

Samar Ahmed
Part one

Interview Inscription	Coding
<p>Hello I am Iris Sangiovanni that's I-R-I-S S-A-G-I-O-V-A-N-N-I and I am with, and my name is Samar Ahmed. S-A-M-A-R and my last name is A-H-M-E-D and today is November 21st and we are interviewing Samaaa at her home. And if you may say your name and your age please. Sure, my name is Samaa Abdulraqib. That's S-A-M-A-A last name A-B-D-U-R-R-A-Q-I-B and I am forty years old and I use she, her, her's pronouns. So thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed today. And the first question that we have for you is where did you grow up and has your childhood shaped you in any way. Yeah I think it did. I grew up in ah Columbus Ohio and I moved and I was born in New York city and we moved there when I was young. Um so you know I consider myself being from Columbus. Um raised by new Yorkers, very proud new Yorkers and um growing up in Columbus shaped me in a lot of ways. I mean I was my family moved there there weren't many African American Muslims, there weren't many black Muslims. We moved there with another family from New York another black Muslim family and there were only there were only a couple of us, there weren't a whole lot of Muslims in Columbus Ohio most of them were from Arab descent um and um so that shaped my childhood considerably. I also you know my parents were very you know they were coming of age and the 60's and the[00:02:13.29]</p> <p>60's in New York City and they were very activist minded and very you know there was a joke that I was raised in a black power household and that so</p>	<p>Introduction (Name, date, location)</p> <p>Family origin (childhood, New York, Columbus Ohio)</p> <p>Race and religion (African American, Islam)</p> <p>Childhood (Columbus)</p>

<p>that you know not only shaped my childhood but that shaped much of my life. Columbus was um when we moved there it was diverse and its much more diverse now in terms of folks coming from other countries but it was you know I was raised around black folks and I went to school with the black folks. So it was diverse in that way in comparison to Maine haha. In comparison to Maine I think of it as not an entirely brown city but we surely we weren't in the minority when we moved there, yeah. So when you say that you like you felt like you grew up in a black power like family what were some sort of key things that sort of shaped that? Yeah so I grew up very at a very young age understanding how racism and White supremacy operate, so I understood so you know I am gonna bring this up now because it is, it is almost that holiday it is almost thanksgiving and one and I was recently telling that story to someone, so you know a lot of you know so my parents gave me a lot of anti imperialist frameworks so for example thanksgiving we didn't the way that we celebrated thanksgiving in my household was that my father would open up the dictionary or encyclopedia this was back when we had paper encyclopedia's right the books encyclopedia's and he would open up the thanksgiving and he would leave it in the middle of the living room and if any of us happen to be in the living room at the same time as him we would get a lecture about colonisim and imperialism and the genocide of ingenious people and that is how we celebrated thanksgiving in my household and we didn't and I think my parents raised me very understanding that as a black person not so much as a Muslim person but definitely as a black person understanding that, that we had to that</p>	<p>Childhood (Columbus)</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Holiday (Thanksgiving)</p> <p>Tradition</p>
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<p>we had to you know scalsatically we had to excel different you know we had to work hard and we had to make sure that we were excelling because people did not would not expect us to do well. So that's just one example, I was also raised to we listen to a lot of music in my house and so I was also raised to value black and Latino cultural creations I guess you would call it. So you know that like we didn't grow up listening to the beetles actually we grew up listening to Nena Symmone and John Coltrane and Sila Cruise. So that just shaped me because it made me believe that people who looks like me or who had diverse experience automatically had values had things to say and to contribute. I was always encouraged to read black authors I read a lot when I was a kid and I went through a period where I only read black authors and so like so those kinds of cultural productions were put in front of me and so that's like my immediate go to when I am thinking about like literature that matters my first thought is not I don't know give me some I don't like, Dr. Sues or something. Well Dr. Sues we read but like I am thinking like, like my immediate thought I am thinking like I don't think of just like Beverly Clarey like someone like Virginia Hamilton who wrote like blacks syfi black young adults syfi because that's what was put in front of me and I think of Tony Morrison versus Hemingway for example you know so and my mother my mother introduced me to , my mother is the one who introduced me to black feminist. I didn't I don't actually think I didn't necessarily I don't necessarily think of myself was growing up on a feminist household my mother was very my mother was very strong welded and articulate in that kind of way but she never she never actually said I am a feminist. But</p>	<p>Culture</p> <p>Music and culture</p> <p>Literature (Black authors)</p> <p>Public figures</p>
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she's the one who introduced to this bridge called my back which I still have I still have her copy of this bridge called my back. She is the one who introduced me to black female poets, black you know I think I learned about Lucio Emclifton through her and I think I learned about June Jordan through her and like and I not Audrey Lord but I think so while she didn't say that I was a feminist she didn't say that I am a feminist she is the reason why, she's where my feminism comes from I would've I would've you know I know I didn't get that in school. You didn't get that in school, we didn't get any of that in school. So do you think like being raised in that household with your family and everything do you think that actually had impact on you or shaped you in any way on the work your doing now or other work that you did then in any way? Yeah I think so, I mean I think that it taught me that at a very young age that my knowledge mattered that my that the lives of the people who look like me mattered. And you know there's a thing that our parents do that tells us that haha that you know that tells us that you know that you are special and that kind of way, and like that you're special and your important but I think beyond that beyond just that you of like as in an individual you know I was they were the ones that taught me about black history because we didn't get that in school. We I was raised on comics that was called Golden Legacy Comics which are just amazing there black its black history in comic form I don't know I don't think you can even get them now my partner bought me like a couple of individual comics but you know I learned about people like Benjamin Banker I learned about Harriet Tubman

Like so it gave me this foundation like

Feminism (Black feminists)

Literature (Comics)

Black history

<p>so it gave me this foundation of black history and black thought and black cultural production and I so like I don't have to convince. Like no one has to convince me like that has value like I don't have to like learn it now. So that's one thing also I was raised my parents weren't activists per say, my mother was in her youth but its not the thing that she like talked about she was like her school valedictorian and she wrote like this really the way that she described it was like this really pro black speech but she didn't really talked about her activism but so but my parents I didn't see my parents as activists but they raised me believing in social justice you know there's a verses in the Quran that talked about social justice and I remember reading those when I was young. And that that instilled in me this- that is one of the places I base my social justice in now this need that you know that we have to fight injustice like that's a to me that's like an imperative of my faith so that's comes from being in that household, yeah. You said that you were like introduced to June Jordan through your mom that sort of discovered Audrey Lorde through other means like, how was the writings of like Audrey Lord like really impacted? Ahh Audrey Lord is to me like- so Audrey Lord is really important in a lot of different levels I mean she is this unabashedly she was like this unabashed like black feminist lesbian poet and writer and I turned to her for a lot of different things like I think like her poetry in one is beautiful of affirming of lesbian life and black women but her you know when I was teaching I use to teach her article her essay "Uses of Anger" and its this wonderful essay that talks about how anger is not a bad thing and I think that back women often get called you know that there is that myth that idea of that</p>	<p>Family (parents)</p> <p>Religion (Islam)</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Feminist</p>
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<p>angry Black women and White women in particular or White people in general are afraid of black women's anger and she talks about how its one well one well of course we are angry and two anger is not an emotion that we should suppress and she does this wonderful thing in the essay where she would like is able to talk about how White women are angry too but they suppress their anger and look what it does, right. And I think, and then she talks about White women's guilt and how that it all it does that it detracts is keep us distracted from the actual fight at hand right so I use that as an example to say like Audrey Lord I feel like I come to her like she has taught me so much about so many different things and that's one example about how my anger is not its not a problem and how my anger is justified and can be constructive and she also writes about she also writes beautifully about poetry and about people who were poor and people who were marginalized don't have access to the time right like the time and the space to write novels to write large like dissertations on blah blah blah so you have this means that you know she talks about people like scribbling words like on napkins like that is a powerful thing, and its tool for people who are without. I came to Audrey Lord in college I think it was my last couple of years I can't actually remember when but you know I think the first thing I ever read of hers was "The masters tools were not dismantled that masters house" and I remember like really mediating on it when I was trynna decide whether or not to go to grad school I took some time off between I took like I worked between undergrad and grad school and I was like I had this I remember reading it so I don't I must've read it like my senior year in college and then</p>	<p>Black Feminist</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Literature (Grad School)</p>
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<p>returned to it and I remember thinking about how I was about to embark on this unknown neither of parents graduated from college they both like took some classes but I didn't know anything like about grad school I didn't know what I was getting into and I was like afraid that I didn't have the right language because people who go to grad school for English they like talk theory talk and I didn't know any of that shit and like I didn't know and I remember thinking that I would loose like I had been activated as in activist in college and I was afraid that I was going to loose all of that because I was gonna start trying to figure out how to read theorists like Hedger and Vacoup I like Vacoup he's fine but you know all of these things like to me had no connection really to my real life- but I went to grad school any way haha I went to grad school any way haha. So I feel like did I answer your question, I don't know I am just talking haha. Oh yeah thats good. [00:16:23.19] So umm so we also have a question like was there any moment when you felt like your sexuality and your religion were in harmony was there any time they were in disconnect? That is such a good question! That is such a good question! I-Yes and no to be honest yes and now to be honest because I think I am someone who for whatever its worth I like I don't have a coming of out story I just lived my life like when I recognized that I it wasn't never a surprise to me that I had the same sex attraction like I consider I call myself queer. I mean like you know like text book you know I would be bisexual I don't I call myself queer but it wasn't really a surprise to me so I didn't have this reckon like some people have I think where their were like, where it doesn't seem to fit it just was, I am also someone who for the most part for most of my life its a little bit different</p>	<p>Graduate school</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Sexuality and religion</p> <p>Sexuality</p> <p>Privacy (Romantic life)</p>
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<p>now but I tend to be more private person so my I didn't see that my romantic attractions were like were a thing that were, they just were I didn't like my family we didn't talk about dating we didn't date, we didn't date we didn't talk about dating because it was like you do not do that and I think that's the conversation although my mother was always like who do you like what boys do you like? Even though you do not date. So I didn't have like but I think there was a time of my life that I would say that my faith has been the same it has always been strong but like what I would call like my connection to religion you know what I mean like I always believed like I always believed in God and that has always been strong but like the rules and the regulations. And there was a time in my life where that was like I was much more that was much more important to me that was really important to me like all of my minutia like all of that and I think at that point I struggled more because I was like I mean there were other things like I did on my life that didn't that weren't in line and so it just pulled me deeper in the rules you know I would say there was things I would do like I never drank but like other things I would do that I would be like God that can't be like I know I shouldn't be doing that so let me just dive deeper in to like all of the rules and the regulations and I think that sexuality was one of those things like I think I wrestled with it and I think it didn't make me try not to it didn't make me it didn't distance myself from being attracted to women it just made me just dive deeper into tryanna to follow all the rules that I thought would compensate I guess. I remember describing to a friend of mine another friend of mine whose Muslim but in the same place she's someone who drinks and she's</p>	<p>Family</p> <p>Faith</p> <p>Religion (Islam)</p> <p>Personal values</p> <p>Sexuality</p> <p>Culture and religion</p>
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<p>religious and culturally she is where's she's from? she is from Pakistan and culturally like very religious but like the rules and so I remember describing to her like its kind of like playing this weird game of Russian roulette where you're like I hope this makes the difference I don't know. As I got older I think I just got less and less worried about that because ultimately at the end of the day I believe that God is just and I believe that there are so many things that we do that matters in the world and this thing who you end up with there's so many things that we do that matters in the world, so this is very long answer to your question. haha So like when you say that you did things to compensate for like other things so is that a discount kind of or was that like what kind of?? Hmm yeah I think that I no I don't think it was like a disconnect I think it was like a I'm not sure like I don't know what you mean by discount like a wait you wanna try to tell me what you mean by discount like just? Like you, do you feel like for example like your faith and your religion kind of is challenging your own personal life, like you know what I mean like did you feel like kind of like you were always trying to like do your faith right and also live your life like I don't know like something like that? Hmm I get what you're saying, I think what would I say I think maybe I think I was like a to put it maybe even in a simple like blunt way I saw these other things that I was doing I was like those are like I am sinning and I am sinning so I am going to you know there are the five daily prayers that you're supposed to do right? There is but then there all these extra prayers that you can do- So I am gonna do all of those and I am gonna like you fast during the month of Ramadan but then there's like you know you could like there's all these other times that you can fast that the</p>	<p>Religion</p>
	<p>Personal life</p>
	<p>Religion</p>

Prophet Mohamed peace be upon him did and you try to emulate those and so I would do all of those and I would you know I don't know how many like Quran read groups I was apart of this was when I was in college and undergrad. In so it was an interesting time in my life because I think I was also discovering my religion on my own you know when you were raised a certain way you have faith you may have faith -you learn hmm I don't know your faith evolves because when you are like nine your faith is I don't know what that might I don't, your faith evolves but you when you move away from the house and you make that like that decision like this is mine. You know versus this is my parents thing when you make a decision even if you so for me is like I was raised Muslim but when I left the house I made the decision that it was my and you know I could've very easy be like nahh this doesn't fit me anymore but I made that decision so I was like learning more as a I was growing into young adulthood so it was an interesting time because I was diving deep into the rules and intensifying my like religious practices but I was also seeing myself as like sinning so.. So during like your undergrad it seems like not only was it just seems like there was a lot going on in terms of like the teaching of the Quran to the sort of like. So it seems that through the teaching of the Quran there was a lot happening this question is I apologize for like its rambling but it seems like there was a lot that was going on during your undergrad in terms of like your activism and also sort of like as you were saying like making your faith for your own and like do you feel like that was something that you did completely on your own or pretty much you were shaped by your peers or professors? Ohh not my professors definitely my peers,

Religion

Religion

definitely my peers. This is part of the reason why I enjoy working like when I was teaching I enjoy working with college young folks like because I think its this huge time in your life where your figuring yourself out and your being in and you have these like new influences who aren't your like I mean you know you have your high school peers who influence you sure- But this is like your figuring out who you are in the world and it is really exciting and I love young activism. So yes I was definitely so I see college influenced my faith I had I was I met Muslims from everywhere from all over right and they all had different relationship to their Islam and that like that was all new to me because my because like I said when we moved to Ohio there weren't many Black Muslims their were a lot of Arab Muslims. My mother and I we were we didn't go out and socialize much with Muslims because our experience was like we were ostracized it was pretty awful like they were sitting there and they were talking Arabic and not talk to us and so we just stopped and I so I didn't have a lot of Muslims friends growing up I had like a couple and to me young people who are like who had memorized the entire Quran that was like huge you know who like, I met converts like you know. I grew up not thinking that White people were Muslims remember the first time I ever saw a White Muslim so I met all of the so I met all of these so it was huge they've really influenced me. I also you know, you know I said I grew up in this household that believed in you know that foster love for black history, black people, black culture, black productions and so you know I joined like the black cultural awareness student union or whatever it was I don't remember the letters but you know what I mean like that organization and so that was great

Faith

Social justice

<p>that that fed those things and I got to learn more about black history in an academic way or black writing in an academic way and so it wasn't like you know like when I was in school grade school I did that on my own. Like if I ever wanted to write a book report I was choosing a black author, like I can take an entire class an entire class! And undergrad like late undergrad it was where I discovered feminism and I went to my very first take back the night rally that changed so much for me. That changed so much for me and it really shaped the work I did right after, after undergrad I worked in an domestic homeless shelter and I don't think I would have you know and I met a Muslim one of my very good friends through undergrad was this black Muslim women who was like roughly she was a little older than me and she was she started doing domestic violence work and that was like and she is the one who like helped me think about like a feminism that is that can incorporate like Muslim women, without actually articulating you know without actually saying it like yea. So yes my peers, yes and I only feel like I don't really remember in undergrad in terms of like the class I don't know things are always a little murky when I think about haha undergrad. I don't remember a whole lot but I remember my peers. Like I don't remember the professors really, its been a while at this point. But my peers I remember, yup. So you kind of mentioned that you worked in the domestic violence area so speaking of that like how does your work with the gender based like I am like basically working with gender based survivors given the sensitivity among trauma like how did that influence your like? Yeah it influenced so much of my work my academic work and my activism and I am back around that because now I do domestic</p>	<p>Black authors</p> <p>Feminism</p> <p>Feminism</p> <p>Activism</p> <p>Undergraduate (Work)</p>
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violence work. And I don't do direct service but -- so after I left undergrad I worked at a catalogue place all through undergrad because you know I didn't have money so I worked all through undergrad. I taught martial arts and I worked at this domestic violence shelter and I was a house manager But really but they call it a house manager but I was basically like the shelter advocate and I often did the over night shift. But you know just going through the training and understanding and all of that came from like my time, the first take back the night rally I went to. A friend of mine had been raped at a eternity party and I was like I went out of solidarity for her, I didn't consciously had like a feminist lens that I articulated I just you know was like black women need women need to take up space because they do and black women need to take up space that was just how I operate. But I didn't call that but going there and seeing all the people there and you know I went to Ohio State University which was like 80,000 thousand people and there's a big feternity we call it feternity row. So we you know we came together and there were already a lot of people gather and so we marched on feternity row and I remember like so vividly all of the feternity members who were coming out of their whatever you call the- frat houses right! Our of their frat houses calling us dykes calling us bitches. When all of the people who were gathering there were saying you know like don't rape me, don't violate my body you know my autonomous body. And it really I don't know. It taught me in a way that my, I had taken a women study class but like I don't really remember the academic that much but it taught me so much more than that then the gender women studies class did. It taught me that people who were raped aren't

Social justice

Domestic violence

<p>believed, people that you know patriarchy requires that anyone that wanted to protest being labeled as a lesbian Which is there is nothing wrong with that but of course you just you are. And so it made me, it made me want to believe women when they said they would say these things and so. Going to do domestic violence work helped give me you know you go through a training its really intense training and I remember it was like a month of training it was like long. And it gave me like a framework to talk about to think about how to support people particularly women who experience violence. And so I did that direct service work for like two years before grad school and it was like oh I started out as a volunteer I actually think like at the hotline and then I went to do the shelter. And it was like the most transformative experiences that I have had and like it was like women would come to the shelter not like dealing but you know thy were dealing with being abused by their partners. But like also they had multiple trauma issues right, so how do you and we are like creating this like kind of community of safety but like also but also people don't know each other so it was just like how do you, it was complicated to manage all of that. Some people would come in with dependency issues. It was just complicated to manage all of that but at the root of it I felt like this is I felt so good. This is the good this the right thing because some of the because these women are being brutalized in different ways and in general no one is there for them and no one believes them. And no one wants to be in shelter nobody that is like that's like an awful thing to be like living in a room with another person that you don't know and having a curfew and like having house shores. Like nobody</p>	<p>Domestic violence</p> <p>Volunteer work</p> <p>Domestic violence</p>
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<p>wants that, that's like. It just like extreme and these women are so that's like, that's better than the alternative so, I don't know. So yeah oh right you asked me about the so when I went to grad school I was having that moment thats the moment I remember talking about Audrey Lorde being like I am about to go into this academic institution when I was like seeing myself doing this work that was meaning and was combating misogyny and I was gonna go and read you know, Daryl Daw. You know I went to grad school I studied Literature and Women studies. I went there wanting to focus on specifically on literature of the black power movement. That changed but that was what I went in - So I kept trying to convince myself that I was doing the right thing I was also struggling like Islamically. I remember like I went to this like before I started grad school I went to this week long camp. That was for like Muslim young folks and it was amazing. It was amazing it was beautiful there were like all these like Imams who were like famous, American Imams like I don't know there like Imam Zaid Shukar was there his wife was there. His wife was like she just radiates light, and I remember the guy the Imam who married Most Deff like performed his wedding ceremony. I remember Seraj Wahaj she was there, I remember being like ohh you know Mos Def hahah. That was really important to me that time! Anyway I was having this moment where I was like this is the right thing to do like should I be out helping people instead of being like in this academic institution. And so I think that I when I ultimately the work that I did in grad school was about I focused on literature I didn't end up focusing not on ah black power movement. I mean I did a little bit in like a chapter of my dissertations but it</p>	<p>Graduate school</p> <p>Literature</p> <p>Graduate school</p> <p>Religion</p> <p>Graduate school</p>
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<p>was mostly about the myth of safe homes and about how in literature homes are often presented- homes and home countries I did a lot of diaspora literature home and homelands are often portrayed as this that place that immigrants or that the diaspora individual wants to return to and this like mythical. Like during a lot of time during the black power movement there is this idea of like Africa this like we were kings and queens. And it doesn't necessarily did anything to account that violence existed in homes for women. So I felt like that was my way of still being connected to the work. When I graduated and taught at Bowdoin I taught classes, I taught gender and women studies but I also taught classes that were about representations about violence about women. But so, so I think it informed I used it to inform my academic work. And when I could I use it to inform like my social justice work that I would do so. I still volunteered in shelters when I was at grad school. When I moved here I started volunteering at right crisis? SARSAM when I was teaching in Bowdoin those kinds of things. I hope that was like, all right. We have more questions so um. Okay, okay. And if I ever start to ramble your like thats actually can we get to this other question please let me no. No noo noo. Okay. Just for the clarifying purposes does the domestic shelter that you worked at that time was choices? Choices in Columbus Ohio yeah. And also, I am like flooded with questions do you have one that you like of sort of. My question is more general like right now are you doing any work in domestic violence field? Yes so I don't do direct services anymore. So in the kind of like social service fields there's like direct service which is like which would be like working in a shelter working with people who were directly</p>	<p>Domestic violence</p> <p>Career</p> <p>Social justice</p> <p>Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine</p> <p>Domestic violence work</p>
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<p>impacted. And then there's so I don't do that anymore. I work for the Maine Coalition to end domestic violence. Which is the its like the umbrella the state wide organization that provide support and resources and trainings for all of the shelters. All of the shelters all of the resources center so like the domestic so there are in the state of Maine there are eight resource centers. The one in Cumberland County is family crisis. And so you know if they for example, needed support with like a I do a lot of anti trafficking work so if they wanted a training about how to best serve victims of trafficking might pull out resources and provide them so yes it is I feel and I started in January and it feels really good. And it feels like I am returning to this it feels like full circle even though its not direct service the work that I do ends up benefiting folks who are experiencing violence. And up until what year this is 2000 up in the middle of 2015 so from I moved here from 2010 I moved to Maine in 2010 and so from 2011 to 2015 I volunteered for SARSAM (Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine). And I was for several years I was a hotline advocate and so I took calls and then for about a year or so I was a hospital advocate which meant that if someone was sexually assaulted or raped and they needed to go tot he hospital and they wanted an advocate to accompany them I will go out there. And that was some intense work, that was some intense work. And so yea, so yes so domestic violence I am just returning to with this sexual assault work I'd been I was doing and it just recently stopped. I am happy to talk more about that. Well, so like from started from take back the night sort of in solidarity to what your describing sort of advocacy work how have you like in those roles like how have you sort of have been able to navigate those</p>	<p>Domestic violence shelters</p> <p>Domestic violence</p> <p>Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
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<p>intense moments and also like moments of like back lashes that you were just describing like from the frat boys that you were just describing. I mean do those moments happen a lot in the work your doing? Yeah hm (that's a good question!) That is like a loaded question. Thats a really good question I think like so what was really powerful in take back the night at Ohio State was that we outnumbered them and we and I remember this so vividly like we started out large. I mean you know there's eighty thousand people at Ohio State so it was like the first rally part was large. But as we started to march we gathered and people joined us, and more and more people joined us and I think what was powerful was that even those frat boys were yelling those things to us we outnumbered them and it was not scary. I mean I know I mean I was not marching as a survivor of like campus rape, rape that happened at campus. So I don't so my experience might've not been the same as someone else who had been raped. But like we had each others backs in those moments....</p>	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>March</p> <p>Advocacy</p>
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Iris SanGiovanni
 Interviewee: Samaa Abdurraqib
 Time: November 21st, 2016
 00:45:00 to 01:32:18

<p>Take Back the Night; power</p> <p>Speakout; sharing stories</p> <p>Voice</p>	<p>...Some people were yelling things back at them you know of course right. We were louder than them. We were more powerful than they were. And then afterwards when we came back to the place of the rally /that's when we had / that's when we had the speakout. Like the" where people got up and shared their stories and so many people were like "I was just minding my business over here and I saw you all and I came to join you because this thing happened to me and you have given me a voice."</p>
<p>Take Back the Night; organized in Portland, ME</p> <p>Giving voice; powerful</p> <p>Solidarity; transformative</p>	<p>[00:45:28.28]</p> <p>Um, I've helped organize the take back the night here in Portland. And it's a different, like the route is not the same, the dynamics are different, so um, but there's... I think that the take back the night or any kind of gathering that gives people voice is very powerful because there's like this, this like... solidarity that I think is really transformative. And it doesn't/You know it doesn't give you comfort in all the moments, you know what I mean. Things can still be scary, um things can still be triggering in that moment you hope/ you think that people there are for you in solidarity.</p>
<p>Work now; not direct service</p>	<p>00:46:26.09] So you were asking me how to deal with, um, moments of ...backlash, and I think,um. So I think in the work that I do now, um because it's not as direct service or/ yeah because it's not as much direct service I think I deal more with like systems and you know /appear. I think the the thing that always ends up/ so I'm often always surrounded by colleagues</p>

<p>Same perspective; colleagues</p> <p>State and Sexual Assault Agencies</p> <p>Against folks; arm yourself with statistics</p> <p>Gender-based violence</p> <p>People who do the work</p> <p>Not doing direct service; Not on Campus</p>	<p>like in my workplace and like expanding. Like I work a lot. Um, with the state agency to the sexual assault state agency. So we all kind of like have the same perspective and understanding on gender-based violence, but you're always coming/buddy up against folks who do things like who say "Well, but you know that women can batter too" it's often men who do this kind of thing and I think, ah. So what you end up having to do is arm yourself with statistics/ as we do for many things like you have to say okay// Cause yeah, that's true, that's valid. Like there are women are/ who abuse their partners and spouses and exes and these kinds of things. But, the majority of the violence is perpetrated by men, so you have to do that kind of thing. Um, but I have to be honest, like I think I'm surrounded by people/ I'm surrounded by people who've been doing the work for a long time and so those are the // I think because I'm not doing direct service or I'm not like/ I'm not on campus like on campus spaces where you have people who are like yelling different things at you.</p>
<p>Teaching</p> <p>Students with different perspectives</p> <p>Film 'Once We Were Warriors'</p>	<p>[00:48:25.05]</p> <p>I mean, I think/ I remember having to bud up against that when I would teach. When I was teaching, like I would have students who were //brrrb// I remember I would have students that would have these perspectives that I was just like //merp merr//couldn't figure out. I remember I taught this, um, I taught a first year seminar on representations of violence against women, and we watched a lot of intense films and read some intense things. And //phewhfhf// One film that I taught was called "Once We Were Warriors." And it's this, um, it's a film/ it's a Maori film, so it's about Indigenous folks in New Zealand and they are dealing with... there's like some intense domestic violence. [trigger warning: rape, rape culture, shaming] There's also</p>

<p>Students with different perspective; contrary</p>	<p>alcoholism,um, and,ah there is,um a young girl who is raped by a friend of the father's. And she is maybe like fifteen. And I/ I remember I had a student. This was my second year teaching it, my second year teaching it and I had this student and he was always kind of contrary- you know</p>
<p>Students with different perspective; contrary</p> <p>Teaching; decisions</p> <p>Rape culture</p> <p>Teaching; shut it down</p>	<p>but there's always one who you're like //mehhemmmahm// why are here? Um, and he...in the movie she comes down in like her nightgown which is like a long t-shirt which is...it doesn't even matter, right? It doesn't even matter. But he said something like "well you know but she came downstairs in that outfit when the father's friend who ends up raping her was there" and like I almost in that moment like I almost...I don't know where he's coming from because I don't even think he was presenting in ah / cause sometimes you have people in your class who are like <i>I'm contrary because I want to be contrary</i>. I almost lost it because / absolutely not. When you're teaching, if either of you go on to teach/ or when you're like facilitating a group discussion sometimes you have to make the decision about well am I going to see how this/ how everyone works this out, if they're gonna do it or are you just going to shut it down. Um, and I had to shut that down and I probably wasn't as gen../whatever...like you can't come into my classroom talking about some fifteen year old who got raped "look at what she was wearing." Like I don't why you're in this classroom, like I don't know why you're here. I don't know why, this is not the first thing we watched, I don't know why you have not learned anything since we've been here. So, sometimes I would have that in the classroom, so you know, in the classroom you kind of like point to the readings or you shut it down if it's egregious. If it's egregious you just have too, I just/ that's what I believe. Anyway, heh. I think that maybe answered the question.</p>
<p>SARSSM</p>	<p>[00:51:19.09]</p> <p>Samar had a question about goals being achievable and impact of political leaders?</p> <p>[00:52:15.29] Samaa:</p>

<p>Gender-based violence</p> <p>Politics; Joe Biden; Legislators</p> <p>Funding</p> <p>Racial Justice; Maine</p> <p>White supremacy</p> <p>Racism; Everyday, every minute</p> <p>Racism; Denial</p>	<p>Yeah I think, now that I feel is like a loaded question, I don't think my work with SARSSM necessarily {Iris broadens the question} ... In General I think that there's a lot of there's funding there are what do I want to say, proponents of the work there are lots of folks who are like gender-based violence is a problem, nationally we have Biden who's talking-you know, Vice President Joe Biden has made it a goal to end campus violence. I think there are a lot of legislators who recognize. So in general I feel like the misogyny issue, which is what gender-based violence is about. I think that that, I don't see that...I think that is a machine that is not. Folks know how to work together, folks...there's no denial of being an issue. I think racial justice work in Maine, that's a different story. I was just at a gathering of folks of color last night, someone said something that was so... it described my experience so much in a way that I hadn't been able to articulate. She was like I came here from places/ I don't remember where's she's from/ somewhere where there is a lot more people of color. And she was like people there just live there lives, ya know they're on their hustle. But here, I'm constantly aware of white supremacy, it's just like everything, everywhere, everyday, every minute, and that's so true. It is much more taxing than anywhere else I've ever lived. So there's the constant presence of white supremacy and the denial of it at the same time.</p>
<p>Racism; Denial</p> <p>People doing the work</p> <p>Organizing; Portland, Maine History</p>	<p>So anytime anyone tries to do any kind of organizing around racial justice it's like WHY? Like that's the general response, why would you because 1. it's great here 2. there aren't really any people of color here, there's an erasure or denial. I think that in terms of racial activism around racial justice, I think/ for a long time it just feels like there's only one or two voices present for a really long time and so anytime anyone tries to do someone different it's as if you have to run it by the people who've been doing it for a really long time and who've been doing the work.</p>

<p>Maine</p> <p>Organizing; Maine</p> <p>White Savior Complex; Non-profits</p> <p>People of Color; Maine; Immigrant/Refugee</p>	<p>Which just blows my mind. Like I came from places like my organizing/ I've done a lot of labor organizing, I've done a lot of grassroots racial justice kinds of things. Like I come from places where there are multitudes of people doing the work so to come to a place where there's one or two people who've done the work for years and years and who feel like they have a sense of ownership. And they feel like they have a sense of ownership, that's being endorsed by white folks who just turn to them, it's just extremely frustrating. And honestly it's/ like any racial justice work has been lacking until the last few months here. I've been in Maine for six years only in the last few months, I'm like Oh look people want to do something different. I think um, Maine doesn't believe/ in Maine I feel like when people imagine people of color they only think of immigrant populations and they/ white folks in particular, well Maine is all white folks, have this kind of savior complex with folks that are coming from other countries whether they're immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers so that's the only... and so they can only think of the rescue narrative.</p>
<p>Non-profits</p> <p>Immigrant/Refugee; Racial Assumptions</p> <p>Racism; Denial</p>	<p>So there are all these nonprofits that are here to give to provide services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and it's it doesn't actually imagine that they have fuller lives. It only connects their lives to the trauma they're escaping it doesn't imagine that they have full lives, it doesn't imagine the children of refugees and immigrants that are born here like they're always foreign. Everyone always thinks I'm foreign, I'm from Ohio. That's what I always have to say. I think that's why we have/ there is a wealth of nonprofits in Maine that provide services but there aren't organizations really that are doing actual justice work or equity work and so... For me that's been very frustrating and for many many /I've been here for six years most of those years well it's not happening in this state ...it's just this where I live</p>

	<p>here because it's beautiful, this other part is really unsatisfying and that's very sad but it's just what it is. But I think it's changing and it's very exciting, I think that um. Ask me more questions.</p>
<p>Organizing; History</p> <p>SARSSM</p> <p>SMWC</p> <p>PRJC</p> <p>For Us, By Us</p> <p>Healthcare; Human Rights; SMWC</p> <p>Organizing; SMWC History</p> <p>Race; Class</p>	<p>[00:58:44.02] Iris asks a question, what are some common values that move through your work? Do you feel it's all very intersectional?</p> <p>Samaa: So the majority of my organizing, so like my work with SARSSM [Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine] I don't see that as, that's not organizing work. To me that's social justice work, but it's a direct service kind of thing. My organizing work, the majority of it has been with the SMWC [Southern Maine Workers' Center] and I've done a little a little support work with PRJC [Portland Racial Justice Congress] and right, and right now, like as of last week my friend and comrade, Marena and I have launched this/ We're calling it "For Us By Us", it's this flexible fund</p> <p>We've raised to help support people of color in their own organizing for their own communities and so, so those are the like the primary places where I've done my organizing work, which is separate from my service work. which would be like my board service, like my volunteer service that kind of thing. And what the workers' center, I've done a lot of work with the Health Care is a Human Right campaign and we use human right framework to guide our work and I think what key to that this idea that of justice and dignity. I think that is something that threads throughout my work. I think that I am always trying to be intersectional in my work which doesn't necessarily mean. You know when I joined the workers' center, I've been working with the workers' center since 2013 I think. The framework wasn't exactly intersectional, but that's what I bring to the work and so we talked about how to get there and now I think we talk more explicitly about race and class.</p>

<p>Work History;ACLU</p> <p>Organizing; Abortion Access</p>	<p>in our organizing and I think that that, I think that's not just my doing it's what I bring to the work. When I use to do, I used to work for the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] for a couple years after I finished at Bowdoin, I did abortion, I did organizing around abortion access...Oh I forget that's organizing. It was paid work, I don't think of paid work as organizing.</p>
<p>Organizing History;Reproductive Justice</p> <p>Intersectionality</p> <p>Organizing; Abortion Access</p> <p>Police Brutality; Tamir Rice</p> <p>Reproductive Justice</p> <p>Intersectionality</p> <p>Identity; Black; Muslim</p>	<p>Um, and while I was there I sat on a couple of coalitions focused on abortion access and I worked to shift that focus to reproductive justice rather than just focusing on abortion.</p> <p>Reproductive justice is a framework that was/ that is intersectional it was started by Black women and it was a way to talk about / to recognize that just because abortion is legal doesn't mean poor people, people of color have access to it and it doesn't mean that;s their only issue/ You know, communities of color, women of color have been sterilized you know poor women have been sterilized like the woman should have the right and the choose to be pregnant if they choose to not be pregnant and they should/ they have the right to raise their children free from harm. Shifting those coalitions' focus to reproductive justice focus, that took a lot of work. I remember so many trainings, meetings, workshops that I had to lead, so many conversations, but it meant that when Tamir Rice was killed by police it meant that our coalition could step up and say this is a reproductive justice issue. Black mothers should not be afraid to raise their Black children, they shouldn't be afraid their Black children are going to be killed by the police, and so that's what I think my framework is intersectional and I try to bring that to the work. Sometimes it fits, sometimes it doesn't fit. You know what I mean, I think, the work that I hope to do with Marena will be intersectional. I don't know. I think just being a Black woman, and being a Muslim, I live my at so many intersections I can't imagine, I just, I can't imagine talking about health care without thinking about poor</p>

	people. It doesn't make sense to me.
Maine Wisconsin People Doing the Work Organizing History Maine; Organizing Class Organizing History; USM Challenges; Class; Activism	<p>[01:04:47.01] Samar: You mentioned some obstacles/challenges living in Maine, so how do you work to try to solve those kind of problems?</p> <p>Samaa: I think there are a bunch of obstacles living in Maine. Maine doesn't have, organizing culture in maine is not as vibrant as I went to grad school in Madison-Wisconsin and I was did labor organizing most of my time in grad school. Madison was one of those liberal towns but everyone was always doing a thing and everyone was in something from like, it was a college town but it was a big school so it wasn't like "college town" it was a college city and it was also where the capital was and so like everybody was always in the streets doing something. We use to talk about the capitol was our house, we would go in and protest, it was amazing, I think that organizing culture is different here because Augusta is the capitol. People don't, I mean, people/ it's like detached from where some of the activism happens, you have to drive an hour. You know, I think Maine is very rural, so you have this divide between what happens down here in Portland. And folks from Portland are very Portland-centric like we all pretend like the way we are down here is Maine, like that's not true. It's not true. There's a huge divide between poor people and wealthy, I've never lived in a place like that. You have you have some people in coastal towns that have immense wealth and they like bud up against really, really poor coastal towns. It's very interesting and so, I think that, and I don't know enough about organizing history in Maine, these are just things I think. There aren't a lot of models, for example, USM [University of Southern Maine] I know y'all are your activism is ramped up and it's amazing and I don't know that it was always that way. I think USM being //it's a commuter school basically right that changes the dynamic.</p>

Racism; Denial	<p>Where I went to school folks lived on the campus, it changes the dynamic and so ... so some of the obstacles I think are when you want to do any kind of organizing around racial justice issues there just not, there's not critical mass and um you know already people don't believe us. People of color, when we say things already in this state people don't believe us and if there's not critical mass, and there's only been like the one or two spokespeople, there's just this suppression that happens and you don't hear, you don't hear the voices you need to hear. So the way that you combat that is by going into places and taking up space, like you know, I don't know how many communities discussions are organized in this town, so many in Portland because we are, folks are trying. Trying in different ways, let's talk about race, but you know you go to those places and they're full of white people and people of color don't feel comfortable. So you have to go in those places if you can and take up space, and demand to be heard, you have, so that's one way. You have to like, create space for, we don't talk to each other- People of color -so because there's no critical mass and what I'm learning, I've only been learning this this past year, I've been in Maine for like I said six years and I'm only learning that there are like Black people, Black folks in like these rural places-I had no idea. I can't even imagine, and so you know like how do we talk to each other if there's no, there are no spaces, we don't have cultural centers, we don't have resources, we have these non-profits like I said that provide services but none to like advance our/ like none that are combating police brutality for example, you know so you have to create spaces for people of color to gather and talk to each other, um and that's what I'm hoping. those are the kinds of things, I'm hoping this flexible fund that Marena and I are doing. This kind of, the grassroots organizing we're hoping to come of that will</p>
Taking up space; Identity	
Organizing History; Maine	
Resources; Non-profits	
People Doing the Work	
Intersectionality	
Challenges; Taking up space	
Police Brutality	
For Us, By Us	

Organizing History; Future	<p>provide. I think that ...I think that in doing racial justice work here, what I am known and I am learning even more now, is the people, is the balance. Is the difficult balance I think is how do you respect elders who have been doing this work, but also say it's time for something different. I think that's really difficult, that's like really precarious, and I am not like, I'm not an young person and I'm also not an elder. I haven't lived here for a very long time, but I can recognize that it's time for something different. But how do you have those conversations respectfully because you know, the elders who have been doing the work--this was not easy</p>
<p>Organizing History</p> <p>Maine</p> <p>Non-profits</p> <p>People Doing the Work</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>So um, for other things when I think about// when I think about organizing around LBGT [Lesbian, Gay, Transgender]/Queer issues I think about/ I think about. I've been saying this to a lot of people recently, Maine is like it's non-profit game is real strong like everybody, like if you want to do anything here you're either doing it as a non-profit or it's not getting done. I think that, but what that means you have these nonprofits that have a lot of money and a lot of visibility and have a lot of, whom might have a lot of donors and for I think LGBT organizing, I think of organizations like Portland Outright and I think about organizations like Maine Trans Net who don't have the big budgets or the high visibility becausebecause they're not focused on things like marriage equality, like there are other organizations that focus on marriage equality and that was very palatable and people were like take all my dollars. And then you know organizations, I call them scrappier organizations that are trying to organize from marginalized people within Queer communities, they get swept under the rug because they don't get as much funding, and they're fighting with other organizations for like the little pieces of money. I think that is awful. i think that</p>

Challenges; Visibility	<p>that means, that means folks who are marginalized within Queer communities don't, they can't what they need, they can't get what they need because that's the only way to go, non-profits, having a huge donor list, and applying for competitive grants. Because that seems like that that's just the way Maine operates, and I think that that's a problem. I think that your question was how do you overcome that as a problem, and I don't know, I don't know, I think you find ways-which is hard- you find ways to raise funds that are outside of that non-profit machine and that's hard in this state. That's hard, ...yeah.</p>
Organizing History	<p>[01:13:52.21] Iris: Can you talk at all about some of the momentum and actions that happened a few months ago that made you feel like there was racial justice organizing?</p> <p>Samaa:</p> <p>Yeah sure, so I don't remember what month it was, I don't don't even remember what awful thing happened, that's how terrible it is. Like I don't even remember what the catalyst was 'cause so many brown bodies have been killed by police at this point. Like I don't even remember what happened in July. But, hmmm, but {{ Recorder paused for brief interruption and clarifying question }}</p> <p>[01:14:53.12] So, let me backup before, so I think that there's so much organizing happening on USM's campus...like however many years ago there were awful retrenchments and cuts and so the young people here were feeling very empowered which I think is a beautiful thing, so I think there were folks already feeling ...our voices matter we can make a difference that kind of</p>

Police Brutality; Trayvon Martin	<p>way. And since Trayvon Martin, I used to live in Brunswick Maine and I moved down to Portland in 2013 and there were always these kinds of --we would do the same thing like Trayvon Martin was killed and there was a vigil which is fine. Like I used to always say like Portland does things that are real cute, like we would go to have the vigil and people would speak it was good, it was good to have people gathering. From 2013 to all the way to like you know same thing would kinda sort of happen, people would gather there would be a vigil. Until...I'm trying to get timeframes right...maybe it was 2014 like the end of 2014. Um, what the h*ll happened I think it was the Trayvon Martin verdict and everyone was not guilty and there was a thing, you know. Young folks from USM organized a rally and we did the rally thing, and someone started leading chants and I remember I was there with folks from the workers' center, 'cause we often, the workers' center we have a microphone with the speaker, so we often provide the amplification for these things like a group of us from the workers' center and we were like should we stay here and see where this goes?? Yeah this is kind of exciting, let's see where this goes. And then the young people were like, it was amazing there was all this chanting and to the police station and did a bunch of chanting, and then it was to someplace else. I don't remember, and it was really really exciting. It was something, there was a lot of energy and momentum and out of that came the group, the PRJC and it was a really cool moment. And I was excited to be able to ah, excited because this is some organizing people are going to get together. Like make some plans to keep things going, so I wanted to help out. There was subsequent rallies that I helped with and I went to a few meetings.</p>
Organizing History; Portland, Maine	
USM	
SMWC	
PRJC	
Change;Organizing Future	
Challenges	<p>Um, I think things got difficult because as I said Maine doesn't really have an organizing culture so there were a whole lot of models, folks weren't sure how to be like if this is an organization</p>
Organizing History; PRJC	

<p>Racial Justice; Maine</p> <p>People doing the work; Young people</p>	<p>what are we going to be. People were pushing, from what I remember for PRJC to become a non-profit like almost immediately. Which to me, to me didn't make any sense like what it is, and folks didn't know the people in the PRJC leadership were not quite sure what they wanted to be. There was no time to have that conversation because everyone was like look people are doing racial justice work just keep throwing, it was just kind of chaotic like I was not in leadership. But for me, I had to take a step back, I couldn't, I was more than happy to help shape whatever the group wanted to be, but I couldn't tell what they wanted, I couldn't tell what that was, and I don't think they knew what that was, so unfortunately like that it fizzled out after a year or so.</p>
<p>PRJC</p> <p>Organizing History; Portland; Philando Castile</p> <p>Time; 2014</p> <p>Organizing History; Disruption; Maine</p> <p>Young people</p>	<p>And then so, a few months ago 2016, I don't remember ...it was in July, I don't remember what the thing was but it, one of the members of PRJC wanted to do a rally protesting the thing that had happened that I cannot remember. Was it Philando Castile? Okay, and this person said to me that they wanted to shut down traffic. So you know, you probably know like that was a tactic across the country, across the country. I remember in 2014, my partner and I went to Boston after the verdict there was a huge intense rally and we shut down traffic everywhere, it was amazing. That was a tactic and I was like okay...let's talk about how to do this, what this would look like. You know it was this moment that these young people were like I don't want to talk to police about this, I don't wanna, I want this to be a disruption and it was very intentional in that way. And it felt like something new and very important, and ... you know, they have gotten white allies that were willing to put their bodies on the line to do this, and it was a very bold and brave move. And I had not seen, and I was happy to help in the capacity that I could. To make sure they</p>

<p>Anger</p>	<p>have thought through some of the end results like you know okay, if you're going to occupy the street for this long you're going to run the risk of getting arrested. So you have a plan in place, what are you going to do? I don't know, it was, it was very bold and brave. I think that, as I told some of the young people afterwards...seventeen people got arrested, as I told some of them afterwards. There's the bold action and that is brave, and then you also have to, the really brave part is dealing with repercussions after that in a place like Maine where people are like life is beautiful why are you angry, why are you so disruptive, why do you hate the police...when no one was saying any of that. The goal was to disrupt traffic so that they could take up space, so that people could pay attention to the Black people that were being killed, because everyone keeps telling us that there's no problem. So that was really important and I think that there's been so much momentum since then that there's, that has been generated out of support, out of recognition of the injustice. For example, out of the 17/18 people arrested for the same action the people of color got more charges, how is that justice? The people of color were arrested first even though, so white people surrounded the people of color and the cops broke through white people to arrest the people of color first and they weren't even going to arrest the white white people, until they demanded to get arrested, how is that, like you can't tell me there's not racism within the police department. like you just can't tell me that. I think a recognition of that like those, I think those of us living here as people of color were inspired...ahhh there was a lot of dissention. You know those people arrested particularly brown not just from white people, but Black folks that had been here a while did not agree with the tactic. But there were many of us who were like, who felt like this captured so much of our experience here like I don't know how many times we have to tell</p>
<p>Arrest</p>	
<p>Change; Organizing Future</p>	
<p>Racism; Police; Maine</p>	

Racism; Everyday	people like racism exists here and its an everyday, it's and everyday.
Racial Justice; Maine	<p>[01:24:30.29]</p> <p>So I think there's just been a whole lot of momentum since that, and it's been really inspiring. I have been saying for I don't know how long that the racial justice activism has not been, I have always wanted it to be something different, and I think the action started something. Mhm...</p> <p>Iris: Getting close to the 90 minute mark, is there any final thoughts? Or things that'd you like...</p> <p>Samaa:</p> <p>Oh man, I feel I've just been rambling. Is there something that, is there, I feel like you should ask me a question you think might tie things together or something missing that you're like oh I didn't know about or I want to know about that. Do that.</p>
Change; Organizing Future	<p>[01:25:35.13] Iris: It seems like, you've really described the climate of Maine and seems like there's this turning point at least...And...it seems like um, ...</p> <p>Samar: So what you just explained to us, was that the climax the turning point.Did you feel like in that moment the work was valuable?</p> <p>Samaa: I have always felt like my work is valuable...Mm, that's not true, I have not always felt like my work is valuable, that's not true. I feel like my organizing work, like not my paid work, my organizing work I have made sure that I'm doing things that, that make my heart feel... you know to go back to growing up in a Muslim home that used Islam as a path towards social justice that made me feel like I've lived up to that mandate. I've always tried to do organizing work that felt like I was fighting injustices, I feel like racial justice work was always missing for me. I think</p>
Organizing History	
Identity; Muslim	

<p>Taking up space</p> <p>Identity; Black; Woman</p>	<p>in general when I make the decision to take up space like if I grab a microphone at a thing I'm always like because I'm visibly marked as a Black Muslim woman, and I'm Queer-identified I name those things often will say this is who I am and that is how I chose to take up space. I think that is important, this is digression but there is this quote by Julia Ann Cooper who was a writer at the turn of the 20th century, Black woman activist and she says that as a Black woman I decide when and where I enter with me comes my entire race--that is a paraphrase--that part as a Black woman I decide where and when I enter I take that into account part as a Black woman I decide where and when I enter I take that into account anytime I decide to take up spaces I am not just... like in that moment like I might be talking as a Black person, as a Black woman but because I embody all those other identity categories I try to bring that into the space with me, but I have felt like racial justice organizing like I haven't been able to figure that piece out.</p>
<p>SMWC</p> <p>Organizing History; Racial Justice</p> <p>Organizing Future; Racial Justice</p>	<p>I felt like racial justice organizing like I haven't been able to figure that piece out. When I work with the workers' like the workers' center came out with an anti-racist commitment, anti-racist statement and anti-racist commitment but you know for the most part it was recognizing like the work had to be done with white folks because Maine is mostly white folks so that is true. Anti-racist work needs to happen with white folks, so I was like eh h h h that's not my piece though like I'm not teaching white folks about racism like unless you're paying me. I'm not doing that like...so I haven't felt that part always feels lacking like my heart is almost full but not quite because I haven't figured out how to do that work, so yes to go back to when you asked about climax. I don't know if it was the climax but it's the thing that I was able to point at it and I'm proud of the work I did, the little bit of the work I did to support and afterwards. I did a lot of</p>

Organizing History; Anti-Racist	work to support the young people getting them legal help and legal representation, helping them navigate the media like that's just a sh*tstorm.
Change for Future; Organizing	And those are skills that I have because of work that I've done like my work for the ACLU and other organizing campaigns. Like I am proud of that, and this work that I'm doing with Marena, I am hopeful. I don't know it's brand new, I'm serious, we just launched it last Tuesday. But already it feels, like we had a gathering of women of color, people of color yesterday trying to figure out what our communities needs, what are concerns are and fears are. It felt, being in community, there were people, I knew most of the women in the room but there were faces I hadn't seen before, Black women I had never seen before and that is like, that feels like its, it feels good. And so I'm really really hopeful, and yes. Yes, I don't know if that was the climax but it was the moment I was able, I could point to that and say this is the thing, the beginning of something that feels right for racial justice work here. It made me excited, and I am so excited.
People doing the work	Cautiously optimistic, in general that is how I am, I am not a --what's that word?--I am not an optimistic person I'm not a pessimistic person, I'm kinda realistic. I'm a realist, so cautiously optimistic always. Always.yeah
Identity	[01:32:06.24] End
Racial Justice	

