so after doing this, I kind of thought more about gender and gender on this campus, and so I realized, then, like, *Okay, this is—maybe sororities are important spaces*. But it just wasn't the space for me. I don't know. And I think that it has to do with that intersection of ethnicity and gender.

AL-JABER: So which spaces do you feel most comfortable in on campus?

GUTIÉRREZ: Physical spaces? Since sophomore year, sophomore spring, I've lived in LALACS, which is an affinity house, and that's a place where I feel very, very comfortable. I also feel very comfortable at the CGSE, which is the former Center for Women and Gender but is now the Center for Gender and Student Engagement. Apparently you can't have "Women" in the title of something. [Chuckles.] And so that's another space where I feel very comfortable.

I also feel comfortable in spaces that belong—or, that my friends can claim and, residential communities—not communities, but in dorm rooms or wherever it is that my friends are. But, yeah, LALACs and the CGSE are two places that I feel very comfortable in.

AL-JABER: So what is it like being a woman in a sort of male-dominated campus? There have been issues with sexual assault and things like that.

GUTIÉRREZ: Right. Like I said, I—so I've actually—I mean, I think a lot of—I mean, I've never experienced assault as it pertains to sexual assault here. I've experienced assault in other ways, right?—like verbal, emotional, whatever, but not sexual assault. It's hard for me to think of myself as a woman on this campus because my experiences haven't happened as a woman, right? They happen as a Latina, and I guess I just want to keep, like, reiterating that because my body—it's not just a—a female body, right? It's, a body of color, a female body of color. And so I think that unfortunately, I haven't really had the opportunity to really interact with a lot of men on this campus.

AL-JABER: Is that by choice?

GUTIÉRREZ: [Laughs.] It's not a conscious effort. I just—I just—it's difficult to create that co-ed community or those co-ed relationships when I have a conversation with someone who ignores or refuses or does not want to engage in conversations that relate to, either gender or race or ethnicity. I really am tired of very, superficial interactions, and so I'd rather dedicate my time and energy to real, meaningful connections. And so I

find—not wasting my time and energy but just—I find it difficult to just have a meal with someone to talk about classes and who knows? Like, footb—I don't want to say sports names. That's so stereotypical. But of classes and things that are very superficial.

I want to talk to people. I want to get to know people. I want to not just know who they are here at this moment but what made them what they are, right? I don't want to know about freshman year on. I want to know about the 18, 17, whatever years back home that have made you, that got you here. And that's difficult to do here. It's very difficult. I mean, you know what people do on campus, but why do they do that stuff?

And so, yeah, I haven't really had that co-ed experience. I feel like, especially nowadays, my family on campus is very much a women's family. I mean, there are men that I really, truly value, respect, and whose company I enjoy, but not as much as I was used to in high school or before.

AL-JABER: So has your sense of community changed over the past four years? Dartmouth is, like, a space where people are constantly coming and going, especially with, like, the D-Plan.

GUTIÉRREZ: Community for me really now—I come to understand them as a group of people, right, that value, respect, love each other, support each other, and so that's what I think of community. And so when I think of my community there are—I can give you names, right?—of people that value, respect me, love me, support me. So that's what I see as community, which is why, when I think of the Dartmouth community, it's hard for me to imagine one. It's hard for me to think of Dartmouth as a community.

I think over the years, I've come to think of Dartmouth as a society. Like, there's a Dartmouth society with different communities within it. I don't know that there's a Dartmouth community in this space, like, in Hanover, New Hampshire.

When we take Dartmouth outside of that, of this geographic space, because there is a greater society, which I guess in this case would be perhaps the U.S., right?—the American

society, then we become a community within the American society. But I think that here at Dartmouth, it's a society and not a community.

AL-JABER: What makes you term it like that? Is it the sense that it's fragmented or—

GUTIÉRREZ: The sense that when I think of community, as I have come to define it with the presence of love and respect, it's not what I see here. Inclusive, empathetic—it's not what I see. So I can't say Dartmouth is a community unless it is in opp—not in opposition but unless it's placed within a greater, like, society, right? So when I'm outside of Dartmouth, I guess, yes, I belong to the Dartmouth community because I go to Dartmouth and if there's an alum that goes to Dartmouth we can—there's that common ground. We can connect based on that, because we're outside. But when we're here, inside, even though we all go to the same campus, we're all here together, there are people that I cannot connect with even if we have that common ground.

AL-JABER: So going off what you were saying a little bit, there have been some race --like, they don't call them that anymore—bias incidents on campus.

GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah.

AL-JABER: So you're very aware of your cultural identity, ethnicity on campus. Have you reflected on this issue? Has it impacted your sense of belonging within Dartmouth?

GUTIÉRREZ: Well, these incidents have made this term a very taxing and overwhelming term for me, and not just for me but for a lot of my friends. A lot of people just in general.

The last time I took classes here on campus was a year ago, last winter break—not winter break, last winter term. I was gone in the spring, and the summer I was here but I was working, and I wasn't necessarily connected to campus, I would go to work, go back home, go to work, go back home.

And then in the fall I was away, so this is the first time I'm back after a year. It's my senior year. I thought, "All right, I've had the chance to meet all these people, to really develop,

develop my understanding of my ethnicity, of who I—my identity as it pertains to this space and whatnot.” And so I thought—you know, I had figured it out. Like, you know, *regardless of what your views of me are, I’ve got it together. It’s no longer freshman year. I have a voice now. I claim this space mine. I’m okay now, right?* That’s what I came in thinking. Like, *regardless of what the environment is, I will end up on top because I can; because there’s no reason for me not to.*

I came in here being like, *I’m gonna kick butt this term.* And then I came back to these incidents, to these incidents of hate and bigotry, and [chuckles] I realized that regardless of how much thought I’ve put into this or how many times I’ve had these discussions, I still have to fight to be here! Yes, I’m a senior, and yes, I am more outspoken than ever, than I have ever been before. But there are people like me that are hurting, that are hurting from these incidents. And whether or not they were the ones who were personally afflicted—I don’t really want to say that. But even if people weren’t directly involved with these incidents, so even if what was written on that white board wasn’t to me or wasn’t my room, it still affects me, and we’re still all deeply affected by it.

And so coming back and seeing that, I was just so overwhelmed with emotion because I thought that things were going to be better because I had—

AL-JABER: Figured it out.

GUTIÉRREZ: —figured it out, yeah, in essence. And then I realized that that wasn’t true at all. And apart from these bias incidents that happened to people that I didn’t know but I still can connect to, relate to, this term there’s been some incidents that I was personally involved in, aggression that happened to me. I mean, people that aggressed me, assaulted me, whatever. [Chuckles.] And so I realized that I still have to fight to claim this space. I thought time was in some ways, like, the answer or the key to belonging, but then I realized that it’s not, because even though I’ve been here four years, there are still people questioning how, questioning me, questioning my reality, and I had forgotten what it was like to be in this place.

- AL-JABER: Do you feel like these people warrant a response or sort of you don't want to even try to validate your presence anymore? Or are you still fighting for your space here or are you just being, you know?
- GUTIÉRREZ: I think that inherent to being, I have to fight. I don't know that I can separate the two. So it gets easier to just be, but I don't know that I have stopped fighting.
- AL-JABER: So it sort of sounds like in the four years that you've been here, Dartmouth has turned you into an activist.
- GUTIÉRREZ: [Chuckles.] Right. I mean, the experiences I've had—I mean, I have grown up at Dartmouth, right?
- AL-JABER: Mm-hm.
- GUTIÉRREZ: The person I was in high school is very different from the person that I am now, and so I guess—so you were saying—but I guess I don't want to say it was Dartmouth, itself, that did this, right?—'cause that would make Dartmouth seem as a good thing, because I'm proud of who I am now, and I'm happy, and I'm—I mean, I'm glad that I'm where I am now, but I don't attribute that to Dartmouth. [Laughs.] Right? Like, because of the negative experiences I had here, I had to, but I want to attribute who I am to the people that helped me through my struggles. So it wasn't because of Dartmouth that I have radicalized myself or that I have become an activist or—it was because of the people that I met at Dartmouth that taught me how to speak, taught me how to think, really, and taught me how to reconcile so many different emotions and feelings. And so it was because of those people that I became who I am.
- AL-JABER: So knowing what you know now, would you have still applied to Dartmouth if you had known—
- GUTIÉRREZ: [Chuckles.] I—
- AL-JABER: —if you would have gone through these many challenges?
- GUTIÉRREZ: I know. I—It's difficult to answer that question. I've heard it before, and I never know what to say, really, because in some ways, had I known, I might have just stepped out—

[Laughs.]—and been, like, *I don't want that for myself*. But then, again, this is the only person I know. This is the only Marián that I currently know, so I wouldn't know what type of Marián would have come out if she had spent four years of her life at USC, right?

AL-JABER: Just going back to the Dartmouth community, has Dartmouth changed in the four years that you've been here?

GUTIÉRREZ: Has it changed? The people at Dartmouth have changed. I've seen people come and go. And, yes, I mean, it has changed for me, because the people that are here now make me cherish the place. I mean, a lot of people have left. The people that have left but that have left their legacy here, within me, I guess you could say. And even on campus, they have made this place worth coming back to. I mean, I'm still here.

So, maybe—I don't think the institution has changed, but the people that are in this space have, and they've made it worth it. And I think that, to give some credit, not credit to the institution but credit to the people working here to make this a better place, yes, it has changed. You have wonderful people working here that I know are working hard to make this place a better one, and so I don't want to discredit their efforts. But I just wish the change were more—

AL-JABER: Change is always slow.

GUTIÉRREZ: Right. I wish it were faster. I wish it were more obvious. I wish it were more clear, more apparent. But—

AL-JABER: So are you still gonna be active as an alumna and still involved in these issues that have impacted your time here at Dartmouth?

GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, most definitely, most definitely. I don't ever want to forget the type of struggle I've had here, because that has helped me become who I am, and so I want to continue to be involved with students in some way or another and perhaps be one of the people that helps them through whatever they're struggling with. Like I said, without the women that I met, uh, I don't know, I would probably still be in my room—

you know, crying, not knowing what I was doing here. And so maybe I can be that for someone. So, yeah.

AL-JABER: Do you think that part of the reason Dartmouth is—some students feel it's quite isolating, its location, that it's sort of cut off from the rest of the [chuckles] world?

GUTIÉRREZ: The place where it's situated I think definitely has something to do with it because the space, itself, is so different where a lot of these students are coming from, and so there is—Like, physically or geographically, there isn't anything around that I can relate to, whereas if I were in a city, it might be different because I could go outside and see people like me versus being in Hanover, where I can't separate myself from the campus and connect with a world that's more like the one I came from. So in that sense, yes.

AL-JABER: So just to, like, wrap up, I guess: In terms of where you see yourself situated within Dartmouth, do you categorize yourself more as an outsider or an insider?

GUTIÉRREZ: Ah, that's interesting. I think that—[Sighs.] Hmm. Well, if I—I don't think that there is a Dartmouth community, so in that sense, I can't be an outsider or insider because there isn't one. [Apparently smiles.] I think that there is an ideal one, and I think that there is an ideal student and student experience that a lot of people try to emulate. I don't think that that exists: this idea of mainstream, what it means to be mainstream and the mainstream experience as an equal to Dartmouth.

So in terms of me wanting to be part of this ideal Dartmouth, in that way I'm an outsider because I'm not trying to be part of an ideal anything. I'm just trying to be me, right? [Chuckles.] So in that way, I'm not part of the group of students that want to be part of this ideal. I'm an outsider of that. But I'm an insider of the students that have realized that and that are, like I said, being critical of a lot of things. I'm an insider of that. [Chuckles.] I don't know. I guess [laughs] I'm making this a lot more confusing than I ever thought it would be. But I really don't think that there is a Dartmouth community, so I don't know how I could be outside of it. [Laughs.]

AL-JABER: That's fair. Well, I think that's it unless there is something that you think I neglected to ask you or something that you want to add in terms of the Dartmouth community.

GUTIÉRREZ: Mmm. I think that there are ways that we can work towards making this a Dartmouth community. I really don't think it exists as of now, but I really do think we can work towards making one exist. I think that there are ways that we can get students to engage meaningfully and that we can practice diversity, we can live diversity, because right now we're not practicing diversity. This might be diverse in some people's eyes, and, you know, in ways it *is* diverse. I've never been around so many people from so many different backgrounds.

But it doesn't matter if it's diverse when nobody's engaging. I won't say "nobody," but when the majority isn't engaging. It doesn't matter. Or it doesn't make the difference that diversity is supposed to make. And so I think that we need to think about the ways that we can engage in diversity and practice diversity more, think about this more intentionally and actively *seek* ways in which we can have students have spaces and opportunities for students to engage, because I think it is possible.

It's not happening now. I don't know that there are many spaces for that, spaces where it's not, like, a self-selecting group that has thought about this and wants to engage, right?—versus just everyone. But I think there are ways. I think there are ways to create a new Dartmouth consciousness, a new culture and perhaps a community.

AL-JABER: Well, I'm going to turn off the tape now.

**[End of interview.]**