



*In collaboration with*

**JASMINE WASHINGTON,**

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**Date:** March 21, 2023

**Interviewer(s):** Rachel Kamis

**00:00 Rachel Kamis** So, my first question is just: tell me about yourself.

**0:38 Jasmine Washington** Yeah. So, I'm Jasmine Washington. (I'm the) Glynn D. Key Associate Attorney at Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) in Chapel Hill. I'm originally—I'm a North Carolina native, so I was born and raised in Franklin County, about 45 minutes north of Raleigh. (I) went to North Carolina A&T<sup>1</sup> for undergrad... I studied Environmental Agricultural and Environmental Systems, concentrated in Agribusiness there. And then, after finishing college, I went to South America for 2 years. So, I lived—I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay for two years, and did agricultural extension work there, mostly with women and children, doing a lot of gardening, and reproductive health, and nutrition and things there. Then, I came back and worked for a year, and then went to law school UNC—I went to UNC for law school, and by some miracle, got my dream job at the Southern Environmental Law Center, when I graduated. I've been there for a year and a half, and most of my work is on cases involving environmental justice, mostly in industrial animal agriculture pollution. I also work on a couple of water cases in general, and then I do some wood pellet/biomass work, as well. I live in Holly Springs, with my beautiful dog, who I hope stays quiet for the rest of this interview, as he sleeps in the corner—and my husband; There's three of us in this house.

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<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

- 01:51 R.K.**                    **Awesome. Where is Holly Springs?**
- 01:54 J.W.**                    So, it is kind of southwest of Raleigh. So, it's like a suburb of Raleigh. When—after I got out of the Peace Corps, I moved to Iowa because that is where my then-boyfriend, now-husband was. We dated long distance the whole time I was in Peace Corps, and so when I got back, I was like, “I can move to Iowa.” And so, we moved out there, but we knew that I wanted to go to law school in North Carolina, because we're both from North Carolina and our parents are here, and we knew this is where we wanted to set up shop. And so, he applied for jobs within his company to move back to North Carolina, and I was applying for law school at the same time. And so, we picked Holly Springs because houses were reasonably affordable compared to other areas in the Triangle and it would put me within a commutable distance from multiple law schools, and so I would have—I was south of like four different law schools that I could commute to if I got into one. And so, yeah, we've been here since 2017.
- 03:09 R.K.**                    **Yeah, that's awesome. That's a long time for long distance. I did long distance with my partner for like a year, and it's hard... And I also wanted to say, `cause I think it's really unique, but I actually—I interned in Paraguay over the summer, last summer. So, I know it's like it's like (a) crazy coincidence.**
- 03:30 J.W.**                    What?! So random!
- 03:32 R.K.**                    **Yeah, we have a program called DukeEngage. We do like internships and service projects in Durham, across the nation, across the world, and there's one in Paraguay. And so, I lived in Asunción<sup>2</sup> and worked at a nonprofit called Alma Cívica.**
- 03:49 J.W.**                    Hmm, what?
- 03:50 R.K.**                    **Alma Cívica. It's newer-ish. But yeah, that's super random—we should definitely talk about that more.**

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<sup>2</sup> Capital city of Paraguay

- 04:02 J.W.** I almost never meet anybody that's been to Paraguay. I can probably count on one hand how many times I've met people who—because it's just not, there's no beaches, there's no mountains, there's not a lot of attractions there, and so it's just not common to find people, unless they have family there or were backpacking across South America and made a two-night stop in Asunción... which is also common if they went to Foz do Iguaçu<sup>3</sup> and just crossed into Ciudad del Este<sup>4</sup> for a day. So, it's, yeah, it's not very common to find people who have spent any time there.
- 04:39 R.K.** **Yeah, no, I totally agree. And... I forgot that you did that, but I remember reading that somewhere, and I was like 'that is just a crazy coincidence—where were you?'**
- 04:50 J.W.** I was in a small town, or a small farm—not a town. It was a farming community near Coronel Oviedo,<sup>5</sup> and so it was about maybe like four or six hours of bus rides from Asunción. It was like 20 miles up a dirt road, so, not somewhere that you would pass through unless you were heading there, but it was right off Ruta Dos (Route 2), if you know kind of how Ruta Dos goes. So there's not many people who just kind of visited Paraguay, but it does have a very large Peace Corps post, so like at any given time, at least, when I was there, there would be 200 volunteers there. So, it's... because it's a very stable country, it's a very safe country, and they just have a—Covid was the first time that volunteers hadn't been there since the Peace Corps post opened in like the 80s, or the 70s or 80s. And so yeah... it's in that sense, it's a really good place to do Peace Corps, because, I don't know, it's a really interesting culture, they don't have a lot of outsiders come in, so like the assumption is never that you're a tourist—it's more of like, they kind of assume that you're a volunteer or somebody who's there to kind of help and do good, and they're really nice about it. Paraguayans are some of probably the nicest people in the world. So yeah, it was a good experience.
- 06:33 R.K.** Yeah— TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

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<sup>3</sup> A city in the Brazilian state of Paraná

<sup>4</sup> City along the Paraná in southeast Paraguay; second largest city in Paraguay

<sup>5</sup> City east-central Paraguay

**06:37 J.W.** So, do you still drink maté<sup>6</sup> and tereré<sup>7</sup>?

TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

**06:49 R.K.** **I never really got into maté or tereré ... but lots of good memories. I miss sopa paraguaya<sup>8</sup>, oh my god.**

**07:00 J.W.** Oh, my gosh—so do I!

**07:02 R.K.** **And chipa guazú<sup>9</sup>... but yeah, it's funny, I actually ran into the Peace Corps coordinator for Paraguay when I was at the iron foundry—the old iron foundry.<sup>10</sup> It's like in the middle of nowhere, I don't know if you went there, but I bumped into that person.**

**07:26 J.W.** No, who was it?

TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

**07:37 R.K.** **I don't remember.**

**07:38 J.W.** Yeah, I guess it's a pretty big post... even though there are—oh goodness... I went to a Peace Corps return volunteer event last week, and another returned Peace Corps volunteer from Paraguay is in school at Duke. She's in, not the Nicholas—she's getting her Master's in Public Policy. So yeah, there's some Peace Corps Paraguay—

**08:12 R.K.** **That's funny. Hmm, very cool. Yeah, another time we should talk more about that, because that's really unique, but back to the questions, so I don't take too much of your time up. So, I would love to hear more about—you said that your dream job was working at the SELC; Why was that your dream, why did**

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<sup>6</sup> A Paraguayan tea-like beverage

<sup>7</sup> A drink involving mixing maté with cold water; the Paraguay's national drink

<sup>8</sup> A kind of Paraguayan corn bread

<sup>9</sup> A corn pancake side dish

<sup>10</sup> Known as La Rosada, in the rural community Ybycui

**you want to work on environmental justice issues, what inspired you to do that?**

**08:49 J.W.**

So, when I joined Peace Corps, I was interested in law school and being a lawyer, but I kind of didn't really know what I wanted to do. And, I just—being completely transparent, I woke up one morning two weeks before the end of my service, and found out that Donald Trump had been elected as president. And in my mind, it was sort of like earth-shattering in that it—I had sort of imagined that America was on this progressive path, and... that we were a country that cared about the environment and cared about women's rights and things like that. And so, I think to wake up and realize that there were a lot of people who, turns out, didn't care about those things was—maybe I shouldn't have been so surprised, but I was.

And so, I just realized that there needed to be good people doing good work in order to make progress happen. And so, I went to law school knowing that I either wanted to do environmental law or women's rights, and sort of women's civil rights, reproductive rights, things like that. And then when I got to law school, I realized that the path towards environmental law was actually a little bit clearer, cleaner, and heard about Southern Environmental Law Center. They came to our career night, and (I) met one of the attorneys who, actually she's one of my supervisors now, and was basically like, 'that is where I want to work, those seem like really cool people who are doing really important, cool work, and it seems like a really great way that I can use my law degree to do some good.'

And sort of within the realm of environmental law, I was very, very open to what my practice would look like. I wasn't dead-set on like, 'I want to do water things, and that is it,' or like, 'I want to do air pollution work.' I was very open to whatever sort of, whatever area needs, you can plug me into—I'm down for. And so, I had studied agriculture in undergrad, so I had a lot of knowledge about sort of agricultural systems and how the business is structured, and how production works, and things like that.

And so, I pretty quickly got plugged into our industrial hog work, and became a (Glynn D.) Key Fellow and started doing

environmental justice work, because one of the attorneys at SELC is the, first of all, is my mentor and role model in life, Chandra Taylor.<sup>11</sup> And she teaches—she adjuncts an environmental justice class in the law school, and so I took that class my 2L year, my second year of law school, and was very, very interested in the legal side of that work, and finding out that that was something that you could actually... practice. And so, when my 3L year came around, SELC was hiring for their Glynn Key fellowship, which is a position that... focuses on environmental justice work. And so, it's not—all of my work isn't necessarily environmental justice, but in that fellowship, you're sort of guaranteed that you will work on environmental justice issues and environmental justice cases. And so, yeah, I applied and I somehow convinced them to hire me, and they did, and I've been there ever since.

**12:53 R.K.**

**That's amazing. Thank you for sharing that. And it sounds like pieces kind of fell together during your journey and led you to this point. I don't know if it's a fair assessment, but... I'd love to know more about the work you do now; You mentioned that you're working on hog farming, right? Can you talk more about that and what you're working with?**

**13:23 J.W.**

Yeah, so most of my work is on industrial animal agriculture pollution. Because this is North Carolina, a lot of it is focused on hog operations. A lot of it is—I was actually giving a talk at UNC last night, and the question came up of, kind of like, what legal... what does environmental justice work look like from the legal side? Because there is no environmental justice statute, there's no 'Environmental Justice Act,' and so you kind of have to pull in pieces from other statutes and laws that do exist. And so, it's a lot of, environmental permitting work, it's Title VI<sup>12</sup> work, it's legislative advocacy, it's executive advocacy, and things like that, that sort of pull everything together in addressing environmental justice. So, there's not one avenue to do that. And I also recognize my capacity as a lawyer in this work, where, first of all, I cannot solve every single problem in the world. And also, as a lawyer, all I have is the legal tools that sort of exist—there are confines in the work, which is very frustrating and disappointing. But that is to say that there are so many ways to do this work and so many other organizers and organizations that we depend on to do this work.

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<sup>11</sup> Also goes by Chandra Taylor-Sawyer

<sup>12</sup> A section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 under which lies anti-discrimination protection specific to the work of the Environmental Protection Agency.

And so, to answer your question, my work is honestly a lot of: challenging permits, commenting on permits, working with partner organizations to stay aware of what's happening on the ground and what's developing. All I can think about right now is a comment letter that I'm drafting, just 'cause that's what I've been working on all week, and briefing for another case related to industrial hog pollution. So yeah, that's what that sort of looks like for the most part.

In North Carolina, poultry operations are virtually unregulated. You don't have to have a permit or anything like that, they don't have to register with the state. And so that's something that we're sort of addressing. There is a lot of movement in wanting to kind of address that because, as long as you are what's called a 'dry litter operation,' meaning that the chickens spend their life in confinement on top of beds of, usually, sawmills, sawdust, and they sweep that out every so often and have 15 days to dispose of it; There's no tracking where it goes or how it's spread, or how long it actually sits there, it's just sort of, 'yeah, just get rid of it, and you're good.' And so, it's challenging with poultry pollution because you don't know where it is, and so there's work being done to address that and to have some sort of accountability in the poultry industry. And so that's a part of my work, as well.

**16:59 R.K.**

**So, I have two follow up questions. One, I apologize for... not understanding legal jargon, but can you tell me more about what a 'comment letter' is—I'm kind of curious what that looks like.**

**17:14 J.W.**

Yeah, so comment letters are letters to, usually federal or state agencies about something that they are about to do. So usually, if... for us we're talking about the Department of Environmental Quality, usually, before they issue an environmental permit, if it's sort of big enough, or going to attract enough public attention, they'll have a comment period for it, where they'll release a draft permit to the public and say, "you have 30 days, or 60 days, or however long, to call in or write out your feelings, or whatever you want to tell us about this permit."

And so that is a decent amount of the work that we do—letting agencies know the problems that exist in some of their actions. But also, sometimes they ask for comments on things that aren't permits. And so right now, I'm drafting a comment letter to (the) EPA on the Inflation Reduction Act and their Environmental Justice Block

Grants.<sup>13</sup> They, about a month ago, put out a Request for Information (RFI) which is basically them saying, “we would like your feedback and your recommendations on this program; get it to us by this date.”

And so, as a lawyer, things have to be very accurate, and we just don't say things willy-nilly. And so, there's a lot of drafts and eyes that have to look at things, and people have to approve things. At SELC, we're very mindful of consistency, and not saying something on one issue that's gonna negatively impact another issue that we advocate for, and so, that's a lot of the review, is making sure that we're not contradicting ourselves, making sure that we're consistent across all of our work.

And also, particularly in environmental justice, we're making sure that we're advocating and making recommendations in comment letters that the communities that we represent actually want. So, not just saying, "This is what Jasmine thinks, and EPA, you should do this," but making sure that I've reached out to our partner organizations and the people who live in frontline communities, who are directly impacted by environmental pollution, and making sure that they are, number one, aware that we're writing these comments, and also that they're—I want to include their opinions and their thoughts and their recommendations in this letter, just because, usually they have better ideas than I do. Just because, once again, being a lawyer, you sometimes end up focusing your attention on too much—or are kind of not thinking outside the box enough. And so, half the ideas that are in the letters are literally ideas that community members brought to me, that weren't even necessarily on my radar as recommendations or things to comment on. So, I think, going back to one of your last questions, what makes environmental justice work different is the level of involvement that you really need to have with your client organization or community partners. Oftentimes, these are communities that have been ignored for a very long time, and who have been trying to bring awareness to the issues in their community for sometimes decades, and it's important to acknowledge that, and to acknowledge that lived experience and not come in and say, "Well, finally, your Great White Hope is here and this is what we're going to do about it," but recognizing, honoring the work that they put in for decades trying to get things done, and

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<sup>13</sup> Environmental Justice Block Grants Program is a program under the Inflation Reduction Act to help atone for redlining, disinvestment, discrimination, and other systemic inequality in housing/commerce/environmental policies and practices that have contributed to environmental vulnerability. The funds are for impacted communities to fight pollution and transition to clean energy.



offering what you can but not letting your work drown out their experience, and their wants and needs.

#### TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

**21:39 R.K.**

**I... heard everything you said, and that was a really well-thought-out answer, and I totally agree with it. And I think that's something I've gathered from what I've learned about community involvement, in my time here in college, is like really centering the community and their needs and their wants, and how important that is. So, it's awesome that that's a focal point of your work, as well.**

**And then, my other question was kind of about that. So, you really started answering it, but you mentioned that you work a lot with community partnerships and you couldn't do your work without them, `cause there are limitations to what you can do within the law and things like that, so could you talk a little more about that—what the partnerships look like, how they work?**

**22:30 J.W.**

Yeah. So, I should know this off the top of my head, but even in the rules of legal ethics, in all legal work, the client is supposed to decide the—goodness, how did they put this? I should know this... Basically, the lawyer, our job is technically to—they set the goals, and so, the lawyer's job is really to sort of decide the mechanisms to achieve that goal. But in all legal work, the client really is supposed to be driving a lot of the decision-making. So... it kind of depends on the partner organization. There are certainly certain partner organizations that will have a lot more maybe experience working with us or working with lawyers, and so they kind of know a little bit more of the system, and the kind of bounds, the scope of our representation. And then there are others that maybe don't have as much experience, and so there is a little bit of mutual kind of tone-setting, and back and forth about what our representation looks like, and what can and can be done. But yeah, in general, it's making sure goals are aligned and making sure that we can provide them—making sure that we understand what their goals are, and understand what our goals are and making sure that there is, at a minimum, a lot of overlap in those goals.

And also, I think probably the toughest thing in my experience is being honest about what the likely outcome is, and what, number one, what are possible outcomes, and also what the likely outcome

is. Because I've had experiences where I've worked with standing witnesses, and they are going through it; They live next door to a hog house that, they're spraying hog waste right beside—20 feet from their back porch, and they can hear the hogs from the house, in their backyard, that's how close it is. And, they're sick, or their family's sick, and they want help. And it is hard when you can't give them the help that they need and deserve, in that way, and when all that I have to offer, I know is not enough to remedy their situation. For me that has been a very tough pill to swallow at times, that... I can't do any more, sometimes, to help them in their situation. All I can do is what I can, and be honest and not... and give them an out not to participate, if that makes sense. It's like, "This is what I am able to do, and if you would like something different than that, or something more than that, then, that is more than understandable, and I will—I will do my best to help you on your journey to get those things." Yeah... it's tough. But I am, I don't want to say I have learned, but I am learning how to kind of navigate those experiences.

**26:22 R.K.**

**Yeah, I imagine that's really emotionally draining...**

**26:26 J.W.**

It can be... but I always say I have a lot of climate anxiety, personally, and I consider myself to be very fortunate that I am paid to address that. Like I truly think that... as emotionally hard and stressful as it can be, sometimes, I feel like I really do sleep better at night, knowing that there are a lot of problems in the world, and I can't solve them all, but I have a niche where I'm trying to spend—I spend a majority of my time trying to solve a set of problems over here... It helps my anxiety.

**27:12 R.K.**

**Yeah, meaning and purpose, right? It's what we all look for. So, I wanted to ask... in the hypothetical situation—well, it's not hypothetical, because it sounds like it's happened—but in that situation where you're working with someone who is frontline, living right next to a hog farm, what can you do for them? ...And then... this is off-script, (but) I'm just curious...what you do for that, and then also, who—if they want other steps to take, what are those steps?**

**27:27 J.W.**

So...very interesting question, and I want to be very careful when answering. At SELC, we can only represent nonprofit organizations. We cannot represent individuals, and we can't represent them—we can't represent individuals, or even organizations, in private disputes. So, all of our cases have to be in the public interest, and so, we can't necessarily represent one

individual against the hog farm next door, just because of our tax status, and other things like that. But what we will do—what I have at least done, and what we will do is, if there is a situation like I just brought up, where this is a person who needs help that we can't give them, is do our best to point them in the right direction. And so, let them know that, “We do not have the capacity to help you with that,” and it's important to be honest about that, because I don't want to bring somebody down the road with me and I can't actually help them. There's no point in stringing somebody along when there might be somebody out there that actually can get them the help that they need. So we'll point them towards other community organizations, that they can reach out to for resources—other groups... yes, other resources where they could get the remedy that they are looking for.

Because, also, in North Carolina, if the issue is the individual and the hog farm next door, our state legislature has taken away the ability for individuals to sue an agricultural operation for its pollution. And so that is another thing we have to be very honest about, that like even if this is a problem, nobody can sort of help you with that in this way, because that legal tool has been taken away. And so... it's a tough situation to have to tell people. But, yeah, in North Carolina, in order to bring a nuisance case against an agricultural operation, you have to bring that case within, I think, one or three years of that operation starting, which, by definition, sort of takes most hog operations out of that realm, because there haven't been hog operations that have been able to—we have a moratorium on opening new hog operations in North Carolina. So there haven't been any new hog operations in over a decade. And so, yeah, it's just not an avenue that we can help people with or that in reality most private attorneys in North Carolina can help people with anymore.

So, yeah, just pointing them towards community resources, towards people who can do air monitoring or well water testing, and keep trying to do our best to address the systemic problems with industrial animal agriculture, so not—which, I guess, that that is most of our work at SELC, is attacking the system, and not necessarily... sometimes that does involve addressing individual permits by individual permits, but generally speaking, it is trying to bring about more systemic change.

#### TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

**32:37 R.K.**

**...I got most of what you said for that last response. A bit of it cut out, particularly when you're talking about like how people**

**can't file direct complaints or direct suits against hog farms or operations. I missed the middle chunk about like the ways you could do it. But that's OK—**

**33:58 J.W.**

Oh, there is nothing you can do. You didn't miss anything.

**33:01 R.K.**

**Okay, and then at the end you cut out again. I can't really remember what it was—what you were talking about. But yeah, just like the last 30 seconds.**

**33:20 J.W.**

I think I was just rambling on about the same things. It's fine.

**33:23 R.K.**

**All right. Well, perfect then. Yeah, I wanted to ask—kind of bringing it back to your childhood: was there any moment or point in your childhood where you had an experience that you think indirectly or directly led you to your career path today?**

**33:47 J.W.**

I don't know that there's one sort of moment in particular. I just, I was an outdoorsy kid growing up, so I just loved being outside; I probably shouldn't admit this now, but... I barely did my homework in elementary school, because I just wanted to be outside all the time. I would get out the car and be—because I grew up on a farm, and my neighbor, we were the same age, and so we would get home and just take our shoes off and run into the woods and not be home `til dark. And so, I always wanted to kind of do something, maybe in environmental work, and sort of hands on; I didn't know what that looked like, so I remember when I applied for college, I was like a Psychology major. `cause I didn't really know. I was like, 'I'll be like a marriage counselor.' I didn't—I was like 17, I didn't know what I wanted to do.

But so I think probably one of the most momentous shifts was literally a week or two before my freshman orientation—I was already going to North Carolina A & T—and I was on Netflix, which had just started streaming services, and I had just gotten my first laptop, and so I was on Netflix, and the movie *Food, Inc.* was my 'recommended movie', and so (I) watched that movie and was like, "I am changing my major to agriculture, because I want to work to bring about systemic changes in the American agricultural systems."

And so, yeah, I changed, I major to from Psychology to Agricultural Business when I was at orientation, and kept down that path. I was very mindful, when I was in college, of the type of work

that I wanted to do, and very mindful of the opportunities that I went after. When I graduated, I mean part of joining Peace Corps was because I wanted to have... hands-on experience in agriculture, and do—and I also wanted to live abroad for a while. I had done some study abroads in college, and I just wanted to have a more extended—I wanted to actually live abroad, and do some good along the way. And I knew that that would also kinda set me down the path of more of a public interest, addressing systemic problems type of career, and that definitely turned out to be the case. So, yeah, I don't know that there was sort of one moment in my childhood that set me off, besides watching *Food, Inc.* when I was... like 18—so I was technically an adult at that point, but yeah.

**36:39 R.K.**

**Yeah, *Food, Inc.*, I don't know if I ever watched it, but I definitely have heard a lot about it. Documentaries are powerful.**

**36:49 J.W.**

I did not think that I would ever actually be paid to do legal advocacy in industrial animal agricultural pollution. I don't think I really thought that that was a job. And even when I came to SELC, I didn't think that I was actually gonna be doing agricultural work, just because that's not usually in the realm of environmental work. And so, I was very surprised when I got there and it was like, "No, we are crankin' up our industrial animal agricultural pollution work, and that is what team you're gonna be on."

So, yeah, I did not actually think that—pretty much up until... a week into being at SELC, I was like, "Wait a second, I'm actually doing the thing that I originally set out to do." And yeah, I'm happy to get to do that.

**37:48 R.K.**

**Yeah, all the stars aligned, sounds like. Did you go vegetarian after watching, *Food, Inc.*, too, or just...**

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**37:56 J.W.**

I was actually already vegetarian, at the time that I was watching that. I am no longer vegetarian. But yeah, I was vegetarian from like 15, all the way through college. It started off as my friend and I just being like, let's just like give it a—I don't know why we did it, we were kind of just like, let's be vegetarian. And then I just kind of stuck with it. And then when I applied for Peace Corps, they were, my recruiter was very honest about it being more difficult to be—sort of two things: It's more difficult to get into the Peace Corps if you're vegetarian, and also your life might just be more difficult at site if you don't eat meat, just because in some parts of the world, not only is eating meat a cultural thing, oftentimes it is out of necessity, and they are not gonna necessarily understand or care

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		why you are not eating their chicken soup. So yeah, so the summer after I graduated from college, before I was going to Paraguay, I went back to eating meat, and I do now try to watch my meat consumption and be mindful of where it comes from, but no, I'm no longer vegetarian.
<b>39:15</b>	<b>R.K.</b>	<b>Yeah, I have similar experiences. I'm vegetarian right now, but when I was in Paraguay, and then I went to Spain for a semester after, I decided to take a hiatus from it.</b>
<b>39:26</b>	<b>J.W.</b>	Yeah, Paraguay is tough. I mean there were some volunteers who were vegetarian; Most of them were closer to cities or small towns than I was, but it is possible, but it is tough there because they eat—most of their diet is meat and starch. So, it's very hard to eat things in Paraguay if you are vegetarian. Where'd you go in Spain?
<b>39:53</b>	<b>R.K.</b>	<b>I was in Granada, in the south.</b>
<b>39:57</b>	<b>J.W.</b>	Okay, yeah, I studied in Seville when I was in college... we went to Granada for a couple of days' excursion. I remember really liking Granada, and I was like, 'I kind of wish I was studying abroad here instead—' it was so pretty.
<b>40:16</b>	<b>R.K.</b>	<b>It is pretty. It's quaint. Yeah, I never had a chance to get to Seville but—</b>
<b>40:24</b>	<b>J.W.</b>	It was interesting. I liked it.
<b>40:26</b>	<b>R.K.</b>	<b>Yeah, that's really random that—I mean it's pretty, it's pretty, Spain's fun. It seems like you're a big traveler—you have your world map behind you...</b>
<b>40:37</b>	<b>J.K.</b>	I just like maps. But yes, I also like to travel. I've been playing this game called Worldle, where it gives you the shape of a country, and you get five guesses to guess what country it is, and like every time you guess, it tells you how far you are and what direction. And yeah, it's fun, because so often, even if you know where country is on the map, you don't necessarily know the shape of it, and so, you just kind of—but sometimes you kind of guess a country, and it's like OK, "Well, I know that it's a continent over." And yeah, it's like a process of elimination, and then you get to guess, if you get the country right, then you need to guess the neighboring countries. If you get that right, you get to guess the capital, and then the population. I like geography, so I think it's fun. Most of my friends are like, "That is lame, why do you do that every day?" And it's a different—you get this one a day, so it's not like you can; It's like Wordle in that way—you get your one country a day.

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- 41:43 R.K.**                    **Yeah, I've played that. My friend Enzo, he used to be obsessed with it.**
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- 41:49 J.W.**                    Yeah, I don't like Wordle, but I like Worldle, so it's an extra 'L' in there—but then, yeah, I also like to travel, so that's another reason why I like maps.
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- 42:04 R.K.**                    **No, that makes sense! I wanted to ask you another question about your childhood... What kind of a farm was it? And what are some of the, when you think back, the smells, the sounds, when you're outside interacting with nature?**
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- 42:22 J.W.**                    So my dad is not a farmer. My parents are not farmers... it's not how they make their living. It's a hobby farm, a small family hobby farm. So, my parents keep about 40-50 head of cattle, mostly Beefmaster and some Angus.<sup>14</sup> And we had goats and chickens, and a couple of donkeys and horses growing up, too. And then other parts of the farm are rented out to other farmers for crops, and so it's a rotation of tobacco, and soybeans, sometimes corn. It just kind of rotates. But yeah, I guess growing up—I grew up in the country, so it wasn't odd to have animals and to be on a farm growing up. It wasn't something that I thought was unique, until probably I started going away to summer camps in high school, and people were like, "What, you have cows"? It was normal to me...
- It was a lot of work sometimes, like a lot of Saturdays mowing pastures and building fences and stuff. Now that I look back on it, I'm happy that I had those experiences, but growing up, it was not fun to have to tell your friend that you couldn't spend the night because you had to be up to help build a bull corral the next morning. But now it's nice to have had those experiences. And also, it was nice to have space to venture out on your own, and to not—to have solitude when you wanted it and to be in in the woods with your friends just figuring it out. Like you see a wild animal like a snake and we didn't have cellphones back then, obviously, and you just had to kind of deal with it, walk away and hope it didn't follow you. And you flip the four-wheeler and it's like, "Hey do you think we can un-flip it or is this something we need to go get the adults for?" And so, it was—I like to think I had a fun childhood and fun doing those things. I imagine if you aren't an outdoorsy person, you wouldn't feel that way. But both my parents were raised on a tobacco farm, so they were very like, "Yes, get out of the house and go play in the woods." So, they were the opposite of helicopter parents, and it was nice to have that level of freedom, and be able to take those risks on your own, in a semi-controlled environment. You knew that the adults weren't that far away if you needed help,

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<sup>14</sup> Beefmaster and Angus are types of cows

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but you got to do your own thing for a couple of hours a day in the woods.

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**45:36 R.K.** **Well, that sounds really nice. I love being outdoors, but I was not always outdoors as a kid. I was in suburban Maryland, by D.C., so less opportunities to do that. But yeah, that sounds... I think I would also be annoyed having to do that much work as a kid. I didn't like doing chores, but also, I appreciate nature, so, I see both sides. And I missed the part—you got cut out in the very beginning; You were saying your parents own the farm, but they're not farmers.**

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**46:06 J.W.** Yeah, yeah. So yeah, my dad, he runs a commercial brick mason company, and my mom, she was a teacher, and then when my second-oldest sister was born, she started staying home full-time. So, no, my parents are not farmers, but—it's a hobby farm, so their income is not dependent on farms. They keep usually anywhere from like 30 to 40 head of cattle, and they have a couple of chickens. A couple of donkeys—the donkeys are there to watch the cows, because the donkeys will protect the cows if coyotes or anything come up. We had horses growing up, but I don't think they—they're watching or boarding somebody else's horses right now so they don't have horses of their own. And yeah, we had some goats growing up and they don't have goats anymore either. But also, in other parts of the farm, they rent the land out to other farmers. So, there's always somebody growing usually a rotation of like tobacco, soybeans, every once in a while, cucumbers, hay—just a random rotation of things on other parts of the farm. But most of my work growing up was in cattle management-esque work—and horses; A lot of cleaning stables, and hauling manure to my mom's garden or to my grandma's garden...

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**47:47 R.K.** **It sounds really nice-ish but I don't know if it was—was it lonely for you?**

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**47:53 J.W.** Not at all, no! I (am) one of 5 siblings, so it was not lonely as a child. There was is five of us. Four of us are very close in age, and then, like I said, my next-door neighbor and I were the exact same age, and so he and I were always trotting around together, and usually my little brother would tag along with us. So no, I feel like there was always somebody around. Also, my dad has like 11 siblings, and my mom has like eight, and so a lot of my cousins, and uncles and aunts, half of them are still within probably 20/30 miles of my parents' house. And so, I had quite a few cousins who are around my age, who were just always bopping through and spending weekends—especially in the summer time, it was not uncommon for my cousins to spend almost weeks at a time at our house. So yeah, there was usually a lot going on.

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**49:02 R.K.** Well, thank you for sharing all that. I have more questions, but it's been about an hour, and I know you're busy and working on your comments and such, so you can let me know if you need to go, or I can ask a few more. It's up to you.

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**49:19 J.W.** My next meeting is not `til 1 (p.m.). So I can..., yeah, I have time for a few more questions.

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TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

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**49:50 R.K.** Okay, I'll just ask one more, and then we can end our meeting—

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TECHNICAL DISCONNECT

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**50:11 J.W.** You broke up really bad. I did not hear that.

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**50:15** Oh, OK. I was gonna move inside... I just said... What do you think is the future of the Environmental Justice Movement, and what do you think—what are your goals for the movement? ...What do you think are the next steps?

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**50:39 J.W.** Ooo. Good question. I think, at least, it seems like a lot more people are starting to pay attention to environmental justice, and that underserved communities and disproportionately burdened communities are starting to get the attention and the resources that they need to start to fight some of the injustices in their communities. And so, I am hopeful that will keep happening, and that these frontline communities that are being the most directly impacted from pollution will continue to get resources and help that they need to remedy their situations.

But there's also a lot of people who don't agree with that, and who are actively fighting against that direction, or who don't think that environmental justice, or even pollution, is a problem. The goal of environmental justice is not NIMBYism.<sup>15</sup> It's not 'put that polluting facility somewhere else.' The goal of environmental justice is 'no pollution anywhere.' And so, I am hopeful that is the direction that we as a society and as a world are going, is rethinking the types of material that we use, rethinking our production practices, rethinking our energy consumption and energy creation practices, because as long as... waste exists, it has to go somewhere. And so, we won't be to the end—we won't achieve environmental justice until there is a reduction or elimination of pollution, because until there is, somebody will always have to bear

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<sup>15</sup> Not In My Back Yard – people want things built, but not built near them.

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the brunt of that pollution, and thus far, it has disproportionately been poor communities and communities of color.

And so, I don't know when, but I am hopeful that eventually one day we as mankind will get it together—before it's too late, hopefully, and clear up our mess... And stop, I don't wanna say stop pointing fingers—that's not the right word—but that polluters will stop waiting for somebody else to do it, if that makes sense, and take it upon themselves before they are forced to do it, to implement better practices and to clean up their mess, before it's too late.

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**53:31 R.K.**

**Yeah, I really like what you just said—especially the goal of environmental justice is ‘no pollution’. That is... so powerful, that is the end goal, right, of all environment movements, so I love that.**

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**53:46 J.W.**

Yeah, yeah, I feel like a couple of months ago, I was having a conversation with somebody, and they were basically saying like, “oh, in this argument are we saying that it would be okay if this facility was put on the White side of town?” And it's like, well, no, at the end of the day, this facility should not be allowed to exist anywhere—(that) is what we really want to argue, but right now, our clients are in a community that has a dozen other polluting facilities in it. So, this community does not need another one. Nobody needs it, but particularly this community right now does not need it. And so, yeah, it's sort of like a... it is a fine line and an important point that I always like to make, is that I'm not saying “put it in the wealthy White community”; The goal is not putting polluting facilities anywhere.

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**54:50 R.K.**

**Yeah, exactly. Well, I think that's a good ending point. So I'm gonna stop recording. But thank you so, so, much for joining me. This was absolutely a pleasure—really appreciate your time.**