

Cintra Pollock Oral History Interview

Interview Conducted by
Severine Stier and Dahlia Krutkovich
April 9, 2019

Collection: Davidson College Archives

Title: Cintra Pollack oral history interview, 2019 April 9

Description: Cintra Pollack recounts her Jewish background and her experience as Jewish student at Davidson College. She speaks of the isolation she often felt as one of the few Jewish Students at Davidson College. She shares experiences ranging from writing an op-ed addressed at Davidson's exclusionary Board or Trustees policy, finding a Jewish community studying abroad in China, inklings of antisemitism at local bars, strengthening her faith through grieving the death of a close friend. She addresses the lack of institutional support Davidson provided to Davidson students during the late 90's in context of her experience as a current Jewish board of trustee. She also discusses the complex entanglement of antisemitism and the BDS movement on college campuses.

Biography: Cintra is an alumna of Davidson College who graduated with the class of 1999. Cintra majored in English with an Asian Studies concentration, graduating *cum laude* and with high departmental honors. She was president of the Union Board, a writer for the *Davidsonian*, editor of *Libertas* magazine, and a member of the Council on Campus & Religious Life. She served on the Union design committee. She graduated with membership in *Omicron Delta Kappa* and *Who's Who*. She was the recipient of the Charles Lloyd writing award. She also was a Cornwell Scholar and a Watson Prize finalist. She studied in China and was a student participant in the Alumnae Coeducation Reunion in 1998. She lives in Denver, Colorado where she works as a manager of Race Street management, a family office/investment company. In addition to managing investments, she is the secretary/treasurer of the Singer Family Foundation and is responsible for both the grant making process and investing the corpus. She was the first Jewish alumna appointed to the Davidson College Board of Trustees. Cintra is a member of the Investment Committee, the College and Community Relations Committee and the Student Recruiting, Enrollment and Scholarships Committee.

(adapted from the Davidson College Board of Trustees webpage:
<https://www.davidson.edu/about/leadership/board-trustees>)

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Interviewer: Severine Stier and Dahlia Krutkovich
Transcriber: Taylor Drake
Editors: Taylor Drake

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Setting Description: Zoom call with Brian Bokor in Charlotte, North Carolina and Severine Stier and Dahlia Krutkovich in Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina

Transcript Notes: The following transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.
C: Brian Bokor
D: Dahlia Krutkovich
S: Severine Stier

Cintra Pollack '99 Oral History Interview Transcript

Severine Stier: So, there's some formalities before we begin with some basic questions ... Um name of interviewers are Severine and Dahlia. Name of narrator is Cintra Pollack, class of '99. Uh location of the interview is the Carnegie Guesthouse. The date is the 9th of April. Um, purpose of the interview is to illuminate um various stories surrounding Jewish identity at Davidson. Before I ask for your oral consent, I just want to read a couple of um--our—just things about this interview that you'll need to sign off on as we preserve it in the archive. So, the recording of your interview will be made, and a transcription will be added to the Davidson College archives. These materials will be made available for research by scholars for scholarly publications and other related purposes consistent with Davidson College's mission and regulated according to any restrictions placed on their use by the interviewee or the interviewer. And also, we would like to give you the opportunity to approve of this interview and watch it before it is placed in the archives um--

Cintra Pollack: Can't watch it if it's only audio!

S: --And, and, listen to it.

Dahlia Krutkovich: We can--you can just stare into a black screen!

S: If you'd like, or we could put up just a still photo—

C: We can just see like the sound waves.

S: Exactly.

D: Absolutely.

S: So, before it's made available to public, we'd love to give you that option as well. So, may I have your oral consent?

C: You do.

S: Great. So, we have approximately an hour or so for the interview, but we'll--we'll pay attention to time and our stomachs are hungry. Um [chuckles]

C: I'll just talk super fast.

S: Ok--

D: Perfect.

S: So, the first the first question we have is just for you to tell us a little bit about your relationship with Judaism before you arrived at Davidson.

C: Ok, so um you know part of this you know looking backwards, it—it has changed so much that I might look at it a little differently. I would say that there was never a time--both of my parents are Jewish. I was raised Jewish. I was raised going to a conservative synagogue most the time when I was a kid, but we were High Holiday Jews, which many people are familiar with. Didn't go to synagogue often. I was Bat Mitzvahed at a synagogue in Denver, called BMH (Beth Hamed Rosh Hagodol), which people also called, "Bring Money Here," so that's about as--as uh you know great as people felt about that. And there was a rabbi named rabbi Wagner, who uh he was from an institution in—in Denver. I didn't particularly get along with him. I didn't like the Bat Mitzvah process so very much. I also had a--my school would--went half-days on Fridays. Um it was not a religious school at all, but so those of us who left half-days and Fridays were Jewish. We had a Hebrew school with a woman who was Israeli, named [Dow Ski?], so I learned how to read--um read Hebrew. I learned a little bit about Israel in a very uh--I don't know—mythical kind of a way, but didn't have a particular drive to go to Israel, and I was Bat Mitzvahed. And then I was sort of done, and I argued with the rabbi a lot when I had to go in for um--you know, you have to go for your Bat Mitzvah or for Bat Mitzvah you have to spend a certain amount of time in the synagogue, and I remember coming home to my mom and saying, "Mom, I don't know--you know--that I really believe in this whole, you know, chosen people thing. I don't really understand it." My mom said to me, "you know, Cintra, chosen doesn't mean better." And so, if you take Judaism from my parents, you know, we celebrate Holidays. We didn't keep Shabbat. We didn't really cook pork, and we certainly weren't kosher, but we didn't keep pork in the house so much, except for bacon--would be the exception. Somehow that's like not pork, but I never grew up eating pork chops. Um, that said, when I went to high school, I went to boarding school, and Judaism was important to me. I kept--I tried to keep Passover. I went to Choate Rosemary Hall, which was a boarding school in Connecticut, and there was a Hillel there, and I did some things with them, but I never felt super Jew-ey. So, when I was looking at colleges, I uh didn't think much about the Jewish population of wherever I was going. I applied to a bunch of schools. I got into all but Yale um--that's not true. I was wait-listed in Amherst. If I got into Amherst, I might have gone, but I didn't. But I did get into Swarthmore and U Chicago and other places that were my top choice schools, and I went to visit them, and there were lots of Jews, and I felt people were so much more like me than they were when I came to visit Davidson. And, um it didn't matter. I didn't think about it. I didn't think, you know, I'm gonna really feel like a fish out of water if there were no Jews. It didn't even occur to me that there wouldn't be more Jews than there were, so I arrived not thinking a lick about Jewish life at Davidson.

D: Mhm. And then, moving from there, can you tell us a little about--about Jewish life at Davidson during your time?

C: There was none.

D: Uh exactly.

C: So, um I—my first year, the--first of all that nobody from Charlotte that I knew of reached out to extend an invitation to come down to High Holiday services at any synagogues or sanctuaries

or anything that wasn't-- you know, when I was in high school, I think we actually were invited somewhere. I don't remember exactly where but there was like somewhere to go for Holiday services. Uh, there was nothing here that I recall, except they did do some sort of a dinner. It might have been Rosh Hashanah. I don't think it was a Break Fast. Um Rosemary Zumwalt was a professor, and she--I think she had something at her house for my freshman year, I went. And there were a handful of other Jewish students, although some of those Jewish students were actually born-again Christians, where their families were, so they had Jewish heritage, but they weren't practicing Judaism so much, but I met them at that. In fact, I remember a woman named--uh I don't--give me--should I--could I--

D: Yeah, you can keep going.

C: I guess I could name names. Um Katherine Davis, nice Jewish [chuckles] uh last name. Katherine Davis was super Christian, so nice. She was a year ahead of me, super super nice and into InterVarsity Christian Fellowship deep. Um, and she I met through "Jewish life"--and I'm making a little quote signs with my fingers in the air here--uh Jewish life at Davidson. So that's about what it was when I arrived.

D: And we've heard from other people that those were Seders, and--

C: I don't remember it being a Seder.

D: No?

C: I definitely remember--maybe there was a Seder, but if there was a Seder, I didn't go to a Seder.

S: Cause yeah, I think there wasn't--there was a Seder in 2000 at the Irwin Lodge.

D: No, no, no, at--at Rosemary's house. We'll talk to her later this week as well, and so um to make sense--

S: There was a Seder of 2000 that--

C: Well, I was gone by then--

D: Yeah, exactly.

C: But I don't--

D: Do you remember [Joana Parker?]

C: I don't remember meeting Joana Parker.

D: Okay, she was the student who was kind of like instrumenting that first Seder, and the second Seder, and the third Seder.

S: Yeah.

D: Um, so you do remember any sort of, like inchoate, like rumblings of formalized Jewish life on campus?

C: No.

D: Were you having conversations with other Jewish students?

C: No...in fact, I remember wondering--I mean, I think that another girl on my hall freshman year--I was on fourth Rich, and there was a girl, sort of across the hall. Pretty sure she was Jewish but didn't really practice. I can't even remember her name--that's not really so great. But, I could see her [laughs] in my mind's eye.

D: Looks Jewish.

C: She did look particularly Jewish, um I don't-- you know, I remember-- I mean other than--so, so when I--can I--

D: Go ahead.

C: --take it--take you on a little trip?

D: Please.

C: So, my first encounter with the idea of being Jewish at Davidson was soon after I came, and I was a Freshmen. I know I've told you guys this one on the phone, but I'll repeat it. I went to a Davidsonian assignment meeting, and I had been working on my paper in my high school, and I went to the op-ed editor, who was a guy named Jeff Kent. His sister was on my first--my freshman hall--it's Cheryl, but so Jeff Kent was throwing out assignments, and he said, "does anybody want to write about the Davidson church school relationship?" And I was like, "sure, sounds interesting." So, I researched it. I read the college bylaws. I read some stuff about Jesus that I had not read before, and I realized that you couldn't be a religion professor at Davidson if you weren't an active member of a Christian Church, and I also realized that you couldn't be a trustee here if you weren't an active member of a Christian Church. And I wrote an editorial for the Davidsonian saying that I thought that that was anachronistic. And that if Davidson wanted to--if it purported to be a liberal arts institution that truly invited scholarship and community from around the world to participate on campus with this...cherished learning that we so value here that they can't do that and not invite us to be part of the history and the future of the school, which is what they're saying to me if I can't be a trustee. Um, and so, that was really my first Jewish experience. I don't remember--I don't remember any sort of flack for that from students. I don't remember anybody looking at me, being like, "you're a Jew." [Chuckles.] Like, I don't remember any antisemitism in any way--um, I think that the first--the first real sort of feeling that I had that I didn't belong here was when the Charlotte Observer then picked that story up and interviewed me and then they put a story on the front page, because it must have been a slow news day and um--and it wasn't even that. It was when the letters to the editor came back, and

they were saying, “well, what did that Jewish girl think she was doing, going to a Christian College?” And I thought, “this isn’t a Christian College. It’s a Presbyterian-affiliated school, just like lots of other schools are affiliated with religious traditions. It’s not a Christian College. I was not such an idiot to go to a Christian school.” And that was the first time I really felt like, “wow, I’m different.”

S: Mmm, did professors or other students like come to you after it it gained exposure and the Charlotte Observer?

C: I know that Dr. Whitton who--who was hit by a car a number of years ago--he was my math teacher. He came up to me, because I made some comment about having trouble with calculus, and that was his class, so he thought that was funny, but he had no comment about my--um, he was a very very nice man. He had no comment about whatever I was saying about, you know, Judaism or religion at Davidson. Annie and Randy Ingram--I guess it’s Annie Merrill now--um she was my advisor, and she was my English teacher at the time, and I know that they gave me--not so much support but you know--um...acknowledgement [chuckles]. Um...

D: So, you received some advice, acknowledgement from faculty, just like, “this is tough. Sorry about it?”

C: No, I mean, egh, I don’t even think of it as that--I guess I--I didn’t feel unwelcome. I felt supported if I needed it, but I didn’t--Oh ah no sorry, Rob Spoch. Duh. I definitely was reached out to by Rob Spoch. Maybe maybe Ruth Pittard who is in that office also she worked with Bonner Scholars. She’s retired now, but definitely Rob Spoch brought me into his office and was just like I want you to know and that this campus is for everyone, and so say yes for sure the chaplain reached out to me.

S: Good. Did you feel like you liked the Chaplains’ office was a resource to you throughout your--

C: Absolutely not. I mean I’m not saying that he didn’t mean to me, but there was nothing about the College Chaplain, and even though Rob is a lovely man and a very warm, and there was nothing about him that if I’d had any sort of crisis of faith or you know need of chaplaincy you know somebody--luckily, you know nothing happened to any my family members or there was no time that you reach out to a Chaplain and you’re really questioning things or need that sort of thing, but I would have probably never gone to Rob.

D: So how did this event inform the rest of your time at Davidson, or at least the beginning of perhaps a journey if you want to call it that?

C: Well, in retrospect, it probably is a good reason why I’d never really dated anyone here everyone was all pretty different I’m pretty liberal also there’s all sorts of things why I was not Davidson.

D: Yeah.

C: Although I am Davidson, and I think now when I look around the campus and as a trustee looking at students now I think that this is a much more progressive place than when I was here.

D: Certainly.

C: Um but I was always progressive, and I haven't become progressive I've always been and so it uh it feels like this college is a little more this college is a little more open-minded and worldly just in general, and um so there's that, but I said I guess the other thing it just always sort of became a joke, and it also became tension for me and my mother. My mother could not believe I came here why did I choose Davidson over Swarthmore? Why did I choose Davidson over U Chicago? Why did I choose Davidson over Harvard? I never applied to Harvard, but she would have liked me to. I would not have gotten in.

D: You're Jewish.

C: But when she found out that Davidson would not allow Jews on the Board of Trustees or to be religion professors, she vowed never to give a dime to this school other than my tuition, and she still you know even when I decided to become a trustee she wasn't for it at first, and even though things have changed. That said, just because I'm Jewish doesn't mean I do everything my mother says. But it's not exactly a point of tension, but it was it's a point of just a dislocation between us where she doesn't understand this choice that I made, so there's that. There's also...you know when I left, I took a semester abroad I was an English major I had an Asian Studies concentration and I decided to go to China, and I was in a program at a University in Beijing that was a small foreign language college and there was a program there was a program of a consortium of Southern and then there's also a BU program or maybe BC program and some other things on the campus at the same time and I think that I knew more Jewish students in China in my program, and it wasn't a big program. I knew more Jewish students in China in my program then I knew here. And I had places to go for high holiday services in Beijing with expats, which actually became very important I don't know that you guys know who Zac Lacy was so Zac Lacy was a really good friend of mine, and he graduated the year before I went to China I mean that summer, and he was actually the first letter that I wrote from China, and he killed himself when I was in China and it was right around the High Holidays, and I went to Yom Kippur services in Beijing in a hotel suite with like random expats reading prayers off of you know Xerox copies of the prayer books and some of the tunes were the same as the ones that I knew and I felt Jewish community, and I felt the importance of being Judaism of being Jewish in a way in that situation that I had never felt before in my life understanding what Jewish community was and why being Jewish even if you don't believe in God which I kind of do, but I sort of don't know still, and I think that's another thing you should understand about Judaism is that you don't have to actually believe in God to be Jewish. I think that that was a startling moment for me too to actually find my Judaism both because when I was here I was the Jewish student from other people saying that to me and because of my exposure in the paper, but then I was Jewish because all of a sudden, I understood what it meant to be somewhere with no one who knows you and nobody who knows the pain that you're feeling and yet have community, so that is maybe the thing that set me off on this one of the most meaningful moments for me my Jewish life for why I even care about

Jewish community. It's not so much that I was the only Jew at Davidson I don't know that I would have gone on to care if I had experience in China. It's almost a contrapositive yeah, and I kind of noticed what I was missing you know what I guess I guess I never thought about it now I'm only saying that in retrospect I've never really thought about that since like oh well I really should have gone to a school with Jews.

S: so when you got back on campus after studying abroad did you did you feel pressure to embrace your faith more or did you dilute it?

C: No, I think I probably didn't think about it again for another couple years. But wait actually that's not entirely true I came back and I became the union president.

S: Union Board?

C: Yeah. Mostly because I you know it was I was inspired Sherry Nelson took me out to coffee at what was Cosmic Coffee, which no longer exists but it was before Summit. And she convinced me to run to be the Union Board president, which the reason I'm telling you that is that the next year because I was Union Board president I was responsible for the campus Christmas party, so irony of ironies though like the one outward Jew the the year after was running the campus Christmas party and speaking before everybody on the steps of Chambers for the I mean holiday it was definitely called the campus Christmas party that I don't think they called it like holiday party.

D: Bobby Vaght, or at least we heard, was very proprietary about the Christmas Party.

C: I don't. You know. Now that I look at it in retrospect it could have mattered to me if they called it a holiday party, but then everything was Christmas you know Christmas pageants weren't winter holiday pageants at schools like everything in the world was Christmas, and...

S: So you got up and welcomed everyone kind of thing?

C: Yeah! and I don't remember what else I said but I wore a red sweater dress I think, and I thought that that was pretty funny but to go back to something I was gonna say before let me remind myself of where that went it had to do with... No I don't know well we'll just keep... I'm sorry I've been just talking talking... I know that's what you want but I mean I'm just trying like I've oh yes I remember yay! You also can't see that I'm raising my hands in victory when you listen to an audio recording. The year after Yom Kippur the year after Zac died was the anniversary of his death, and I took classes off, and I went out my friend Kirsten Lunar was off campus with two basketball players who I don't remember their names but they had a house that was actually on Lake Norman that they were renting for the year I do not know how they scored that, probably because they're basketball players. But she let me just go and hang out at her house all day and I just sat looking in a hammock by the lake and I had nowhere to go that I knew of for high holiday services so I just sat there by myself looking at the water in a good way--not in the bad way--I mean just sort of like I didn't want to do what you would do...I mean I wanted to spend Yom Kippur doing something that seemed Yom Kippur-esque, and so I just

went and uh didn't eat and stayed by the water, and then I broke my fast by coming to another off-campus house my friends were eating pizza and watching Sarah Zogby, who was a class ahead of me, on Jeopardy she'd been on the College Jeopardy and the airing of it was that night so I broke my fast by going and eating pizza with people who are watching a Davidson student on Jeopardy.

D: We've heard a lot of stories about like Break Fasts and Seders and these moments of rituals. It's a ritual that turned into very individualized almost solitary things and it seems it's interesting to me at least as someone who sees a lot of Jewishness as community and even you said yourself like I don't know the actual spiritual politics of it all it's kind of incidental to the being and community of people, so after you're time at Davidson, when did you start to kind of think about well how do I want me to learn about this?

C: So... Let's see... After Davidson, I moved to Seattle, and I...when I first got to Seattle, I didn't have a job, and somebody from the Jewish community in Denver through her Wexner Network, which is pretty strong, actually introduced me to people in Seattle who were Jewish from her Network to help me get jobs, but instead of helping me get a job--although they did help me sort of I mean at least get some interviews...This woman named Cynthia Stroum invited me to her house for Rosh Hashanah, so when I first arrived in Seattle a couple weeks after one of the first things I was doing I had no job and no friends yet was I went to some stranger's house or actually her parents house for Rosh Hashanah and so I kind of got pulled in there...She was the Stroum family is actually a very philanthropic Jewish family. The JCC is named after them in Seattle. I didn't know that when I was invited over to dinner that I was going to this very prominent family's house, and so I got involved kind of tangentially then, and then I became friends with people that worked at the Federation in Seattle and I joined a Jewish softball team and some members of the Jewish softball team would do Shabbat on Friday nights, and so I would, hang out.. I had my friends at Amazon, which was where I was working, and I had what I called the "Jew Crew", and I still never felt quite comfortable with them. I didn't know the prayers. I didn't go to Jewish day school. I didn't go to Jewish summer camp. So, all these things that had sort of prepared them to be Jewish together, were not part of my experience, so I felt I always felt a little odd about it. But then I was still friends with them. I moved to Boston. Some of the people from Seattle actually moved to Boston at the same time, and that was my Jewish community, and I had high holiday. I'd go to high holiday services at Tufts or at MIT because I was living in Cambridge, and sometimes I'd go with my friends even because one of them was a student at Tufts and so and one of them was a student at MIT, so I would go to these other college campus Hillels else to celebrate.. Oh I did that also at the University of Washington when I went to grad school later. I'd go to the Hillel there for services before I belonged to any synagogues. Anyway, so I was still sort of living a student, like other people's student lives of Jewish life, and I did have people to have dinners with and it wasn't until I moved back to Denver and I had no friends because I've been gone since I was fifteen that I really got involved in Jewish community, and I did that because I needed to make some friends, and because it was comfortable in a way there were you know people that I'd known my whole life for involved and that's really now how I am the super Jew that you see before you today.

D: You might not have an answer to this, but did you notice any differences between...I didn't know if you interacted with Southern Judaism while you were here, or if there were just now Jews at all, but being a Jew in the South is its own sort of thing.

C: There were no Jews at all to speak of. I've been involved in so many national things though that I know people from all different communities I know a lot of Jews from Atlanta. I know Jews from other places in North Carolina, so I feel like I've met southern Jews but I don't...I feel like if there had been Jews that were Southern Jews at Davidson at the time, they would have felt more Christian than Jewish in a lot of ways. We look at Jews we're like "Oh Northeast feels Jewish!" Like even if you're not like if you're North Eastern even if you're not Jewish you're a little bit Jewish. I feel like that's the only place in the country where it's really like that and so I don't know that I would have recognized other Jews as Jews I would have recognized other Jews as you know...I don't know.

D: Something someone said to us was that Christians in at least maybe Davidson or in the South or generally see Judaism as something to wear over your Christianity, and you can still come to church you're Jewish right? The same book. But it's not recognized as its own particularity. Did you did you experience anything like that or?

C: No. I didn't really. I mean I guess I know I never went to DCPC for anything ever, and I think I conflate experiences of high school and college because I definitely remember going to a festival of Lessons and Carols. I'm pretty sure that I was that was at my high school Chapel. There was a chapel without a cross actually the high school I used to go I loved father Devlin who's the chaplain at Choate and obviously he was a Jesuit priest, but I adored it but I was really good friends with him and so I would actually go to Catholic services on Sunday nights more than I would participate in Hillel, but not because I love Jesus just because I love Joe Devlin.

S: So there was the Hillel on Choate's campus?

C: Yah, I mean not like a building but there is a club. And actually a guy named Paul Obermann was the Jewish teacher who was leading it, and this last last year in January not this year, I went to Houston to see the devastation of the flood on the Jewish community, and one of the last visits on our trip going around was to talk to the principal of the Jewish High School, and it was Paul Obermann.

D: No way.

C: So Jewish life comes pretty full circle. It gets really small.

D: Only so many Jews in this world

S: It's true!

C: And we all know each other! It's like a cabal! It's like a conspiracy! It's like the elders... Well never mind.

D: We've never heard that one before! Were there a lot of Jewish professors here?

C: Yes

D: There were, yes, okay.

C: There were Jewish professors here. I was surprised that Karl Plank wasn't Jewish because he was teaching Jewish thought, and one of my um actually sorry now I'm remembering things there's a woman named Margaret who I'm still Facebook friends with, but she was taking Jewish Thought, and she would ask me questions all the time. She was fascinated by it. She was from Columbia, South Carolina, and she's a lovely person but so she she was taking Karl Plank's class, and she didn't know if he was Jewish or not I think because he kind of looked Jewish (laughs).

D: We did his oral history earlier today. Yah he and his beard and his ambiguous name he said, "sometimes I pass, and sometimes I don't!"

S: Did you take a course with him?

C: I didn't take a course with him, but I remember he was startled that I was the great niece of a guy named Maurice Friedman who was a great scholar on Martin Buber, so if you read lots of almost any any biographical thing on Martin Buber, it might have been my great-uncle who wrote it. So I remember Karl Plank was like, "You're Maurice Friedman's great niece?!" So I do remember professors there. There was a professor Richard K, and he was a visiting professor in English. Let's see who else was Jewish. I mean Kuzmo (Kuzmanovich)!

D: But he doesn't wear it on his sleeve.

C: No, I mean he's not like religious Jewish um who else is Jewish. I mean obviously...I didn't know that Professor Ault was Jewish, or maybe I did I don't I never took a class from her. You know obviously Professor Zemault if I went to her house for a service and then she actually I took a classroom her in Inuit but yeah like North American native populations, and other than that I can't really think of professors who were Jewish.

S: That's fine.

D: And so there's all these Jewish professors, but could you talk to him about being Jewish or Judaism or were they just like Jewish people?

C: I don't know that it even occurred to me.

S: Okay.

C: I mean I was a fairly introspective and thoughtful you know 18, 19, 20 year-old, but I don't think that I ever really thought much about Judaism.

S: Did you hear of any antisemitic incidents in the town or in the broader community?

C: No, but you know what I did what I did know or what we thought we knew, and it might still be true the Korner Pub is spelled with a K, and I was and I never once went there. You know even I didn't do a whole lot of off-campus drinking because I didn't turn 21 until my senior year like right before my senior year, and I didn't... You guys didn't have the Rainbow Deli, but we used to go to these things called mug nights there where you'd take any sized mug, and they'd fill it with beer for some ridiculously low price there weren't a lot of places to go, but there were a couple places off campus that you would go, and a lot of people even starting freshman year I remember girls on my hall would go to the Korner Pub, and I just heard that because it started with the K it was a KKK bar, and so I never went close.

D: Wow. Is K Pub still open?

S: K Pub is still open.

C: I don't know if it's true..

S: Yah people still go.

C: But you know there is this sort of this convention this idea that if things that are supposed to be spelled with a C are with a K it's supposed to be like a dog whistle. It might be entirely untrue, but I believed it, and I never went there.

D: And the other thing is that even if it's not true the fact that people are saying it means that it's in the popular imagination.

C: And I had no idea who said or why but it stuck.

D: And the fact that when you said that I immediately thought oh that could be true is itself its own proof of something. I mean like not to segue perfectly into our next question but what was it like to hear about the unmasking of neo-Nazi students on Davidson's campus last semester?

C: Well, um I got a little bit of a preview being a trustee I got some information before it came out a little bit more on the broader news. I guess it didn't surprise me. I mean I didn't I don't think about students at Davidson but it wouldn't surprise me anywhere really. If you look at society today there's a lot of blatant prejudice and hatred and it just needs I mean with things like Twitter as a megaphone it comes out as a as a megaphone and a disguise at the same time, people say a lot of things I think it was pretty disturbing to find out I don't know that it was disturbing as disturbing to me as it was to you guys because I think that when you're here you feel the sense of safety in this sort of idyllic setting and everything here even if bad things happen, it's it's not the real world and so you don't want it to infiltrate your experience and I think that College should be a slightly unreal experience. You are in an idealized place doing something that is wonderful that you might never get to do again which is just spend time poorly. It might not feel like a selfish endeavor, and I don't mean that in a negative way, but this is this is time that is

absolutely for you and I think that probably for you guys I can put myself in your shoes and to think that that takes away from that. It takes away from that when you feel you have to be an activist on your on campus in some way. I guess I saw some grumblings even before and you guys I don't know much about this except for I when I did go to Suzanne's house last fall this was before the unmasking she asked me "What's wrong with Sabra hummus?" and I said "What?" and she's like there's all the students are freaking out about Sabra hummus being sold or whatever and so I realized that that was like that the early really cute seeds of the BDS movement here at Davidson College. I was like isn't this nice? So they're three years behind other colleges it's so cute they don't even know. Well for the Sabra thing, it was like it started pretty whatever but they're they're like three years behind on this specific thing like this thing like okay so you know like it's owned by PepsiCo but it's also and by this other company Israel and they support the Israeli troops, and I was like that is so cute. I mean BDS is not cute, and so I what I did though then is I went to Mike Goode, and because I know that the woman who works with him at the Union I'm forgetting her name that she's helping with.

S: Emily Eisenstadt.

C: Okay, so I said if you guys need I said I'm your Jewish trustee! If you need speakers or you need people to come to campus or you need somebody to explain what's going on or whatever it is in an open way, but so that people understand cause you really don't want...I I don't know I mean I I I personally as a Jew that is pretty left-leaning, I'm like Palestinian rights: absolutely! But I feel like as Davidson moves more progressive I actually don't want the Davidson students to get progressive ideas that are not based on fact, and so at least some balanced information about Israel I thought was necessary, and I don't just want it to be Evangelicals that love Israel here, and I don't love Israel perfectly, and I'm really worried about the election today or yesterday. But I was trying to offer resources for that, so like I was seeing some things but that was like before the unmasking and I was concerned about BDS on Davidson's campus--And actually sorry that just reminds me of one experience I did have when I was here there was a woman named Dahlia who was an international student and I know we probably have to eat or something, but I was she was an international student from Israel and at the time I knew so little about Israel really I mean I knew some but I hadn't been there that when she said she's from Israel I was so confused because I thought I didn't think she was Jewish, and she wasn't she's Palestinian and she was Arab-Israeli, and she said to me you know not all people in Israel are Jews, and I kind of knew that but I never quite realized it I don't think I'd ever met a Palestinian-Arab you know Israeli, and I remember her seeming kind of offended by it and I didn't mean to offend her, but that was a good lesson to me about Israel because I actually didn't know that much about Israel.

D: I'd say most Davidson students don't know a ton.

D: I think what was particularly upsetting about that whole Sabra hummus thing was at least some of like personal politics the fact that the school is so small means that like I know the people who are saying everything, and we're friends and we're in the same classes and we're in the same kind of like social circle. So, when they say something like if you have a tenuous connection to Israel you should be socially ostracized. Like that's like someone who's like two steps removed from me in like literally almost every Davidson way, and it's really heartening to

know that there are people in power who kind of a power at the school who kind of get that on the level that is perhaps not “Oh like that seems tough poor Jewish childlike of course we’re here to help you, and that’s really it’s heartening to me to hear that like someone reached out behind the scenes on this like “Mike Goode, if you need someone like if you need speakers if you need whatever and it’s still offered to you”

C: I am connected not I’m not trying to like but I am connected to the Jewish world in a mega way to give you really good speakers like the kinds of speakers that are balanced. I think I could find you really good people who aren’t just like hawkish yeah Israel people because I I’ve been to Israel eight times in ten years now. I invest in Israel. I invest philanthropically in projects that are trying to make the state better for all of its citizens, and I think it’s important to know that there are people that are Jews that do care very much about Israelis that care very much about that and don’t believe in the settlements but also believe in Israel’s right to exist. I think it also must be hard because if people here know so little about Israel and Jews in general like they must just conflate just the way the world does they can flake Israel and Judaism and antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment it just can be the same thing and you don’t have to separate it.

D: Because there aren’t enough Jews to separate it all right? Yeah and its definitely a takeaway from last semester it was hard for a lot of reasons. The Sabra hummus incident being the first of many.

S: Pittsburgh.

D: Pittsburgh the graffiti on the whiteboard.

C: I learned about the graffiti on the white board a lot later yeah but was it really graffiti? And so I’ve heard mixed stories I’ve heard that it was graffiti on whiteboard. I also heard that it could have been people working on a project where they wrote some stuff on the board.

S: That was as separate thing.

C: Okay. What was the graffiti on the whiteboard thing?

S: That was in a computer science class, and it was it was kind of small on the top of a white board, and it read “Hitler did nothing wrong.”

C: Could it be the same person?

D: They actually, the people who were later ousted tweeted about it. They said wow I wanna meet this person.

C: Oh okay.

S: So then we were like oh okay there might be a network!

C: Well that must make you feel a little unsettled.

S: Yeah that was certainly unsettling.

D: Yeah. I was talking to a couple of friends recently, and I was like the Nazis are gone, and then someone said well, the visible ones are gone.

C: But then again, it wouldn't surprise me at all also and it wouldn't surprise me when I was a student here if people said like "fags burn in hell" on a board or something you know? I mean I really you know there are most Davidson students are not like that or at least they wouldn't do it outwardly. But if they were drunk they would do anything. And you know it's just college kids are stupid yeah if they're not actually homophobic or even if they're not really antisemitic in a moment they might be and they're dumb. You guys are probably not dumb butts, but you get you get dumber and smarter as you get older, so like...

S: Nice words. I do want to ask was did your faith come in in conversation kind of when you decided to apply or I guess that? Like when you decided to become a trustee? How does that work?

C: Okay so I am a trustee because I am a Jew. I have no doubt. I did not.. You know I love Davidson in certain ways, but I wasn't a major donor even though I do a lot of philanthropic work, but Davidson was always something to, but I think I started at \$99 a year because that was my class that is not the kind of gift that will put you on the list to become a trustee because they're hoping you're gonna build a building. I'm not planning on building a building.

D: The Pollack Center for Jewish Life is not coming to campus anytime soon?

C: Not any time soon! But I so I kept in contact with people from Davidson, and then at one point in time Dan Dreyer who works in the office you know was trying to raise money. I guess he'd done some research, and he was coming out to Denver anyway and I think he realized that I was involved with the Family Foundation, and I did philanthropic thing so he wanted to meet with me, and I met with him and Brad who's also there I think was in town - somebody else was with him I'm pretty sure it was Brad. Anyway, doesn't really matter, but I was having coffee with them, and I was explaining my Davidson experience, and Dan tells me now he said I walked away from that meeting oh yeah that did not go well. So like a year or two later um Eileen Keely came out to Denver, and she remembered me because she worked here when I was a student here. And she was just coming through and she just thought well hey I'll put Cintra on my list of people to talk to. She started talking to me. We had a great conversation about the Hurt Hub that was being built wasn't called the Hurt Hub then. I talked about social entrepreneurship and I talked about other things that I'd done and you know and she's like well so why aren't you more involved with the school? You were the Union Board president you were so great you should be more involved with the school, and I said umm I don't know what does that entail I'm very busy. It's in North Carolina. I'd never go to reunions like it's so far away to go to North Carolina I just don't go. I had been back to campus, but but it had been a while. Um and she said well you could be on the Board of Visitors she could be on the Alumni Association Board or you know even someday you could be a trustee now. And I said well why don't you tell me what those things entail. Write me back or like research to tell me how much of a time

commitment it is so she went away she came back I don't know three weeks later gave me a college she said well I know I told you I was going to give you information on Alumni Association and on the Board of Visitors but we just want you to be a trustee. And I was like uhh what does that mean? And I knew that I'd be the first alumni trustee because they had a Jewish trustee, but she had been a donor to the school because her family had been really close friends with Sam Spencer and that was that was why she had become a trustee, and she's also very involved with lots of other things and she's a wonderful woman, but I realized that I kind of had to take that chance. I researched how much time it would be I said how much money did you expect me to donate and all Davidson made me commit to is making this one of my philanthropic priorities, and there's no dollar amount involved. But and that and money is not always why people become trustees but I don't think I've done and done stuff in my life but I don't think I've done enough for Davidson. I mean if you look at the Board of Trustees these people have been involved since they've been here they sent their kids here they've done all this stuff like most of the trustees are just like they have Wildcat paraphernalia at home. I don't have a single Davidson sweatshirt or hat. I know I could get one, but I'm like the worst trustee ever. I'm not really but you know I just don't go home and say "RAH RAH DAVIDSON!" I do talk I mean I do go to see the Alumni things, but I'm just not that involved if I weren't the Jewish student that I was at the time that I was in this sort of thing I would not I would not be asked to be a trustee I'm pretty sure. And I think that that's okay I don't mind being a token in this situation. And I did require that I meet with Carol before I said yes I talked to her on the phone I thought that Carol Quillen, and her vision for the school was awesome, and it was something I wanted to support, and it was something that I wanted to be here at the time to be able to make some changes that I'd always wanted to make with her and with other trustees and I think we're trying to get other trustees that are gonna take this college to the place where it can and should be. I'm not saying that all the Presbyterian affiliation and some of the things written in the bylaws are bad. I just think that some of them have outworn their time, and I think that some of the trustees agree and some don't I do remember there's one guy on the Board of Trustees I think he's still or for one more year. He's been on so long, and it turns out that his son went to high school with me, but his name is Lowell Bryant, and he's super nice and he drove me one of my first nights as a trustee we were having dinner at Kindred, and he couldn't walk all the way there so he was driving me, and I was in heels even though I could have walked down the street but um I said well how long have you been a trustee. He's like well I've been a trustee on and off since 8,000 years ago, but since I was a student here, and I said oh I caused some problems for you guys back then. He's like yeah, I remember. He's like just so you know I was on your side even though.

D: How do you see your position now as a Jewish Trustee? That's kind of a softball question.

C: Uhh well. There are 105 Jewish students as I as well as I know. I mean it might be a you know give or take a dozen. Some of those Jewish students just say that they're Jewish because ethnically they are, but they feel nothing for Judaism whatsoever. And that's fine, but I think that that's a significant percentage of the school, and I think that the Board of Trustees should reflect the student body, and so if nothing else I have to be there to represent Jewish students as part of this population and their interests. I think that Judaism has a lot to offer the world and a lot to offer

the world and thinking about you know how you discuss hard things and disagree and record discourse and yet still move on and come up with good decisions, and I think that's a good skill to have on your board of trustees. Tomorrow I'm supposed to not tomorrow the day after, I'm supposed to give the closing prayer for our meeting, and I'm gonna do it Dvar Torah!. Although it's a particularly hard Parashat to do it with this week because I want them to know with the way that Jews look at the Torah every week and think about it when they go to meetings, so I think I have something to offer in that way. I'm glad I have another Jew with me on there now. Although I haven't met him yet cause I wasn't here in January.

S: Okay.

D: What do you think about Jewish Studies because you have Jewish activism that's happening now?

C: Um, I mean I hope it's not just a craze you know? Like I hope I think that Jewish thought. My study of Judaism as has happened much later in life. I guess one thing that I realize in going to the Wexner Heritage Program, which has been incredibly meaningful to me is that I realized how Jewish I have always been by reading texts and reading Jewish philosophy and learning Jewish history. My family is Jewish to the core even though we are not observant. And I got great value out of the things that I studied. I think that those things are great things for lots of people to study whether they're Jewish or not. I think that the value of descent, I think that the idea that you can't have any ultimate I mean some people at Davidson would totally disagree with this but I think that just the way that Torah is written...I mean you have in Bereshit you have Adam being created in one paragraph with one description, and in the next paragraph basically with a different description of the same act, so there can't be any ultimate absolute truth. You can't be fundamentalist about Judaism because you've got this constant...The way that Judaism works is that the texts are constantly blown apart and then condensed again and blown apart and then condensed again and it's constant call and response to what has happened before, so there is no end word final word. I think that that's important for intellectual curiosity, so I think that Jewish Studies would be great. I hope you guys get some support. I'm happy to help and you know I think that three professors in three different disciplines, I think it'd be great. I can't imagine it would ever be a major here.

D: Well it's not what we're looking for anyway.

C: Well no I mean it's just one of those things where I'm like "Oh, Jewish Studies?!" That's funny. Is that sort of like, you know, astrophysics for people? Like you're never gonna touch it, but you might as well learn about it! I have some hypotheses. I don't know, but I mean I'm supportive of it. I think it's good I think the Jews have offered a lot to the world, and I think that people at Davidson College study what some of those things are. But the other thing that I think also would be important, and this is what I learned in Wexner, and I think I always felt it, and then I think we should go to dinner unless you have any other burning questions?

D: No that was the last thing.

C: Well the last thing I want to say is that one of the things I've learned about Judaism that I would like for Davidson students to know in studying Jewish Studies. People look at Jews as the underdogs. They look at us as people that have suffered innumerable tragedies punctuated by a horrible Holocaust, and I think that that's true but I think that that's not why Jews are Jews. I think that we aren't underdogs we are actually, if you look at history and you look at the broad expanse of time, Jews are successful for like a thousand years at a time before you have something like the Crusades. Jews have certain things in the way that we learn and approach each other and have been forced out into places and to make networks in the world that have caused us to be resilient and caused us to be successful, but we are actually in incredibly successful people that because we have utterly succeeded in so many ways because maybe because of our book because of the things that tie us because of our values because of our emphasis on education. I don't know exactly what it is, and it's not to say that they're better than other people that were better than other people, but we have survived these horrible things because of all of the strengths that Judaism and Jewish thought and Jewish tradition has brought to our lives. And it's not somehow we're these amazing underdogs. We are not we don't have to apologize for being Jews we don't have to feel sad for being Jewish. I feel like so often people are like oh you suffered so much tragedy. But that's not the story, and so if people can learn something about that from Jewish Studies then I would feel gladdened.