

Interview with Meiriely Amaral (She/Her/Hers) - May 1, 2020



When did you go to Middlebury?

I graduated in 2019, so a year ago. Ahh, it's insane.

And what was your experience like on campus, if you could talk about it broadly?

Yeah, I mean related to like feminist activism right?

Yeah.

Okay, um, I was a Gender Studies *laughs* Political Science joint major. So when I was like thinking about this, I was like I kind of, like feminist activism was incorporated into my academics a lot as well as my extracurriculars. I don't know, it's kind of an overwhelming question. Good experience with feminist activism, I feel like I grew as a feminist. But I definitely think that more because I studied it than like through the things I did. Just because like the growth that I did came a lot from the new things I was reading, and like what I learned about feminism. And then like I felt like I got to execute that and practice that, and I did learn in like the things I participated in as well.

How would you describe the campus culture at that time?

Like in regards to feminist activism?

Yeah or just the general campus culture? Anything that just like comes to mind as important to say?

I think, I don't know, I mean Middlebury it's so like...there's so many like parallel worlds kind of happening. Like people really interested, like take GSFS [*Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*]: I was part of the department, with majors and minors we were like thirty people, maybe thirty, like we were a small department. And like in the classes you get to see the same people and like, but then there would be like that one person who took it to take a GSFS class, which is great, we want that obviously but there was definitely this kind of like separation of people who were in that world academically and also socially, and invested in it, and kind of like constantly talking about those things. And people who would kind of like try it on to see what this thing is all about, and also like didn't have it really happening in their general life, that's kind of what comes to mind, what I saw academically. And that I think is true for activism as well. I mean I was on campus, I don't know, what year you are?

I'm a sophomore Feb [*Febs make up a class of one hundred students who matriculate to Middlebury in February each year, giving them a self-directed gap semester before college*].
Ohh, baby, so that means this is your second semester? Oh my god.

Third.

Third, third. Okay so like a full, you've been there like a full year, that's crazy. I was there, I feel so old. I was there for the election [*of Donald Trump*] on campus and Charles Murray [*On March 2, 2017, Charles Murray, a controversial sociologist whose work is widely considered racist, came to Middlebury to give a talk. Students at Middlebury protested and shut down the lecture. Administration issued punishments of varying severity to 74 students*] in the same year *laughs.* Um, so that was very like exposing of campus culture because, I don't know, Middlebury is like liberal and everyone's like "Yeah, Vermont." You know you feel like everyone is liberal, but no, everyone isn't. And you, it gets exposed in moments like that.

And were you part of any organizations on campus?

Yeah like here and there. I was literally, I like pulled up my resume because I was like what did I do at Middlebury, like what happened in those four years? So I was a monitor at the Chellis House [*The Feminists' Resource Center*] for a good amount of time and I think up until my junior year. And then after that I wasn't a monitor but I was like involved kind of with sometimes helping out or definitely like going there and being in the space. I went to some FAM [*A student organization called Feminist Action at Middlebury that challenges the construction of gender as well as issues of sexual and domestic inequality and violence*] meetings, I went to some Alianza [*A student organization that seeks to learn more about Latino cultures, share that knowledge with the Middlebury College community through events, and offer students of Latin American background social support*] meetings. Um, I kind of like, I couldn't do the clubs I think. I also

needed to work which made it harder for me and like I made my work my spaces of like, as much as I could, of like activism. Which is why I liked working at Chellis House, because it was a job but like it was also being involved in feminist activism. Um, but org [*student organization*] wise I never like committed to one, except I started one: Midd Law. And maybe that was why I couldn't do other clubs, because I was like *laughs* involved and invested. Midd Law, which was just supposed to be a community for people interested in law school and, um, cause there isn't really a huge like pre-law community at Midd that's very like outright. Um, so that was the point of Midd Law. Oh and then I was co-director and a committee member of the Sexual and Relationship Respect position [*A position in the student government cabinet that works with issues of sexual assault, relationships, respect, and health*] and the cabinet. And I volunteered with WomenSafe [*nonprofit that works to serve people across the gender spectrum who experience sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking*], and still do as a hotline volunteer.

Very cool, thank you. I think we're going to go back and kind of discuss some of those things in more detail. But just first of all, did something prompt you to act or get involved in some of your feminist activism or like were you seeing problems on campus? Or did you just want to get involved?

Um, I wanted to get involved. I needed a job so that's why I, and Chellis House was like oh my god, and Karin [*Hanta*]'s like an angel. So it was kind of like necessity, and this amazing opportunity, and then I was interested. I took like foundations in GSFS freshman fall, so I came in kind of interested and I just wanted to incorporate that. Not saying that I didn't think there needed to be things addressed but it was more like, it was always the plan to be involved with that kind of stuff.

And what was the culture around sexual assault like on campus when you were a student?

I, yeah, I mean freshman year, um, when I was there freshman year we had the Mods. It's where Ridgeline is now, so the townhouses and the suites, that area was like, I barely remember, but it was like all woodsy. So it's like next to Tavern [*Middlebury Social House*] it was like woods, woods, woods and then behind that I think was the Mods. So where the suites are. And the Mods were very much this space of like, it's like Atwater [*Suites and dorms often belonging to athletes, sometimes referred to as "frat-water" by students for it's fraternity-like party scene*] but the Mods. And like there were the soccer Mods, and the baseball Mods, so similar to Atwater. It was like people on the sports team lived there, so that was like their space and like the punch...I don't know this, I didn't experience this obviously but it was like common rhetoric and knowledge that like you couldn't trust the punch at the Mods. Like go with friends, like it's similar to how Atwater is treated, but like worse. And like my one experience is, or maybe two I think I went there twice, is just like parties and it's like I don't know. So it was a very predatory space and similar to that, Atwater. And the thing about those spaces is that they are not regulated

by Public Safety [*Campus police*] in the way that like Tavern is, because they function like social houses but they're not, they're residences, like Atwater and the MODS. They don't have to go through like the hoops that social houses do and like anti-hazing training, and registering their parties, and having a safe person. So that was definitely part of the culture, and like how I talked to my friends, and how we like thought about our safety. And also stuff we talked about with, um, the Sexual and Relationship Respect position, like in conjunction I think with, like there's a position in the SGA [*Student Government Association*] that's like social life person thing, and we would talk about that. Cause like that definitely, sexual assault wise, made people more concerned.

Did you feel like people were concerned only within certain communities at Middlebury, or like there was a general understanding of concern over sexual assault?

Yeah I want to like, I lean towards, I definitely think some people downplayed it more. Middlebury's the kind of place where like if you go up to someone and you're like, "We're worried about this," or if you have like an It Happens Here [*An anti-sexual violence campaign that collects anonymous student stories to raise awareness and give survivors a voice*] table, everyone's going to be like, "Yeah, like sexual assault is bad and it happens here." But like beyond that surface level kind of acknowledgement I think it was definitely more specific communities that were actually engaging in that and stuff like that. Like, the football team has to do Green Dot [*A national program that helps schools incorporate bystander intervention training*] and then, you know, like there's not much more after that. I think it was very surface level because at Middlebury you are socially outcast if you are like socially vocally conservative or vocally against things like that, so people definitely don't do that. But beyond that I don't think a lot of people are engaged, yeah, in that discussion.

You mentioned that you were at Middlebury during the time of the election and Charles Murray. Would you talk about how those events impacted kind of what you were doing, or whether there were other like outside movements and events going on at that point that impacted your activism?

Yeah, um, I'm trying to think. So like the election, it's interesting I was thinking about this like, the election and Charles Murray happened and while that happened I was co-director of Sexual and Relationship Respect. And I was focused, like in that position, we were focused on like the logistical, like talking to facilities and we got pads and tampons with Karina who was the president then. Karina Toy I think her last name is, um, who was the SGA president. We got pads and tampons free in the dispensers on campus, so we were kind of, it was like a weird dichotomy. It's like that was so consuming that I felt like what I was doing in my feminist activism, let's say in this position, was like separate. But it was also like, the acknowledgment of like it's even more important. Like in the spring of my sophomore year we had like Consent Fest, it was in April, and it was Sexual Assault Awareness Month and so it was supposed to be

like this kind of discussion around consent ,and events, and talks, and we had like this carnival where people could come to tables and play games that made you think more and talk more about consent. But it was very much like things I would have done anyways that were even more like important, and I was thinking about more, because of what was happening

When did consent fest happen?

I actually found a picture for you. April of 2017.

And did it happen yearly, annually? Or was that the one you remember?

That's the one I remember. The next year I was abroad in the spring so I don't know what happened. And then senior year I don't know. Senior spring is also like, yeah, I was a little checked out.

Where was the event?

So it was like a, there was a talk. So it wasn't in only one place. There was a keynote and the carnival type event was in Axinn [*A building containing library, classroom, and office space*], in the Winter Garden [*The open area when you enter the building*].

I would like to go through some of the things you mentioned you were a part of and talk about what type of feminist activism or work you felt like was involved in that. Did you feel like your Midd Law club kind of branched to feminist activism for you?

It was hard. Um, I was one of like two girls, in charge, and that wasn't even the beginning. And, like, in the beginning it was me and two guys. And not that guys can't be obviously, like, feminist activists, and I don't want to like say anything that would come off in a weird way towards them, but like it was very much...it wasn't like...if it was just me running the club it would have. But I had, we had other people and other interests and other like goals in the sense of like first our goals was just to get like people talking about what do you need to do. It was very logistical, it was like what should you take any courses at Middlebury to prepare you for law school? Like should you take the LSAT in college or after? What about, who are Midd alumni who went to like law schools? And we had conferences, so we'd schedule like a conference call with them, people in like pretty good law schools that went to Midd and are in law school now so they remember their Middlebury time a little bit better, and like they would talk to us. So it was a little, very logistical, but I see in my head the overlap and I wished it happened more. But, um, in the execution it didn't.

And then, in terms of your Alianza and FAM work, did you feel like that had a big impact, or was kind of just a small part of what you did?

I think that they definitely had great impacts, both of them. And this one, so I'm Brazilian, but I'm a white Brazilian so it's like a bit complicated. So I was involved with like the Women of

Color club [*A student organization committed to uplifting and creating space for women of all backgrounds and engaging in critical discourse and social justice around women's issues*] as well, but then I also kind of stepped back just because in my own reflective process of like, what's my, how does my presence affect that space. But I would say those three organizations themselves had good impacts on feminist activism. My...I feel like what I did, just because I wasn't as involved with them, then I don't relate like my experience to them if that makes sense. Yeah, but they were good I think.

And you also mentioned that you monitored Chellis House and were very involved with that space. We've been doing interviews back pretty far so I actually got to interview people who like helped found Chellis House and stuff like that.

Wow.

Which was pretty cool

That's really cool.

So I've been kind of more curious in how people felt that Chellis House functioned as like a safe space or a space for feminist activists. So kind of what was your experience of that space while you were a student?

Yeah I think it was definitely a good resource. So like they have that, I don't know how much time you've spent there, they have that little library upstairs so I would just do work there because like, and then I would also just look around at the books. Like I think as a space, I have a thing where I love being surrounded by books that inspire me, and like I love the collection there. So like I loved being in that space. Um, and then besides that I think the events that were hosted, like I think I have the copies of the news letters. Like there were just such cool talks that Chellis House would host. I definitely talked about it like to my friends and was like you should do this, like this is happening. I think there was a bit of an issue in like getting the word out about the Chellis House events which is frustrating because I thought it was such a great space. Like one of the talks I went to and covered was like, because the monitors would like go to these events and then do a write up after for the newsletter, um, which again helped me because like I needed to work, it's like the reality. And I couldn't, like going to just talks is something I wish I could do just always in my free time, but like you know, you must know even like not being there for long that like at Middlebury it's so hard to juggle everything. So it really helped me that like part of my work was to go to these talks, because then I didn't have to sacrifice stuff that I felt like would fulfill my soul and like the money I needed to make. But one of the talks I covered was about this female entrepreneur who went to Midd, and then she was working like in finance or something, but then she was like really over it and really over her whole job search process, so she's like a career coach now for women specifically. And it's like how it's different in like the job hunting process and how we're like socialized from such a young age to be a

certain way that makes it harder for us in like the job hunt. So just like events like that, that you know, it was very interdisciplinary in terms of like feminist activism but like how are these people doing it and what can they share with us.

You also said that you volunteered for WomenSafe, and I know you can't talk too much about that because of confidentiality. I'd love to hear how you got involved in WomenSafe and kind of what that experience was like and how it related to your other activism?

Yeah so I'm not like, I don't work in the office. So I actually don't talk to people that much. Like they're amazing, the people who work there and like do that every day. I was, um, I started senior year and I did like the training and I basically now, since I'm not there obviously, I do hotline coverage. And then while I was there I did some office stuff and I helped once, there was like an immigration clinic in town because of like the Mexican consulate was there and there's like a migrant worker population that's like primarily Mexican in Vermont and like they were offering immigration services so I had, and I speak Spanish, so I had a WomenSafe table. So I didn't do much besides the hotline because that was like the easiest way for me to get involved. Um, and I wanted to get involved with that because like up until then I had been doing stuff primarily on campus and I was also a senior, so I was like I want to connect with this community a bit more before I leave it. And I was thinking a lot about like the college and its relationship to the community, and how all of these students filter through and kind of like benefit from this really privileged institution and like don't really know what's going on outside campus. And Middlebury doesn't really push you to do that either. So I wanted to get involved, and it was nice. Like the volunteers were not all Middlebury students, so I got to interact with like everyone. I'd just like recognize people on the street or like in Hannaford's [*A Supermarket chain*], you know, so it was kind of nice. And I wish I didn't only do it in my senior year, that was part of the motivation for me.

What made you want to continue doing it after you left?

Um, yeah, and it's something I forgot to say as well. I think like you get trained in how to be an advocate, and so like the training and being an advocate and the practice in being an advocate is something I value. Um, and I want to be a lawyer, so that's something that I think is important as well.

How did you feel, cause you know MiddSafe [*MiddSafe is a student run hotline and advocacy program for sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, etc. MiddSafe works closely with the administration*] is like a student run hotline, did you feel there was any relationship between MiddSafe and WomenSafe or how was that dynamic? What made you not want to do MiddSafe but want to do WomenSafe?

Yeah, it's because I did so much campus stuff. And I know, I think MiddSafe is open to the community as well but I wanted to do, I think WomenSafe, cause it's like run by people who's

full time job is to be there. I wanted to, like saying nothing bad about MiddSafe, I wanted more of a connection to like Middlebury community. And I felt like I could get that at WomenSafe and MiddSafe I thought might, just because I had done a lot of campus stuff and like specific to campus stuff, that I wanted to branch out. I think I might have also just missed the deadline for MiddSafe, part of it *laughs.*

I would love to talk to you about SRR [*The Sexual and Relationship Respect Committee*], which I'm excited about because I direct SRR right now.

Oh my god. How's the leadership document? God it must be so different, the like former to next.

Yeah so part of what we've been doing is kind of trying to trace it back to get to the beginning. Because right now on our website, on our archive, we don't have an SRR collection and we're trying to like put one up. And to do that we kind of wanted to know more about the origin, like who started SRR. And people are saying you did.

Oh my god, I did not. Oh, that's really nice, but I didn't. Wait let me see if I can pull it up.

Well, that you were in the founding...

Pair. I think I was in the second one. Oh my god, okay, this is so exciting because I can actually help. Because I'm pretty sure I have this in my Google Drive because I...hold on. So, I'm pretty sure this girl, um Maddie, I will find it. But I think there was someone who did it before us, but it was like a pilot thing and, um, then me and Kyra Gray, who I think is also from the Bay Area, who was my co-director, then me and her were next.

What years did you guys direct the committee?

Me and Kyra Gray were the co-directors my sophomore year, so 2016 to 2017. It was her senior year.

Was that the first year that you guys had like an actual committee?

We didn't have a committee, it was just the two of us. Now there's a committee. I was on the committee junior year because I was going abroad so I was like I want to be involved but not, I can't take charge. We didn't have a committee, would have been nice. I think it's a good idea that they did that after.

But you were still part of the SGA cabinet correct?

Yes, so as a director, the directors are part of the cabinet. I don't know how they do it now. And then like junior year I was a part of the committee, so I just attended the committee meetings and the directors would deal with the SGA.

Wonderful. So there was someone kind of who started SRR before you? There was a director before you?

Yeah. I'm pretty sure there was. I'm pretty sure we were the second. And I can look for this more because I know that I have these documents somewhere. But, um, I think I can find this girl on Facebook, the one I think who started it. Because she left us this amazing transition document and she did a lot of stuff with, like, transformative justice. Part of our welcome packet like included her thesis, like she's really cool. I liked her a lot because she was also Gender Studies and Poli Sci [*Political Science*]. There's like three people I knew who did that combination of things.

Well that is useful new information *laughs.* How did you then become a director your sophomore year?

I, um, Karina was going to be the president and she emailed like a general email to nominate people that you think would be interested. I was interested so I nominated myself, and then she reached out, and then I interviewed with her. And yeah, and then she gave me and Kyra the position. I think when I reached out it was originally because I had this idea, like in Davis [*Library*] in the bathrooms the language and like the organization of where you're supposed to throw your pad away is so like, "Your like sanitary products go in this container." I was just like, someone should just put "pads and tampons" like, I don't know. And I was just like early on, I was like still a baby, a freshman, but I was just like noticing things and I was like I'd love to be more involved. And I wanted to try out SGA to think about doing other SGA stuff, so I wanted to try out the cabinet. Yeah, so that's how it happened.

And what were the main projects or feminist work that you guys did? What type of work did you do?

Yeah we got involved in... so one of the things I was interested in was, and that Kyra and I did together, so Kyra was co-director with me up until like half of the year and then she like for personal reasons couldn't continue, so then it was just me. So some of this stuff like we definitely thought of together, but when it ended up happening it was just me. So it was like Green Dot training and how like football teams get Green Dot training, but like why don't we incorporate it into other spaces? And so I talked about it in reference to Tav [*Tavern Social House*], because I was a member of Tav, I joined...I joined actually sophomore spring so I wasn't a member yet. But I had a lot of friends who were, and so that was one of my big projects, um, that I was trying to get happening. And I met up with, what's her name? Barbara McCall?

Barbara McCall [*Director of Health and Wellness Education, hired in 2013*]

Yeah, the Green Dot person. I got Green Dot certified, so that was part of it. I did that sophomore year. And then I talked to her about like trainings and trainings in different settings and I think we did one. One happened, but it just wasn't a lot of people. It was an org leader and

Green Dot training kind of thing, so I think we got a couple like organization leaders to come and Barbara to talk to them about like how to incorporate Green Dot into their club. So it was like moving Green Dot from being this thing that you sit through, because like my big issue was that like people get Green Dot trained and then people like, you can sit and do anything for like six hours that doesn't mean you're going to engage with it actively, and like that's what necessary for things like sexual assault. And I have other issues with Green Dot because it like focuses on bystanders instead of like...I don't think it's wrong, I think it's wrong how much emphasis we put on it at Middlebury, because it's only one part of the equation. But um, so that was one of the things I did, and I think we did have a training in the end. That was one thing, and then the other thing was free...

When was that training?

Oh, I don't remember that, sorry I'm like having a hard time remembering the training. It was definitely in the Spring of my sophomore year, yeah, so in 2017. And then I think I left stuff about it in my, in the transition document we left. That was that, and then the free pads and tampons.

And what did that look like?

So that was, so I talked about it with Karina and um, we met about it and we reached out to facilities. I think I didn't go to the meeting, Karina met with them and like worked out the money; like what would it mean cost wise and I think we used SGA budget to pay for it. And to pay for the, also the doing it right? So like changing the machines, the thingies, so that you don't need to put money for it to dispense a pad or a tampon, so that you can turn it and it will bounce out, so that cost. And like I remember us like talking about restocking, because right everything is like people get paid for doing things, so if we're giving them away for free like what's happening? How is that going to work in terms of like the facilities folks who are still going to have to incorporate that into their schedule but maybe aren't getting paid for it. But it worked out I think and I also, I think it was just like talking to facilities, to the head of facilities. So it was logistical craziness basically.

So it was like an attempt in all of the like public restroom dispensers on campus, to make them free?

Yeah exactly, cause we were talking about like accessibility and we were like well that's the first easiest thing to do. And it wasn't easy, but like most feasible in our minds rather than leaving a basket of pads and tampons, it's like wait these are already here. So it was that process, and then it was incorporated into a bill.

So besides the Green Dot training and the free pads and tampons was there anything else big that you guys worked on that you want to mention?

Not super big but just Consent Fest, we talked and worked with Barbara. So we weren't leading it, we didn't organize it, but we helped, like, I had a table.

Wonderful. You mentioned that you felt like your class work kind of involved you in feminist activism almost more than some of your work with organizations. Do you feel like your classwork contributed to like your feminist education and your feminist activism?

Yeah, definitely. I think it's like an example: I was taking foundations in GSFS and we were learning about like intersectionality and that same year...freshman year...freshman J-term [*A one month term in January where students take only one class*] I think, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term, came to Middlebury and blessed us with her presence. It was amazing. She talked in Mead Chapel [*The central chapel on campus, also used as a gathering space*] and talked about police violence and how Black women disproportionately experience it, but like you don't hear about like Black women through that experience. And so she did this exercise where like we all stood and she was like I'm going to say names and like sit down when you haven't heard of them. So she said like names of men who a lot of people knew had been killed by police brutality, and then like the first name of a woman that she said like more than half the room sat down. Which was like, it's just an insane visual. So like those two things in conjunction that definitely made me think more about, like, just like how the activism at Middlebury sometimes was centered around white women, and like there are majority white women at Middlebury. Um, but like that that was something lacking in the feminist activism and my feminist activism. And that was kind of started through school, through what I was learning and then through that event.

Did your work seem well received? Or how was it received by fellow students and also by the administration?

I mean, I think, well received for sure but maybe not like...people weren't super interested. So, well received by the few that were interested and that engaged. And administration wise I didn't have like, I think they were maybe, I think they responded badly to certain kinds of activism. I don't think feminist activism in the sense of like that I engaged in it, like pads and tampons and Green Dot trainings and stuff like that, it was like okay with them. But I think anything more radical they like, I think there was this, and I don't know if you've heard about this but there was, um, how do you explain it: it was like a performance that people would do.

Stares on Stairs? [*Performance activism in which some students would stand in varying states of undress with painted handprints on their skin and signs reading "I'm still not asking for it" and "Sexual assault leaves a mark," while other students engaged with the audience and passed out information. The performances were held in active party spaces on campus*]

There you go, yes, *laughs.* Um yeah, so stuff like that I think had a less positive response because it made people uncomfortable. Which, you know, activism is also supposed to do. But,

so because I engaged in kind of more like safe things that were more like institutional, logistical, I didn't experience too much of a negative reaction.

Was Stares on Stairs prominent while you were a student?

I never saw it myself. I didn't really go to Atwater, um, so I never really saw.

It was happening while you were a student?

Yes. Yeah it was happening while I was a student, I know like the people that were involved in stuff, like they were students while I was a student, um, but I never saw it. I just heard the discussion about it.

Did you have any mentors or allies in your activism?

I think my professors played a huge part, and Karin [*Hanta*], oh my god, angel. Anyone who lived, who lived, *laughs* who worked in the Chellis House or who had an office in the Chellis House I think were, I definitely felt like were mentors and allies in student activism because like I was learning with them but they were also super involved in like what was happening. And like Sujata Moorti was my advisor, my thesis advisor, and my boss when I worked and did research for her. So I just, I interacted with her a lot, and so I interacted with these professors in ways that also led us to like talk about stuff that was happening on campus and student activism.

Activism, I think often is portrayed as like only the worst parts of it or only the best parts, and we've been making sure to ask people kind of what do you feel like the best part of your feminist activism was and what was the worst part?

The best part and the worst part. Um, hm. I think the best part is that, like, it was fulfilling and it was a great way to connect to people. Like you connect to people over common ground in like so many ways but like activism is a really cool one. And like I went to the women's march in January 2017, in Montpelier [*Vermont state capital*] and it was like that feeling of like everyone here, like there's so many things. Like it was like very white feminist, like there's so many things wrong with it, but also like that common ground I think is really powerful. I'm really into, and as someone who's studied feminism, like the subjective and emotional connections and that with politics. And so I think that activism in its best spaces is very much like the emotional space that I want to be in, and that overlap was really interesting to me. So I'd say that's the best part and also just like getting to put into practice the stuff that I was learning and talking about and growing in different ways. Um, and maybe the worst, I don't know. I don't know what the worst is. Maybe that like I felt, it can sometimes feel like an uphill battle like with the things you want to do and like the logistics and all of that, and also like with how selectively people can engage in it. So it's like you can do that, and you can talk about it, and you can have this event, and people can go, and you can talk to your friends, and at the end of the day like no one really had to engage in it that didn't already want to. And like it's important obviously but that's also

frustrating. Especially because the activism that makes people uncomfortable, that makes people stop and look, is usually not accepted. So it's like this boxed in kind of situation.

Did you see any change at Middlebury in the time you were there?

Hm. I mean Charles Murray was pretty like impactful in how like people got really educated about the protest policy, and so like activism definitely changed because of the way that we responded to things the way Midd administration responded. Um, so like people thought about things that they wouldn't have thought that they needed to think about before. Which is good I think but bad, sad in like the reason why it had to come about. Like a lot of people were really negatively affected by the way the administration reacted to Charles Murray and to the activism. But maybe it will make future activism stronger knowing that like that can happen and that the school won't be on your side. Also as a side point I don't know if you're like on the meme page [*A Facebook page called Middlebury Memes for Crunchy Teens that is followed by many students and alumni*], um, or just have seen this but Middlebury posted on their account a picture of the Charles Murray protest and said like, "Social justice is something we care about" so yeah. Just relevant if your **laughs** looking into activism, like that's where Middlebury's at now.

Yeah, they have a new person running their social media right now, who I just don't think understood how that would be received.

This is what I mean, it's very much like, "We care." But like in the actual like execution of it, no, people don't. And people like face so many consequences. Like people were even saying like pictures like that were used to identify people to go after them **laughs.**

Yeah. What do you wish you had known about organizing before or like what advice would you give to feminist activists now at Middlebury?

Um, I wish I had known, and I want people to know that it's okay not to be like the best activist, and do everything, and like dedicate everything. It's okay to do that as well and some people are amazing and they do that and they have the capacity to. But I think I felt a lot of guilt, you know, like I dealt with things in personal life and then I wasn't as involved in some things and it made me feel like less of an activist and a bad activist. And definitely that doesn't mean no one should feel uncomfortable, that's crucial I think to being an activist, especially like if you're a person who holds privilege. But like beyond that, be self aware but also like be understanding and loving of your capacity for things and how you're learning. And everyone is learning and no one knows anything still, now, I believe **laughs.** But especially in college.

Have you continued to organize after college or how has your experience organizing at Middlebury affected your life after college in the last year?

Yeah, so I'm a paralegal right now at a law firm. I work in, so at our law firm we do public interest law. And public interest law can kind of be anything, not be anything, but it's like so we

have cases, lets say, we're a labor firm primarily, so we primarily do labor public interest. So we, like, defend class actions of workers who like didn't get proper pay, didn't get proper breaks, like were taken advantage of by big corporations, so there's like labor law. We do a lot of sexual harassment cases actually. So that's kind of like how the activism I did at Middlebury has kind of continued. So I definitely feel like that keeps me, it's hard, you know like working with sexual harassment and talking to folks who have experiences such things in a space, in corporate spaces, where they're not valued and where they have like no resources to do anything about it. It's definitely taxing but I feel prepared because of Middlebury and I also feel like I choose to continue to do it for the same reasons that I chose to do things at Middlebury. And um, other than that, like you know, just navigating post-grad life you want to hold onto things that were a part of your life before, and so I've like looked into volunteering and stuff like that. And like so I looked into that obviously for like feminist organizations. It didn't, nothing, well one thing panned out. You know the woman's building in the mission? I've been volunteering, I was volunteering there before all of this [*Covid-19*] happened. They do like a tax clinic twice a week during tax season and you can volunteer to be like a greeter or an actual tax preparer. And I did not feel qualified to do that, um, so I'm a greeter and I just do like english and Spanish. So its like yeah, experiences like that, so it's not like primarily on its face feminist activism but like its a space that provides this resource. I've been enjoying getting involved in that space.

That's really cool. You're studying for the LSAT now?

Yes, I've taken it once. I'm studying to take it again. Hopefully final time.

And then you're thinking you'll apply and go to law school?

Yeah. This year apply and then go start in theory, ideally, fall 2021.

I actually am thinking possibly about law school.

That's exciting, you can always reach out to me. Yeah, and from a perspective of being interested in activism, there's like, because law can be a little bit like corporate and conservative as well. Which I've discovered only recently, so happy to talk about that.

Although also I think it can be a really good, like, mode through which to do activism depending on how or what you're doing.

Yeah, yeah, that's kind of like, it's what I've been thinking about and there's, there's some interesting, there's some disheartening stuff out there about it not being that. And it's like you have to make the decision, I've made the decision, that I think there's spaces where yes you make so much more progress and like the system is so fucked that like working within it can only do so much, but...

Within the system that we have you can do good?

Exactly, or like, that's my, I think it's my role in it. Like I think, yeah. So definitely it's a complicated thing and it's more nuanced than like do I want to go or not. So as someone who's actively thinking about it I'd be, you can reach out any time.

Well, was there anything else you wanted to talk about?

Yeah, it's kind of like a shameless plug but you know, I'm going to embrace it. I wrote a piece for a blog, who's run by a Midd alum who's now in Yale business school. And it's called, the organization is called Inclusion NextWork and their mission it's, they do a lot of things, but like one of the things they do is like IDEAS: which is like Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access [*Accessibility*] and Sustainability [*Social Justice*]. And they do like workshops for workplaces to incorporate those ideals into their workplaces. Um, and so I got involved with them and I wrote this piece for them, it's called a perspectives piece, and it's about kind of like activism and feminist activism. It feels related to this and it kind of compares like the response in the Middlebury community to the election, in comparison to when I was abroad in Chile in Santiago and we had a feminist strike and takeover of my university.

That's very cool.

Yeah and it's also related. It's activism, but at a Middlebury school abroad instead. And I just talk about, in that, like the difference in the response and how like in Chile everyone had to stop and talk about it and think about it. And like that never happens at Middlebury, and like the events that do again people get punished. So it's like, I can send you the link and you can include, or if it's interesting, or I think it's related to kind of like the questions you were asking even though it's a plug also.

One of the reasons we're doing this is because you guys are cool people who have done really good work that continues to affect our experience at Middlebury and we think that should go down in history, so please plug yourself. What pronouns would you like us to use for you?

She/her/hers. No, I was going to say thank you for doing this, it's very, it sounds very cool and as someone who's washed up and, uh, graduated it's nice to talk to the youth.

It's fun to talk to you about SRR.

Yeah it's so cool that you're a director, oh my god.

It's so funny how things that like you started have like evolved. Like you guys got the public bathrooms pads and tampons to be free. And then Cece [*Alter*] and Vee [*Duong*], I think, got pads and tampons in all freshman dorms. And then this year we got pads, tampons, condoms, dental dams, and lube put in all freshman and sophomore dorms.

Oh my god, that's amazing. You should do, I don't know how this structure is, but that lineage in and of itself it's like following the start of a project. And that makes me so happy because I remember like at the end of sophomore year in the transition document I was just like, or I just remember my feeling of being like there's so many things I wish I did and like even if I was the director for another year I wouldn't be able to do it.

Like you kind of started talking about Green Dot and they also did. Cece and Vee did like a Complicity Project kind of thing because they kind of tried to talk about doing something in orientation and realized they weren't going to get very far. And then this year we were able to, for the first time, do a consent thing in orientation.

Oh that's great.

Which is really great. So there's been a lot of like things that have kind of started with you and gone through the different directors which has been really interesting.

Actually that makes me think of, I went to this thing, this conference at UCLA like literally right before everything...like shit hit the fan [*Covid-19*], it was like my last trip *laughs.* And it was about feminism in the carceral state. And there was this, I'm interested in law, I'm really interested in UCLA law school, and there was this like Brazilian woman who was speaking. And so I heard her speak which was really cool and she was talking about domestic violence law in Brazil. But also like they had some really interesting things and just as like how I've continued my activism, so like trying to be a scholar or feel like a scholar again in events like these and like learn more so that I can be better as an activist. And also relating to like something I learned that I wished I had learned: there was this really, really, really cool talk about consent and like, it's so important to talk about consent but the way that we've made it the main thing that we talk about does change the responsibility in the dynamic of like if people communicated more it wouldn't happen. Which like excludes the scenarios of like people know through body language, through hearing the word no, like people know when they don't have consent and like continue. And so like how do I address that, which was mind blowing to me because I was like that is so true. And it's like, we're getting better and better right, so first it's like okay let's talk about consent and then we talk about consent and it's incorporated in things like that, and then you learn like wait but this does leave out these scenarios. It's like, oh shit. So I don't know, I just thought it was, I can send you the link to that conference and can talk more about it if you're interested.

I've also run into this idea because, um when we did kind of, we wanted to implement consent training some people were like you shouldn't do that because of those reasons. And I was like I don't know if that's a reason not to do consent training, I just think you also need to address the other parts of it.

Right, like and I think that's like the gap, it's that we don't know how to do that even. How do you have a training on like how to not sexually assault people? Like people would get attacked

just by the thought of that. But like the fact that we don't know how to talk about it is like...people keep doing it you know. Yeah, I think it's a useful train of thought because it highlights that we don't have it, and I don't think consent should be the focus, but I think consent is important.

It's also usually, just like you said, an easier starting ground for people to be like, "Okay we want something about consent."

Exactly. Yeah it's like safer because it's like, "Oh yeah, everyone, of course I support that."

Yeah, I think the way to address the other part is to go after masculinity.

Yeah, and then the world *laughs.* Yeah no, that's great, it makes me very happy to hear that the work is continuing.