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Nora

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11/07/2012

N's Interview

St. Catherine University

N

11/07/2012

L - November 7th 2012 and I'm speaking to N. N how old are you?

N - I am 25.

L - Thank you. When you were growing up where did you grow up? Who was in your family and in your household?

N - My mom was born in Detroit Michigan. My grandmother, her mother lives in Arizona now with nursing care and I don't know her very well at all. Her father, my grandpa I went to his funeral when I was three she has an older sister my aunt Dawn and two cousins Robi and Neil and then she has two younger sisters I've never met and I don't even know how many cousins I have.

L - Ok, but growing up it was with just your mom?

N - My mom and also my dad who was originally from Sacramento so then his side of the family my grandpa and grandma and all my aunts and uncles and cousins are from California and I was pretty much closer with that side of the family but don't know my mom's side of the family very well.

L - Yeah that happens. So where did you grow up?

N - Oh and I have a brother, sorry, he is three years older than me but I grew up in St. Paul just walking distance from the St. Kate's campus I used to feed the ducks when I was a kid in the pond and even though it was school let alone the school that I would go to one day it's so weird.

L - That is pretty cool. I think when you see the little kids with the ducks its planting a seed, it's a pretty place. Did you pretty much live in the same place when you were growing up?

N - Ok right, I was economically stable both of my parents worked. I still don't know what my dad does never did he works for P&G but I don't know doing what. My mom was a flight attendant my whole life for Northwest which was merged with Delta so she would be gone for the weekends but home during the week and me and my brother would get drive to school picked up that kind of thing. She was always around to cook and clean and I was very close with her emotionally and otherwise my dad was always very distant emotionally he could be verbally abusive at times, pushing doors down that were locked like he would break... he threw something at me once, threw something at my mom once, and walked out a couple times and would drive away angry but overall basic needs were met a lot of my wants were met – had the dog, cat, rabbit, fish, hamster. I loved school I had lots of friends memories of lemonade stands playing outside being happy safe secure for the most part.

L - At least the image of the American dream.

N - That's what I remember about my childhood.

L - That's great. So we're going to shift in to talk about housing insecurity and when did you first experience it and what happened?

N - So kind of going off of a timeline from when I was born to when I was 13 I was living at home in that St. Paul house with my family and then when I was 14 my mom was actually a student going back to get her bachelor's degree and part of that was doing work out in Oregon so she was gone for 6 months when I was 14 and my brother was also a student in Australia so I was just living at home with my dad at this point and I had a boyfriend who I secretly moved into the house.

N - I know.. I thought I was being sneaky but looking back on it I'm sure my dad must have known but he never.. he would go to work early in the morning and when he would come home he would go straight upstairs to his room and he would throw money over the side of the steps so I would have money to get dinner or whatever. I literally never saw my dad and my mom had left her car at the house and I would steal the car ___ before I even had my license. It was just terrible I can't understand, looking back on it how my dad didn't know but whether he knew or not regardless he wasn't involved and I had secretly moved this boyfriend of mine who didn't have a safe place to stay and that was my first experience with domestic violence at 14 with him and then at 15.

N - My mom had returned back from Oregon but this was after I had been assaulted in my home by 9 of my peers which left me diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome, anxiety, depression and I started to self-medicate with marijuana and liquor. I dropped out of school because the people that I was assaulted by were at the school I didn't feel comfortable there, I tried switching this happened at Highland Park and I tried to switch over to Central but the people that were there also went to that school so it kind of followed me.

N - I didn't last a month there and at this point my dad had been out of work for a year and he was hired in Cincinnati at a new job finally and so with everything that was going on in his new job we all agreed it was best for me to just go to Cincinnati and try to start over so I was looking forward to that but I ended up not resolving any of the issues I was having. I didn't like school and my mom being a flight attendant I could technically get on a plane for free whenever I wanted and I ended up every Friday after school going back to Minneapolis/St.Paul by plane for the weekend and then coming back and forth and back and forth like that to the point where finally when I turned 16 I convinced them it would be..

N - I was capable of moving back to St. Paul even though they didn't want me living in the home because they never got rid of the home, my mom was freaking out "this is where we're going to retire, I'm not going to give it up" and her being a flight attendant she had to commute back and either stay in a hotel or something then so she's like "when I commute back I just want to stay in our house and we're still going to retire here one day" type deal. So I wanted to move back and just stay in the house but being young like that they wouldn't agree to that but I convinced them that living in St. Paul was truly the best thing for my mental health so they agreed to get me an apartment in Bloomington because they thought that would be safer than living in the house by myself considering everything that had happened but the deal was that after six months of helping me with rent I would have had gotten a job and been able to take care of it on my own and I think secretly they were hoping that I would see I couldn't do it and end up back in Cincinnati.

N - But I was just determined and so of course when that didn't work out and I wasn't able to keep up with the rent I ended up moving into an apartment with a friend on West 7th I finished my high school diploma at an alternative school and I was working as a CNA thinking I would go into nursing just for the guaranteed job and the high income but then my friend who I was living with her sister got pregnant at 15 so my roommate decided to move back home and help her out with that which kind of left me having to make a different decision about housing at that point.

L - So you're 16 at this point?

N - 17. At this point again ironic timing I was dating somebody who was really originally from Brownsville Texas and he wanted to go with some of his family to this plant in Geneva Indiana which is a really small in the middle of nowhere town to do temporary work at a tomato factory.

L - Like canning or something.

N - Yeah exactly so he was just going to temporarily live in a trailer park across from the factory and I decided I'm just going to follow him and move out there and I figured it's free rent and I'll start nursing school which is exactly what I did. I would drive two hours to Fort Wayne to go to _____ LPN program and had every intention of marrying this person I don't know what I was thinking I was so in love but of it didn't work out and so when we break up my family's house in Cincinnati was just 6 hours away from where we were staying so I drove down there and decided with my family that I didn't want to go for my LPN <Licensed Practical Nurse> anymore I wanted to go to this _____ in Kansas City that was the only one in the country that had the RN <Registered Nurse> program and I thought that's perfect I'm just going to go out there and make that happen and they agreed to help me with rent while I was in school and working so I found an apartment there started working as a CNA <Certified Nursing Assistant> I got all the way through and completed the RN program but I got put on a year-long waiting list to do the clinicals which you have to complete before you can actually take the test and everything and[.....]

N - When that happened it came to a surprise to our family financially and we hadn't planned for that year so I was really disappointed, wasn't sure what was going to happen at this point but it was also again ironic timing a friend of mine who I had made she actually trained me as a CNA showed up at my door her face all banged up she had been kicked out of a moving car by her husband.

N - I went through the process with her of trying to contact the police to get her things back they had a car they shared between them of course he got the car, he got the apartment, he happened to also to be a CNA at the place we were working at he got to keep his job she lost everything and [.....] At this point in my life I had great credit I was disappointed about this waiting list but felt pretty much on top of where I was going and what I was doing and [.....]

[I was] very young, very naïve thought that I could take this person's problems on and all they needed were the resources to get back on track , back on their feet. I ended up, I just couldn't leave her like that so I ended up opening up my credit to her like a credit card so she could get things like toothpaste, clothes, that kind of thing and I agreed with her that it was a good idea that we should just get a place together the whole time thinking again she's older than me and once we get our feet back on the ground she'll help pay back all this money that I loaned her and we had this goal of saving a bunch of money and we wanted to move out to California together and we enrolled ourselves in this program where we would learn to be trained to pass medication, I forget what it's called... a medication aide? You get paid more but in the process of moving out of the apartment that my family was helping me with into this apartment with her we were using a wheel chair that we mistook as an amenity and it turned out to actually be property that somebody charged us with theft for using[.]

N - So we're trying to find work, a new job, with this brand new theft charge on our record that made it really difficult along with everything else she was going through and it turned out that she used to strip so she suggested that we do that temporarily to make a lot of money fast and I'm like yeah great idea just not thinking about anything other than...

L - I sounded easy.

N - It wasn't about the money. I was just about us sticking together no matter what because I knew what it was like to go through domestic violence from when I was younger and I could see first-hand everything she was trying to do and the help she wasn't getting.

L - You were being a friend.

N - I started drinking every day because of the work we were in and the credit that I was thinking was going to be getting paid back maybe \$500-1000 turned into \$10,000 that wasn't getting paid back. We were spending \$50 between the two of us on marijuana every day. It just got to a point where I realized I'm not helping this person I'm enabling them and I'm no longer in a position to help her I can't even help myself anymore at this point and I confronted her about it.. this is all happening while I'm 21 and I confronted her about it and I'm not really sure if it's because of the fact that...

N- I don't know what was going on in her mind I'm not even going to attempt to try to guess but she had been in a car accident with her family, her sister, both her parents and her brother died. She had... her eyebrows won't even grow back in, she shouldn't even be alive but she needless to say had nowhere to go, nobody to turn to and I think when I confronted her about the changes that we had to make and the changes that needed to start being different I think she thought I was going to abandon her or something but she disappeared on me and I was left with all that debt, the lease in my name that I didn't know if I could break, this theft charge, a substance abuse problem just in a bad...

L - it really snowballed.

N - This took place over a period of 4-5 months at this point and I had not been being honest with my family about what was going on clearly they didn't raise me that way and would not have approved or been accepting of it. It was really hard to have to feel like I needed them at this point and know that I had to be honest about what was going on and ask for their help and I was so blessed and lucky that while they were not happy by any means they took me back in I had a place to go and start my life over start paying that debt back start dealing with my substance abuse and get my life back on track and it wasn't even six months went by that I ended up getting pregnant.

L - You're in Cincinnati at this point?

N - Yep I moved back from Kansas to Cincinnati and I met my daughter's father and found out on mother's day in 2009 when I was 22 that I was pregnant this was also two weeks before I was to start house arrest because I had violated my probation due to substance abuse so now at this point my family won't even speak to me let alone let me stay with them. You need a place to stay in order to not have to spend 30 days in jail if I want to do this house arrest and I'm in Cincinnati pregnant and would have to go back to Kansas and spend 30 days in jail, I had a job I was making payment plans to pay back my credit I had a job I was still making payments I would have lost my job, I would have lost the credit plan that I was on.

L - All that you had worked so hard just started to put back together.

N - Right and I didn't know anybody else in Cincinnati I'm not really from there so I only knew my parents and my daughter's father. I thought I was lucky that my daughter's father let me stay with him but that is when the domestic violence started with him but I couldn't just walk away from the situation especially in that 30 days because of the house arrest and even on top of that even when that was over I still didn't have a place to go and I knew I needed to get out of the situation but I didn't have the credit, the down payment, the resources in order to make that happen so I was looking into shelters and things like that but you tell them.. they'll ask you well did you hit you? And they want to know and at that point I wasn't being battered so I wasn't qualifying really a lot of assistance in any way and I will call the police and they will come out and sometimes they would just talk to him and they wouldn't even talk to me. There was times I would try to call the police and he would break the phone before I even got through and I'm pretty sure that's a felony getting in the way of a 911 and he never got in trouble for any of that. I just never got any help with it.

L - It's hard in that position to assert your rights and especially if other people are recognizing and honoring them.

N - I had a job but I was only making \$10/hour and I had to pay back this \$10,000 credit which was.. I can't remember exactly the number but it was over 100 or \$300 a month just in making payments for that credit and I had a vehicle that I was paying off on top of that, insurance, gas because I was a home health aide at this point when I found out I was pregnant I switched from being a CNA to a home health aide to get off of my feet and having to life people and stuff like that so I needed my car I couldn't afford to pay rent and everything like that. I did just for safety reasons when I felt like..[...] when he would get really drunk or whatever and I was actually worried about my safety I would actually go and sleep out in my car. There would be times too where he would just be mad at me for whatever reason and it was his name on the lease, he had the keys he would just not let me in, he would lock me out with all my stuff in there. Wouldn't have access to food I had purchased or need to go to school. I was a full time student I went back to school to get my associates degree in healthcare administration and I would have to go to school not showered wearing the same things I had worn the day before pregnant, hungry, looking crazy.

L - Not an easy time.

N - And this was all when I was 22. By the time I was 8 months pregnant I was able to finally, I was working at a place long enough and made all the requirements for job length and saved up enough down payment and secured my credit enough that I was able to actually get my own apartment and that went really well until my daughter was 8 months old and the domestic violence got so bad to the point where he actually slammed his head into the kitchen window I was on a first level and broke glass... I was standing right there trying to lock it and I had my 8 month old in my arms and he slammed his head into the window breaking glass shattered it all over our 8 month old. He was banging on the door so hard trying to get in there was blood all over the door. For all the things that had ever happened, even there

was a time he had held a knife to my throat and I knew he wasn't really going to do anything but that day I don't know what it was but that day something about his temperament I didn't know that I wasn't gonna really get hurt that day and I just finally got it in me to get a restraining order and he violated it enough times that finally he had also been in a car accident where he killed somebody and had time hanging over his head so when he violated it he didn't actually go to jail for what we had going on but he went to prison for 4 years for what he had done earlier in that car accident. With him in jail and with me having secured my own housing and everything that I was doing for so long my family finally agreed that it was a safe enough situation that I could come home and they were going to start helping me to see me finish school and they let me come back in so I didn't renew my lease I just lived in that apartment for one year and then moved in with them, finished school September 2011 I graduated with honors my associates degree and knew that I needed to take this time while he was in prison to be able to leave the state if I wanted to do it now I had to just do it because when he's out he could use our daughter to keep me there.

L - Parental rights.

N - Right and since my family still had this house in St. Paul they never agreed to let me live there before they finally..

L - Well you're an adult you have a child.

N - Under the circumstances my brother had been renting the house out but he moved out, lost his free rent and income from renting it out and let me and my daughter move in and I applied to St. Kate's got in on an academic scholarship I've been volunteering at domestic abuse project since I've moved out here and I started a new organization on campus woman against domestic violence organization and East side neighborhood services and I really want to get my masters in social work and public health and just dedicating my whole life to domestic violence and the issues that can come with it like homelessness.

L - That's definitely that it's really clear that all these things can be so interconnected. It seems like in terms of resources I think you're a resourceful person and I'm so impressed that you graduated with honors, got your degree, you're raising a child, it's amazing. In terms of your family has been key at certain junctures at really being able to help.

N - Oh yeah, I wouldn't be here living here able to be a student right now if it wasn't for them coming back into my life and being supportive in the way that they've chosen to be. Not just willing to do it but even able to do it. If they didn't have the type of income and lifestyle that they had even if they wanted to they couldn't be doing all the things that are allowing me the opportunities that I have.

L - In terms of other resources you got the restraining order..

N - Which was useless..

L - Which was useless, yeah. Were there other kinds of services that you could find that could help?

N - Another thing that was a lifeline for me was being able to get food stamps and WIC. Especially the WIC the food stamps often times my daughters father would sell for liquor or buy a whole bunch of junk food or things that he would want to eat or I would even be able to buy food but I would be locked out of the house and wouldn't have access to it so even the food stamps I think sometimes people don't realize like oh you're getting something for nothing but sometimes you really need that just to eat for real live and sometimes even then it cannot be a resource to you.

L - Not to cover it.

N - You need a place to store the food, cook the food that kind of thing too.

L - There are just a lot of practical barriers and I think what you're talking about too especially in situations of domestic abuse that there is just a lot of that isn't available if your home isn't safe. So you didn't always have adequate food.

N - No. Which especially being pregnant it's the thing that I'm not sure how I'm gonna, I'm working so hard on forgiveness and so much of it is so easy to forgive it's so understanding my family's reaction to unplanned pregnancy considering I had no business having a child, I can clearly understand those feelings and yet to leave somebody in a situation when they're pregnant it just absolutely vital for that unborn child that I was not put under the stress that I was put under that I had adequate access to healthcare and nutrition and a person's pregnancy is not one of those things where you can be like oh I'm mad at you so figure it out, and it's your fault if you can't, and oh well if you don't. Had anything happened to my daughter had she for whatever reason my pregnancy not gone well or she was born unhealthy in anyway and I'm not sure she wasn't affected I mean she seems.. appears to be very healthy and happy and I'm so blessed that everything.. but had something happened and even though it didn't that's the hardest thing.

L - You can see how close and that there is always a certain amount of luck involved.

N - It's so painful to see all these people, like her father, even my mother who without her I wouldn't have the future I have or the life that I have right now and yet it's like it's so hard for me to accept the fact that it wasn't that long ago that when she was unborn... for people to look at my daughter and be like oh she's so cute like our family members will be like oh I love you and I... I didn't feel you that you loved her very much when she was unborn inside of me and for society to see that I'm in need as a pregnant person of just basic things police and everybody else to sort of just brush it off as my problem and that's just the way things are.

L - Right.

N - It wasn't that there wasn't places for me to stay, I would always think about that like how many rooms are there in the world that I could be in right now. How many free shows are technically available, how many... it's not a lack of resources it's a lack of access to them. And how these people decide these policies it's always about the bottom line things are not done with love behind it that is not the motivation to treat people and each other with love.

L - You've lived a lot in your 25 years. I want to talk a little more about your experience since you've been at St. Kate's. We've talked a lot about your educational journey and it seems like school has been a place that you have done well and as long as there weren't other things going on that you were able to actually do it that this has been someplace you've enjoyed success.

N - Before I went through all of this I was just like any other person thinking that I probably had a sense of entitlement that I'm going to go to school, go to college, get a job, make money so I can whatever.. the things you value. I had wrong idea about what life is about and about what values are all about and I had no drive, no motivational purpose, no sense of who I was in this world or what the world was even about until I got to see actually walking the footsteps of somebody who just wanted to live to live to value life for life.

L - To have that sense of purpose.

N - When you think of people in 3rd and 4th worlds they are so funny they live their life with humor, they sing when they're sad, they are so capable and.. what is the word I'm trying to think of – Resilient.. ingenuity – they have so much ingenuity and they just find ways to heal and strength from things that

actually matter in life: each other, family, love. They do things, so much in this world especially in the United States you'll hear about people I'm depressed, I want to die, how when you look at everything you have in this world.. really, like really...

L - I hear what you're saying.

N - I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't want to be pitied for what I went through. To me I see that as micro-aggression I thank god every day that I went through what I went through because it brought me to god it gave me a relationship with god, it gave me my daughter it taught me what matters, it gave me purpose, passion, meaning.

L - So you could be resilient and confront the practical and other kinds of obstacles that you were dealing with.

N - I actually didn't realize it until I took the time to sit down and write this timeline out and I realized my whole life was about self-medicating and feeling sorry for myself about the things that I had went through and being really shy and focused on one day I'll have money and I'll do what I want. I didn't even know what that meant but I had nothing really driving me, no real purpose so I kept falling apart, I kept making poor choices. When I got pregnant made me realize life is what's really important and that's when you'll see a change in my ability to actually follow through on what I wanted to do and I got out of \$10,000 in debt. I got my own apartment on my own.

L - You're getting your education you have pretty ambitious goals that you're going to make the world a better place and partly because you've seen how hard it can be.

N - I had substance abuse issues from untreated PTSD, depression and anxiety that when I got pregnant I've been sober since 2009.

L - And you did that on your own?

N - On my own, nothing, no counseling, nothing.

L - I feel like that is part of what we're trying to understand how is it that so many people can pick themselves up and find that purpose and it seems like becoming a parent or discovering that you were going to be a parent was what made you find the strength and purpose.

N - I don't even know if it was so much becoming a parent as it was the fact that for the first time in my life even if I didn't want to or I was scared to I actually couldn't go back to my family, couldn't even talk to them like I said we had different definitions of what love is. I felt like an orphan. I had actually reached out to family in other states that I would visit on Christmas holidays when I was a kid we didn't really have that.. but begging them – like my family is not talking to me I'm pregnant – no you know we can't really help you and we hope you're.... I had one aunt tell me you know it's really dangerous and I hope you're baby doesn't come out with health effects and I just – zero support from anybody and I think that was what brought out that resiliency in me because I was forced.

L - To be able to rely on yourself because...

N - I actually had to there was no oh I'm scared I don't want to, like no I really couldn't go home and the people that should have been there for me weren't and the person who was 50/50 responsible in getting me into the situation that I was in was abusing me and the world the way the respond to domestic violence there was no support. That's what drew me so much to St. Kate's is that it's a woman's school a

social justice school and I know of anywhere in the world like this would be one of the few places that would hear what I had to say understand even a little bit what I was saying and allow me to flourish through my experience.

L - I think that what you're saying is how you've been able to do that and I'm not trying to be judgmental of other people who can but...

N - I couldn't. If my family not only like I said was willing but able and I never forget that for one second because before they came back into my life my plan was to keep on working as a nursing assistant or a home health aide all the time and I still didn't know what I was going to do about daycare. I had nothing figured out I was scared every day ends were not being met it was very insecure. I couldn't be doing what I'm doing without my family's support is what I'm trying to say so for the people out there who are still in those positions because they didn't have that lifeline that I have that's why I want to come do this, do it right and educate people to understand. You want to look at these people, judge them, label them, blame them, leave them behind, screw them let them fend for themselves, no screw you they are you that could have been you we need to get this together and think differently about it and educate each other and engage each other and empower each other. Sorry.

L - That's beautiful, it's really wonderful. You came to St. Kate's to study social work and public health.

N - I view domestic violence, homelessness, poverty as a public health issue so when I speak about it I want people to see I have those credentials and listen to me and listen to that issue as a public health issue and call it what it is public health crisis.

L - How far are you in your studies here?

N - I'm a junior right now and my junior field work at East side and if everything goes smoothly and I keep taking classes full time I should graduate by the summer of 2014 and then I want to go on to get my masters that fall of 2014.

L - You are defiantly making progress and can see what's needed. How have you found being at St. Kate's? is it's what you hoped for?

N - It's pretty much what I expected. I am a little disappointed in my peers I don't know why I guess I though just because I'd be around women and like-minded women and being in a social justice school I wouldn't be confronted with so much lack of knowledge and ignorance about it but that has not unfortunately been true however the social work staff have been amazing.

L - Are you connected with access and success?

N - Yes. They are giving me a scholarship paying for my books.

L - And can help provide support with your daughter.

N - They are giving me some money for daycare through a grant that they helped me apply for and I meet with them every other week just to check in and that kind of thing.

L - That kind of program really is able to address the needs of someone who's got a lot of trauma in her background but also just financial needs.

N - It was through Beth that I got hooked up with a counselor for the first time since I've been through anything. I've never had counseling I've just always tried to deal with it on my own which clearly was not

working too well. But I have a lot of fears like I was saying he's not going to be in prison forever he gets out not this Christmas but next and I won't even be done with school I'll be in the middle of finishing my last semester when that happens and I want to think everything's going to be great, I have hope but I'm also not naïve to the fact that I'll probably be in more danger than I've ever been statistically that's what they...

L - Because you made it....

N - Well they say statistically that women are in the most danger when their abuser just gets out of prison so I'm trying to be aware of that and not stupid about it and yet..

L - You have to live you can't be paralyzed.

N - It's terrifying because if and when the dynamics change of him getting out and he is planning on moving up here to be closer to Savannah and try to work things out with me my family is not happy about that and I could see just through the conversations we've had about that if at any point in time they're not comfortable with the way things are they may ask me to leave and they are very concerned about somehow the support they are giving me would somehow trickle down to him even if it meant I gave him a ride somewhere. I'm worried about that because before I even finish my bachelor's degree I could have a lot of turmoil within the support system that I currently have set-up that is making all this possible.

L - I think you definitely have your eyes open and it just seems like the longer you continue on with your goals are so clear on what you want that will serve you.

N - That's kind of what I'm hoping. I feel so much pressure to be getting A's here and to be making those connections with smart people who know what's going on and who I can talk to and sort of getting my

story out there because if and when it ever gets to a point where I'm going to need people to not judge me and continue being a support system in a different way that they weren't before I'm hoping maybe against hope that by showing people who I am now and how I can be when given the resources and the things that I need what I'm capable of and who I really am versus maybe who I might become due to lack of these resources and I might seem like I'm more needy..... I don't know..

L - I think it's a long journey and we're catching you... you're a good way down the road but we can't say the story all turned out perfect but you're doing everything right.

N - I'm not really going to truly feel secure with my situation until I've finished school and I've established a job that can pay a living wage.

L - And that seems like a very realistic assessment. You mentioned that with some of your classmates you don't feel like they have much awareness or sensitivity to issues of, and I'm going to say poverty, homeless, and domestic abuse?

N - Just to quote one of the student the other day for example she said "you know I really think if you're not eating healthy every day you're just not meal planning" and she's going on about how I have to live on a budget and shop for myself and if I can do it anybody can do it and was very adamant that you are truly.. it's a matter of you being lazy if you're not eating healthy every day.

L - Right and that you have control over it and the fact is a lot of people can't totally control their food situation or other factors.

N - There was another future social worker who made a comment that she would not be willing to help anybody more than they were willing to help themselves and when asked to clarify what she meant by

that essentially her perspective is that if somebody can't find a job in a certain period of time that she deems...

L - Correct interval..

N - Then she'll put no zero after it and to continuing to help them at that point rather than maybe considering other factors. I heard a lot of people just talk about stereotypical things about welfare moms and how they use the system and everything from mixed messages like you should be out working and yet also the same people that say that will want to see you're at home with your children all the time and they're not thinking even about what they're saying.

L - Right and that's not dealing with reality and it's not helpful.

N - It's very judgmental, very ignorant.

L - Do you think that some of your classmates through their education are getting their eyes open somewhat or do you think that they're just kind of hold on to?

N - I think it gets to be a political issue almost. Maybe some people are having their eyes opened a little bit and really taking in the education in that way but it almost seems like when these topics get brought up; homeless, unplanned pregnancy, domestic violence – Oooo – that's like a top button issue as if it were a political issue.

L - There is a saying the personal is political but I think that sometimes that just sort of deciding making up your mind that I know what this means and I can judge and you wouldn't see me homeless. I think personally that there should be a lot more there but for the grace of god kind of attitude that it is an unjust

world and a lot of good people have to confront these issues. When it comes to your classes, your professors, professional staff at St. Kate's do you feel that they are sensitive to these issues? That there is an awareness?

N - The social work staff that I have been exposed to I think are amazing and I just love every one of them that I've had so far yes I would say in _____ there was a professor for example who brought us to meet with Father Rick and I wish so bad I could think of what his last name was but..

L - Is he from campus ministry?

N - Yes he is an _____

L - AWW the guy from Haiti?

N - Yeah, we got to sit in class and he came out and spoke to our class and just the fact that she knew it was important for us to hear him talk was a sign to me, not a red flag, but a sign to me that she gets it. That what this person has to say is more meaningful then any text book could ever.. his experience was more impactful then any...

L - I think that's part of it as a historian I see that I can tell people oh it was like this but if I give them materials that at least show that it's a lot more powerful it's not just blah, blah, blah.

N - Exactly I don't feel like they're just up there to be up there and going through the motions so to say I've been in alternative schools my whole life until I came here and I know the difference and it drives me nuts I'll hear people "oh I don't want to be here," "class is too early," "I don't like this teacher for X, Y and Z reason" and I'm think like are you kidding me I know poor education or poorer education this is..

we're getting a good education from people based on the social work staff that I've been exposed to who not only are knowledgeable of what they're doing it but doing it because they really care and they are coming from a place of love and I can feel that, I can see that, I can tell that.

L - And it's tangible. What do you wish other students, faculty, other people in the community, what do you wish they knew?

N - About homelessness that you don't know it if you haven't been through it. And don't pretend like you do, don't pity people who are in those situations because that's not helpful it's micro-aggression like I was saying earlier. If you really think that you care educate yourself, be willing to self-examine your own stigmas and attitudes about it. Actively act as an ally for these people by engaging yourself and community in policy change and if you don't really care...

L - Keep your mouth shut.

N - I don't know I don't know what else to say I think it is something everybody should care about but if you have anything to say about it at all it better be in that direction of education empowerment, engagement if it's anything that is judgmental at least be willing to self-reflect at least be willing to do that much because you're wrong, you're really just wrong.

L - So when you graduate your plan is to go on and get your MSW and you'll be doing more of the same with public health.

N - I want to continue this women against domestic violence organization it just is going to get chartered officially probably sometime next week, on Tuesday I think, and I want to see that grow a little bit we're

even talking this won't happen maybe it will we're talking about maybe even getting a student run office on campus; I don't know we'll see what happens with that.

L - I think especially like the center for women would be a place to connect with but I think it's not going to happen unless somebody dreams it and says this is really important.

N - I want everybody at St. Kate's who comes here to stop saying why doesn't she leave and start asking why does he abuse. I just want to change, like you do, change people's thinking and bring awareness. I want to do research with Katherine _____ and with Sarah Ferguson doing different ant projects and research so I can walk out of here feeling confident with my research skills so I can go to policy makers and be like this is why you should care and this is my proof. I'm not trying to do jack of all trades because I know that's not realistic but that's how I feel. I want to be able to one on one micromanage situations with people but also like policy change and _____ and an educator there are a million things that I want to do.

L - I think you don't have to limit yourself. You can probably only do one thing at a time in a real focused way but developing those skills and I think you can find your way. If you were doing the interviewing is there a question that you would want to ask that that I haven't thought about?

N - That's a hard question. Honesty I don't think that this is a subject or a topic that can be covered in an hour and I think there are so many more brilliant minds and articulate people who can think better and quicker on their feet that would ask amazing questions that would lead a very important and valuable conversation and insight into this issue that I could never do justice to.

L - I know that my ability to get your story is constrained, it's limited but it's partly why I want to talk to a lot of different people.

N - I think with that said want people to understand that you're not going to be able to understand this issue if you don't go through it and just listening to my story or this person's story it is a lifelong learning through yourself being able to self-reflect and it's a lifelong process of actively engaging in the world and in the community on this issue and it isn't about... one story, one person, or one resolution.

L - It's partly learning that it takes shape in a lot of different ways and different people are able to respond to it and access different kinds of resources and actions but we are all on our own journeys and there is a process of learning and I think one piece of it is trying to get more discussion going and heightening awareness and having the start of some records of people saying here's what I know. That it's not going to fix things but it's part of trying to address. Is there anything else I should know?

N - No I can't think of anything but thank you so much for doing this it is not something that I think a lot of people take seriously enough and it does my heart so much good to see that I'm in a community of people that are actively thinking about this to the point of not just saying "oh that's too bad" but actually "ok I need to do something."

L - I think that's how social change is brought on. The small group of concerned people who are thinking somebody needs to do something and end up saying well I guess it's me cause I don't see anyone else doing it. N I thank you so much you've been so generous and helpful and I don't think you give yourself enough credit.