

Thomas Konrad: I'm Thomas Konrad! I am a student in the race and oral history project here in San Diego, umm at University of California, San Diego. Uhh Professor Man. Today is uhh June 5th, 2019. It is 2:47 p.m. and Jennifer and I are calling umm from our mutual locations. I am coming from my apartment umm so very do-it-yourself.

Jennifer: ??? (0:27)

Thomas: Yes and uhh thank you so much Jennifer for your time

Jennifer: ??? (0:33)

Jennifer: Just over the border

Thomas: Oh, okay. We're we're crossing boundaries we're breaking down boundaries with this Skype call. (laughs)

Jennifer: There you go.

Thomas: I feel very special um so thank you but thank you so much Jennifer for re-recording this. I apologize for the inconvenience.

Jennifer: Oh, of course.

Thomas: Umm, so I guess to uhh we had a really good conversation and I guess I'll just start up with the first question that I did last time which was sort of why did you choose to go into umm the legal uhh profession as a career umm...

Jennifer: Okay.

Thomas: Umm feel free to take it away.

Jennifer: Yeah, to give you the the story of my wandering life.

Thomas: Yes! It's a good story.

Jennifer: Yeah! Uhh, it's a story, man. (laughs) Sooo the the short history I guess is I umm law was always kind of on my radar as a possible career from an idea I had when I was really young. I always tell people I had this uhh I got this dress, polka dot dress that had a blazer with it. You know, it was the late eighties.

Thomas: Mmhmm

Jennifer: Umm but I called it my lawyer suit because it had a blazer when I was in second grade. Umm I can I can give you the copy of the second grade school photo wherein I am wearing my lawyer suit.

Thomas: Oh totally, totally. I think I think umm future scholars will definitely get a kick out of it.

Jennifer: (Laughs) Right. So I'll send you that one, that's good.

Thomas: Okay!

Jennifer: But umm yeah! So I always kinda thought about it, but was somewhat conflicted uhh going into college partly because it's a pretty intense career; it's a lot of time and money investment.

Thomas: Mmm

Jennifer: I had been raised really, kind of traditional conservative Mormon, and so there was always this like, you know, are you going to be a mom or are you going to have a career conflict like baloney but, you know, I still was trying to navigate, and so. So umm yeah, there was a lot of back and forth. And I graduated from my undergrad program in English, uhh kind of general studies. I did everything but traditional literature.

Thomas: Oh! Interesting.

Jennifer: (Laughs) I was like, I don't want to take all the old British people.

Thomas: Yeah.

Jennifer: Like contemporary literature, I took law and film, and folklore studies and writing, rhetoric and all the other things. Graduated and thinking I was going to go to law school, and i got a job as a uhhh, receptionist for this small law firm. There was a couple of established attorneys putting this together in a new firm situation, and ummm. My second day of work I was promoted from receptionist to office manager.

Thomas: Nice

Jennifer: My grand feat of accomplishment. Unfortunately the existing office manager was demoted to be the receptionist. I had to fire her because it was just not a good situation.

Thomas: I can imagine, I can imagine.

Jennifer: Having now done some management consulting work, I can look back and say that was a bad call on their part.

Thomas: Yeah I am just trying to process sort of what's going through their minds as their making that.

Jennifer: Well they sometimes lacked emotional intelligence. Wherein they might think logistically and pragmatically.

Thomas: mk

Jennifer: (Laugh) Lawyers are traditionally horrific managers, their bad managers. Anyways so I worked there for a year thinking I would take the LSAT and go to law school. Just didn't love it, and did not love a lot of things about it. The business was rough and the dynamics of really combative, all the stereotypes of lawyers.

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: So my other sort of dream had always been to teach, you know that was from the time I was little I could be a lawyer or a teacher. Then just sort of last minute deciding what if I got a masters degree. I know I want to sort of do grad school, at some point in my life.

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: So I kind of last minute was like the middle of December, Christmas break I think, yeah the deadline for applications was a week out for the master's program at my undergrad university, so I had a lot of professors during my senior year who encouraged me to think about a Phd about academics.

Thomas: In English?

Jennifer: Yeah in English, they were all like, "so come get your degree and come teach with us" so I was like, "well I will do a masters"

Thomas: Sure

Jennifer: It was all really last minute so I thought I will apply there if I get in and its a good fit great, and if not I'll just take the next year to actually research grad programs and figure out what I wanna do (Laughs).

Thomas: Right Right

Jennifer: So I took the GRE and my scores came in and my scores came in three weeks after the deadline and it was such a hatchet job application. But I had a good application, I had really great professors recommending me in this program, and so, I ended up doing a masters in English. Initially going in thinking I would focus on a focus on writing pedagogy, so that's

teaching writing in a university setting, and also just general rhetorical communication argumentation Theory and how that applies outside of academics

Thomas: Oh so was the teaching of the writing more creative writing or more technical writing?

Jennifer: Expository argumentation writing yeah so research writing, and I also specialized in advanced writing, called writing in the disciplines. So I taught writing in the social sciences, technical writing for science and math majors. Ummm went on after graduation at the university of maryland where I taught some prelaw classes. Because I had worked in a legal field because I had worked in the legal field and done some heavy drafting. A Lot of students had taken the legal writing had aspirations of going into the legal field, as a cop not a lawyer which are actually very very different.

Thomas: Interesting.

Jennifer: Which are actually a few different modes of thinking. So I actually built the class around that. So I went during my senior year of college to a small village in Mexico where I had done a field study and I had done a whole ethnographic research study there. And so in grad school I had worked on, it was one of my thesis advisors, I had worked on ghost writing an independent study course that was using ethnographic methods in writing studies and then rhetorical discourse community things. So I had that background doing more case based, descriptive, ethnographic writing. I have written a few courses on that, and so that yeah kind of mapped on to the kind of writing that goes to investigative reporting, and insurance writing, and law enforcement criminology type writing. So I had those classes for a couple of years, got tired of being poor. Decided that I didn't want to do academics anymore. It hit me one day, as an academic, that the height of accomplishment would be to get tenure, which basically means moving somewhere and staying put and doing the same type of research for the rest of my life. ????. See most people would be comforted by that thought, but that makes me nauseous. This may not be the right type of profession for me.

Thomas: Sure Sure Sure. It wasn't the adjuncting though?

Jennifer: No! But it was being a full time professor, I am going to make 10,000 dollars a year more which is still nothing. And if I am really lucky I get to live in like Tulsa Oklahoma for the rest of my life studying some little corner of the universe and trying to publish or perish. And I was like maybe that's not my calling in the world. Ummmm, so I went into industry for a while, so I became a trading consulting which is basically a teacher that gets paid twice as much, and that opened up to doing training for technology stuff, some policy stuff for the federal government agencies, management consulting, leadership training. Really broad consulting practice.

Thomas: Sorry to ask, but could you describe some of the work you did with the federal government?

Jennifer: Yeah so my first contract I came along with was with the National Institutes of Health. And the company that hired me was a small boutique consultancy, and so there specialization was grants writing.

Thomas: Hmmmm

Jennifer: So they had a lot of tech experience. The clients they had been wanting to build their tech systems for support on the grant management tech side. And they had wanted to bring in training, it started with training on how to use the communication systems and the grant management systems and quickly they were like we need training on a lot of other things. And what had happened at NIH is, this is the division of extramural activities, not extramarital as some people mishear it. The arm of NIH that grants money out to other researchers, so Harvard, Johns Hopkins, right. So these were NIH grants, this was the part where they actually oversee the paperwork and administration of grants. The agency had undergone what's called a government mandated reorganization to create what's called the most efficient reorganization, you know, ummm which is exactly the uhhhhh. A misnomer it sounds like. A government mandated efficiency. But they had done this massive restructuring, they pulled in all this mid to low level administrative staff who were not my staff. So you know travel coordinators and admin assistants and people working in everything from the mailroom to document scanning to like high level executive assistants. Well they had all been taken out of their respective divisions and put into their central contracting office, and work with an internal contractor. With that had come massive layoffs and massive hiring, and complete obliteration of all you know...institutional knowledge and leadership and on and on. So I came in and had to build a complete training program from the ground up, which started with new employee orientation, and basic you know we were working with folks who were just ????? which is like basically a GED or a high school diploma requirements, so folks in the mail room all the way up to SDS's which are executives. So we were just every time we are having problems with this so what kind of training can we do, so I did that for about two years.

Thomas: I'm so sorry would you mind repeating what you just said.

Jennifer: Yeah so I was part of the team that built training programs, starting at like, really basic level, like basic orientation, like how to use word and excel, and basic computer programs. We started to do a lot of soft skill training, so conflict resolution, and communications, and professionalism, and that kind of lead to training a lot of rapidly promoted supervisors who didn't have a lot of management background. Doing executive coaching with the management teams, so that was a really interesting evolution. Cause I had done a lot of work in argumentation theory and descriptive work in different communities often looks the same as conflict resolution. SO I had done a lot of that at the theoretical level and I had done a lot of that at the practical level

Thomas: Sure.

Jennifer: So it was a weirdly good fit. Ummm. We actually won an award, it was actually a big deal. So our entire, our consulting team. There was one other consulting team and a couple of managing teams, had overseen the rebuilding of the program for the reorganization. So collectively we were awarded, its called the Directors' Award, which is the highest honor the agency gives. For like extraordinary efforts in support of the mission of the agency, ummm. And the kind of ground breaking thing is that they had never awarded that to someone is a contractor. They had only ever given that to federal employees. So there's a whole two tier sort of in the federal government between the contractors and we call them the govies.

THomas: SO you guys broke new ground

Jennifer: Yeah, so that was kind of cool to be part of a team. I had been part of a really being the brains and the energy behind the training program that has been recognized up to the top of the division that is really important in moving towards stabilizing the agency. I got this plaque that sits in a box somewhere that is pretty fancy. Had a little congressional medal thing, i dont know its extremely excessive. I don't know what to do with it other than schlep it around in a box next to my degrees. I don't know nothings on the walls anywhere (Laughs) ????

Thomas: Yeah

Jennifer: That whole thing. So so i had finished that contract, and I was working there. I was ambitious to move up, and that was starting to cause some internal conflicts because clients had been coming to me instead of my boss who had less sort of. Like she had kind of inherited the training program because she did similar things, but that was not her background or expertise. She didn't have the credentials but I did, and so I became as junior and became the lead person functionally and that created some real internal problems? So i was looking to leave really, I was like I gotta. She thinks I am gunning for her job and I don't necessarily want to but she thinks that. So the contracting company gave me an opportunity. They said, "we've got an existing contract at the Department of Justice, and there justice programs" which does grants. And they had the opportunity to bid on the second expansion that project and they needed someone to put together the pitch and proposal and bid on it and if you win it then you would be the project manager. And so I ended up doing that and winning the contract. And what I found when I had came in was that the existing team that had been working on the other contract that had been decent. They were ok but uhhh the contract managers, so kind of the client boss, the people that we worked directly with, did not like their team in terms of leadership. They were like they are good juniors but we don't want any of them wanting the contract. So they had written the description in the request for proposals in a way that would exclude anyone from our team from winning it. ANd they hadn't told me this but they brought me in because I had the years required and the advanced degrees. Because I had the masters degree and the background. And so I walk in to a team where I did not know half the people in that team were really bitter, that I was brought in from the outside and they were applying for time.

Thomas: That sounds like a really interesting management decisions

Jennifer: You know that company made some decisions that had they been my clients I strenuously objected to. I did in fact because I was there problem child. But the clients loved me cause i got crapped on and because I was capable and wasn't flying by the seat of my pants and I was really good at communicating and client management and so they were struggling, because the company really couldn't stand me. It was just you know, I was their junior employee one year, and at the year end christmas party. And they gave out the employee of the year award and they do one from every project. And 4 out of the 6 people who got the award they got up and described them as quiet and they just do their job and they are efficient and they don't cause problems and they don't make waves. ANd i was like ohh you really value people who do their work and put their heads down and shut up. So you don't really like me but i just brought in a 2 million dollar contract and over the course of that contract so it was back in 2008 when the big financial collapse had happened and uhhh the Bush and then the Obama administrations pushed the huge stimulus package. Which gave a bunch of grant money into the agency, ummm. ANd i was able to actually get, uhhh money from that to expand our contract to add 2 million dollars more. So I just made you 4 million dollars (laughs) so if you hate me, but also you love me. It was messy, really messy. Ummmm.

Thomas: THeY couldnt get rid of you

Jennifer: I was too valuable, but they didn't like me because I called them out on all of their bad management. So that contract started, again it was exclusively a tech contract. ANd when stimulus money came, it immediately pulled my team and me specifically to build a training program for grantees. One of the big things was it was supposed to create jobs. And you might have heard of the phrase ?????? ummm instantly kind of go, yeah that needs a crap ton of recording and paper work. ?????? That's how that goes, so they had these like massive reporting, and instead of typically grant report once a year. And they wanted reporting done once a quarter, and it all had to be put online for general public viewing. And so it was this rush to figure out how to train our grantees, which our like our local law enforcement agencies, local nonprofits that do juvenile delinquency and justice programs. Like how do we teach them to do these reports that are asking for new metrics, and oh by the way none of these metrics are defined in the policy.

Thoams: Huh

Jennifer: And so I ended up putting together a training that said how do you count a job, how do you put together this number that needs to be counted on this report form. ANd it ended up being a lot more complicated than it seems. Because what happens when you use the money to pay for half of someone's salary that was already working for you that was getting money that was going to run out so they were going to get fired but now their not going to get fired. Do you extend a job hmmm you know. Its all very complicated, it's all very complicated. So I was drafting, and I asked so what is the actual policy and they were all like write what makes sense and we will review it with the legal team. SO there were a couple times where i would draft

something, where I have no idea what this is supposed to be but if i were to make it up this is what I would do. So I would go to the general counsel's office and they would say yeah this seems like a good way to do it actually here let's call up the office of...OBM (Office of Management and Budget)and OMD (office unknown) which is the white house office of management which is overseeing publically the federal government, so let's tell them this is how we are doing it and maybe the other agencies should do it this way too ANd I was like, I am very uncomfortable with how federal law seems to be made by me and powerpoints. But I walked away not just building a training and management but I actually developed and refined federal reporting policy. So yeah.

Thomas: ????

Jennifer: Yeah it was crazy, so it was crazy deadlines and everything was high high profile. We had one that we had to get done. I don't even remember the project. But something we had to get done and the timeline was 4-6 months. And president obama had got up and given a press statement that said 4-6 days. And everyone was like we cant get up and say he was wrong, so everyone was like we have to do it in a month. And I was like oh my god this is the best, this is amazing, this is actually really really stressful. (Laughs)

Thomas: Yeah Yeah

Jennifer: Yeah so that's a lot of what I did. And right after I had kind of been put on that contract, uhhh. Cause I was still very much thinking. I was like its all kind of more of the same, you know it's a good promotion. BUt after 6 months there I wasn't completely happy with it. You know it wasn't the best fit. And I was really trying to figure out the next move in my career. And then realizing that by then actually taking the initial job in NIH was a transition. I had burned out teaching and wasn't making money and actually one of my best friends had died that year and so I had some really severe depression. So i needed the out and teaching was just so exhausting and kind of isolating.

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: SO i kind of jumped into that job because it was a good move and it was a good transition but it wasn't really the game plan. SO after about three years I came back to like, this is good but this isn't what i wanna do for the rest of my life. What do i wanna do? SO i had decided about 10 years ago that I was never going to be a lawyer. And I remember coming home when i was working with DOJ and i was working a lot with the office of general counsel. They had to clear everything that i was pushing out. The external training. And they would take my lovely four bullet points and a few graphic slides and be like well maybe you should say it this way and hand me a 100 word paragraph. That's terrible instructional design. But legally they should actually say it this way. I hated the lawyers. Every day I met with the lawyers my life would get hard. Everyday I came home and talked about the lawyers my roommates would just laugh at me about how much i would just complain about the attorneys. Because they made my



life hard, even though I understood why they do it. I was just thinking you don't get it at all. The reason I have a job is because you're contract language makes no sense to. Like we'd get calls from someone who was just like, "Now I am just a small town sheriff in Louisiana" and I am like oh dear, oh dear god. Louisiana is having some trouble.

Thomas: Yeah

Jennifer: I had one tech call my team told me. We had to spend five minutes explaining there was an icon on his desktop. And after about 10 minutes the guy realized he was looking at his actual physical desk, they didn't realize he meant the screen of his computer. SO not always technologically advanced grant recipients that we were trying to support. They were good at other things. (Laughs).

Thomas: Laughs

Jennifer: In that I had looked at maybe doing an MBA program, we had worked with many of the big consulting firms like Northrop Grumman and McKinsey, and so maybe moving over to a bigger contract and maybe going at it through that way. Maybe going back into academics from a different standpoint. Like I had looked at everything except law. At one point I was actually mediating a dispute. I was like dealing with some terrible landlords, who had filed complaints with the city, and trying to figure out that whole system. And someone in my family, you know I was telling them that I will file this in this commission and I was having to navigate that and I had to put all this evidence together and there like, "why don't you go be a lawyer." And I just immediately that I have already decided that I never want to be a lawyer. But it was this moment that had crept out of me. You know something about it had just felt, it was conflicted and compelling. I don't know but there is something about that field that there might be something worth looking into again. So I really struggled and you know I was 22 when I made that decision, and I was in a different place and I was a different person. I had different experiences and I was in a different position. So I was like I will explore. So I made this deal with myself and the universe so I am going to just take the LSAT. I don't want to be a lawyer, and I don't want to go to law school. And if I am going to give up, what at that point was a really good salary, you know in the federal government. And I was, you know, it was a good position. I am going to give this up to go 200,000 dollars in debt. It's gotta be to a top tier school. I had no desire to leave. I was living in Washington DC. I loved my life there. I was like I don't wanna leave DC I love it here. So basically I gotta get into Georgetown. That was the only one here that was locally, that had a real national reputation. So if I can't get into Georgetown so then there is no point. That is how I started this I set up some real conditions. So if I don't get at least a 170 which is this like kind of an egregiously high score. I think it's like 97th percentile. Out of 180 right. Then I am not going to apply. Then there is no point. So I went online and I just pulled a practice exam. And without studying. Ok I am just going to take a practice exam and see where I am at before studying. And I took it and under timed test conditions I got a 168. Which by itself is a really high score, and would have qualified me to get into just about you know most of the top schools that would

have pushed me into that level. And it was this moment of recognition that, not so much that oh I am so smart, but more like my brain is particularly fit for doing this kind of thinking.

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: THE Isat has these logic games, and all of that. And it's very time constrained. And i was like oh. I used to do logic games like this in the third grade for fun, because you know I was a weird nerd. Just like I am a weird nerdy adult. And so it was just like this moment of recognition that I was good at this. I was well suited to this. And all of a sudden schools that I had never dreamed of being on my radar. You know Yale and Harvard and Ivy league top top schools. Like I was well within range of being a competitive applicant to as school like that. I was like well, I don't know if I want to be a lawyer. But if i go to stanford or harvard or yale or something like that. If i got to a top three or a top six school, like I actually have those schools open doors. It doesn't really matter so much what your program is, but they open doors and opportunities. And thats what I was looking for. I wanted to open some opportunities in my life and in my career. So i was like ok let's do this. So I ended up studying, and I took the LSAT a few months later, maybe two months later. THE morning I took it I had a severe migraine. The week before I took the test I was getting near perfect scores, I was getting 178 and 179s consistently. I took the test with an egregious painful migraine. Like i stopped in the middle of the test during a break to go throw up.

Thomas: Oh my god.

Jennifer: SO you know in a brain fogged migraine I pulled a 170 and I was like well. Isn't that a kick in the pants from fate. So I ended up applying, and then I got into. I applied to the top 20 schools. Most of them had waived my application fees. So that was kind of how I justified applying everywhere.

Thomas: That's a pretty good justification.

Jennifer: I was like, i will apply anywhere in the top 20s that waive the fee. And then i will pick 1 or 2 schools that I am serious about. So that ended up being, usually you apply to five or six schools.

Thomas: Nice

Jennifer: I never heard back from UCLA. THEY were notorious for. I wasn't a California resident at the time and they prioritize Californians. And so they never write you back, they just ignore you. So they deny you if your out. And they do what's called yield protection. So if your scores and your application looks like you will apply to a higher rank school, sometimes they wont even talkl to you. They don't want you to be admitted and then you decline to go. But they also don't want to deny you early in the process. But I got accepted at, all but two schools. And I got waitlisted at Harvard and Yale I think. Which are #1 and #2. And I got accepted at Stanford

which is now #2. Stanford and Harvard trade #2 and #3. I got accepted everywhere except UCLA and Yale and I was waitlisted at those schools. And I was kind of torn between University of Chicago and Stanford. And those are very different schools and very different cultures. Very different academic focuses. Different reputations. They are kind of polar ends of the spectrum. So I knew that if I didn't want to go to New York. I looked at NYU and Columbia. I knew I wasn't a Manhattan girl. So I was like alright its either Chicago or Stanford. And I hadn't told anyone at work that I was leaving, that I was looking at schools. So this was all while I was going crazy at the Department of Justice, I was like I am going to take a vacation and visit my grandma in California. That was the cover story.

Thomas: They didn't know that you were at all applying or in the process of going through law school.

Jennifer: Not at all.

Thomas: Not at all, ok.

Jennifer I had told maybe one colleague and we kind of shared our angst. She was another perfect manager. So I told her after I accepted. Cause I ended up deferring for a year. So she knew for about a year that I was plotting my escape. So no one else knew until the very, very end that I was plotting which was kind of beautiful. So I had planned this trip where I flew into San Francisco. I was going back to visit my family, I was going to go to San Francisco. I was going to rent a car and drive down to LA. I had a lot of family in the Central Valley. And so I was going to hang out in Southern California and I was you know going to visit my grandma and visit a few other relatives. And then drop the car in LA and fly back to DC but do a three day stop in Chicago and visit University of Chicago on my way home. That way I could see two schools.

Thomas: Sure.

Jennifer: And get a week off. So that was my cover story. So I flew out to Stanford. And it wasn't even during the regular new admitted student weekend where they bring everybody and have all these programs. I couldn't get time off for that. So I just had done my own trip. I went and did my private tours and I talked to everyone there. But the minute I stepped onto campus I felt at home. It just felt like that was where I belong. So that was Stanford. I went through the motions of like talking to professors, and asking questions, and pretending like I wasn't sure where I wanted to go. And I after the second day, I wrote my deposit check and dropped it in the mailbox at the law school. I was like well I will let you know I have a few weeks till I have to decide. I think decisions were a month away. But I dropped my deposit there and went to online at my hotel and actually like pulled all my applications at all my other schools. I just declined them on the spot. And then I canceled my flight to Chicago and just rerouted straight to DC. And I was like nope that is where I want to go it just feels right. And you know I thought Chicago is just going to be a different school and this is exactly what I want so I am not going to bother. I didn't even open any of my financial aid packages, so I was like you know what I know that

should be a consideration. But I was like I a going to pick the school thats right for me, because thats how I want to do this. Because thats what I wanted and needed. You know?

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: Because I wanted to walk that path. And I felt very conflicted about going to law school. It just yeah, I wanted some personal (laughs)

Thomas: Some making sure it lined up just perfectly.

Jennifer: Some making sure it lined up personally with what I really wanted. Making sure like all the assumptions that I had made that I felt were valid when I was 22. And so yeah that is how I ended up when I was in law school. I was 32 when I matriculated at Stanford Law. I was ten years out of undergrad. And my class skewed a little bit older. I think the average student was 26. So there was a good cohort. There were about a dozen of us in there 30s and above. We had one or two classmates who were. I remember one of my classmates was a tenured professor at I wanna say UNC (University of North Carolina) Chapel Hill. He had decided he wanted to do some legal scholarship, so he ended up taking a year doing law school and then. At one point he just decided to take a masters in law and go back so he wouldn't lose his tenure.

Thomas: Oh

Jennifer: So we called him Jafessor?

Thomas: Jafessor? (Laughs)

Jennifer: And he was, probably in his early forties. So I always tell people, I feel a little old compared to these twenty somethings. But I am not as old as Jafessor.

Thomas: Yeah.

Jennifer: But I had a good cohort of classmates who were like 28 to 35.

Thomas: Oh that's good.

Jennifer: So there were a few of us who were older. And yeah a lot of students who were straight through undergrad. We called them the KJD's because they had never not been in school. From Kindergarten all the way through their JD's. We also referred to some of them as Stanford High. Because they had all sorts of drama and crazy and binge drinking. And all of them were all like I don't have to apply to anything else and I can just graduate and party. You know all of these nerdy overachieving kids who could finally just party a little bit. It was entertaining.

Thomas: I can imagine.

Jennifer: Like our own CW show.

Thomas: With all the melodrama

Jennifer: Oh yes, with everyone hooking up with everyone and everyone getting drunk. And the older folks sitting back there sipping their single malt whiskey and thinking like uh huh children. So but I had a great experience at Stanford. So while I was at Stanford, I was still very much a bit of a non-conformist. And I was like you know. I am not sure I wanna be a lawyer but I know that Stanford was the right place and there was so much there that I wanted to take advantage of. And I was really blessed, because the dean at the time: Larry Cramer, had just spent the last few years radically restructuring the program to bring it in line with. His big thing was like pushing us, to not just take classes at Stanford Law but also here at Stanford University. So we were allowed to take a year's worth of classes outside the law school and count them for free. So a lot of people had done joint degree programs. I had looked into doing a second masters or a potential JD-Phd. And I ended up deciding to take anything and everything I had always wanted to learn and i could make count. I had done some stuff in literature and film. I was very intrigued and i had never done true film studies. I was just so fascinated by visual rhetoric and story telling and film. My very first semester you are allowed to pick classes. And you are given one elective in your second semester, err quarter that you're there. So everyone else was taking Administrative Law or Federal Courts, and all of these things that are recommended for getting good clerkships and all of that. And I took law and film. We watched movies every week about like legal things and then we had these great discussions. And I was in charge of making artisanal popcorn for everyone. I started bringing fun flavor popcorn. Then it became a challenge that every week I would bring some fun crazy popcorn every week. So this is where I live and found myself.

Thomas: So this was your community?

Jennifer: Yeah so instead of doing law review or journal, which is like a big deal in law school. I had a documentary film program that someone had just started the year before. And i was like I am going to learn to make movies. And I ended up joining and over the next two years ended up running it actually. And I had almost no experience filmmaking. I had made a spoof sketch vidoe in grad school at like the year end party. This was like mockumentary style back before the office had came out.

Thomas: Oh wow ok.

Jennifer: It all started because we had discovered that the cubicles that where are our offices were that we shared with three students were almost exactly the same as our bathroom stalls. So there was a bit where one of our graduate freshman students came for a meeting with one of our graduate instructors in the bathroom stall. And everything evolved from there or devolved.

Thomas: (Laughs)

Jennifer: But basically a little handheld camcorder. First generation I-Movie. And so i was like yeah I wanna learn how to make film. And so I worked with some film students and we finished a documentary on the three strikes law. We did several interviews, and actually my second year we got permission to film inside San Quentin prison, which was a really big deal. So I have a bunch of footage, interviews and b-roll inside San Quentin prison that's been sitting for 10 years. I am actually talking right now with a friend who's private practice client is a filmmaker, a documentary filmmaker who is thinking about reviving my stuff. So that all happened last week.

Thomas: Oh wow.

Jennifer: She actually asked me to go get a camera and go to the border and putting together a film about migration and all the stuff we do. And I was like oh yeah my film in law school was 10 minutes long and I went to a film festival and she was like cool, send me the links. Apparently I have hollywood people right now that are my friends. So I did that, I took some journalism, like video journalism classes, I took things like media psychology and ummmm. ANd then I took a whole bunch of classes at what's called the Hasso Plattner School of Design. And so ummm, I don't know if you're familiar. IBO is this really famous innovation consultancy in silicon valley. Their whole shtick is human centered design. They do this whole human center design process that maps onto rapid iteration that does in depth ethnographic research on your users and doing you know all this kind of process for innovation and user centered design instead of engineering centered design. So thats kinda like these big buzzwords that have been happening in Silicon valley for the last 20 years. So IBO invented the mouse, and the palm pilot, and all kinds of things for companies like Mlcrosoft and IBM. So there like yeah, the big deal that only the insiders in Silicon Valley know about i guess. And David Kelly is the founder of IBO and he gave a bunch of money to create a creative design program at Stanford. And their whole thing is completely interdisciplinary so no one gets a degree in Creative Design. But it's folks from all over the university, mostly grad students only. So they're all advanced level students and professionals. And they do what's called radical collaboration, where you put a doctor a psychologists a lawyer, an engineer, a computer scientist, and an archaeologist in a room. And we would work with real life clients. We did one project--I took one class on health--where we would work on chronic disease patients from the community health centers. So if someone had heart disease or diabetes, we would work with them designing lifestyle and behavior change, sort of life hacks. Like How do we change people's lifestyle behaviors. Because typical medicine does a terrible job at that. Or we did one project with the Wall Street Journal where they wanted to figure out how to expand into younger markets using digital technology and that sort of thing. So we would go out and interview people in jobs and basically connecting with and helping them design marketing promotion and new features. Right you're working in this group just like completely collaborative. Like hands on they have these rooms like completely full with concrete floors and white boards everywhere, and stacks of post-it notes and markers, and like piles of craft supplies. So like they would do all these low tech what they would call prototypes where like you wanna build some cool surgical tool, lets build something out of markers and scissors

and tape and test and see what people think about it. Then we will 3d print something out that's a little bit more refined. So it was one big arts and craft project like all the time. So I just loved it there. It was the best

Thomas: That sounds really cool

Jennifer: I took one class there, it was two hours a week or three hours a week one day. It was called creative gym. It was just these challenges in creativity that would just push you to think outside the box. And like every day was a theme. So like one day we did a whole day where we learned improv games. Ummmm, and then one day we did a whole thing on visual art and we did, we spent like, we did this activity where they put a piece of art, a painting, a photograph where they put a giant painting in a screen and stared at it for a full 10 minutes. And we talked about the art and tried to see what happened to our analysis as we sat there for 5 whole....10 minutes is a long time to stare at a painting. And then we built chairs out of six different materials, like clay, and toothpicks, and gum. Exploring how material changes design, and you know turn around and build puzzles, and turn around you know. So it was just like every day was just all, I told people it was like kindergarten for grown ups it was fantastic. You're working with all these people, so I spent a ton of time in this school. And I was always trying to get the lawyers to come over, and they are always a stick in the mud. So I would get a few friends who were lawyers that were there on the regular.

Thomas: Yeah

Jennifer: So I graduated from Stanford. I did one summer at a law firm. And I hated it, it was the worst experience.

Thomas: What kind of law was it?

Jennifer: So I went to a big general practice firm, kind of a regional firm, kind of a mid sized firm. There were hundreds of attorneys in San Francisco. And I wanted to do soft IP (intellectual property). So hard IP is patents, and soft IP is copyrights and trademarks and that kind of thing. I wanted to do intellectual property, I wanted to work with startups. I had done one or two projects with them, but what I found out was that the recruiting committee wanted me to work in labor and employment. And what I didn't realize until it was all said and done and after I had left all of the women, all of the minorities, they have all these awards for diversity, all worked in labor and employment. And labor and employment is the least profitable area of the firm. They are on a separate floor. They don't have a lot of political power within the firm. They are in a kind of marginalized space. And every time they would bring an assignment to me. They would be like oh it's this great assignment. You'll be doing litigation. You'll be drafting and doing research. It'll be good for your portfolio at the end of your term. And I'd be like great, sign me up! And they would be like great here is the attorney in labor and employment who is overseeing it. So it was a really frustrating experience over there. I had to figure out why things weren't working well.

And it wasn't till ???? mentors after it was done who said oh you totally got marginalized and sidelined, that's what they do to women and minorities in law.

Thomas: Jeez

Jennifer: I knew this kid who went to a local law school. And he was bright, he was top of his class. But his school was pretty low ranked. And he was not a great writer, I coached him. I helped him write three or four big assignments. And at the end of it he got praised for the quality of his writing. And the one feedback I got was you have too many typos in your first draft. I was like, I've been taught professional writing, I've been paid to do professional writing. Like no one gives a f\*ck about typos in a first draft. Like you're probably gonna have me rewrite and redraft and research, like I did not, you know. So I would get stuff like that, and I was like wait what? That was one assignment three months ago, like why are we still talking about that. And he's a great writer? I wrote half his stuff. And like, I started to notice at every meeting I sat in when we looked at our task meetings I started to notice that everyone had one or two assignments and I had like four or five. So everyone else did 8 assignments that summer and I did 12. Ummm and they came to me at the very, like Thursday was my last day of work. They came to me on Wednesday before and they said you've been really wanting this assignment, we have this great trademark research that needs to be done. You know we already told the partners you want to do it. I was like I have four major memos due tonight. I am leaving here at 8 pm. I have to go home, move all my belongings into storage, and go catch a flight at 7 am.

Thomas: Right

Jennifer: Like this is my last day of work, I can't take that assignment. And then there were, the person who was coordinating was all like I already told them you wanted to do it. Could you go down to the partner's office and tell them you don't have time to do their project for them. I was like are you kidding me, you set me up. So it was a lot of stuff like that. When it came to the end of the summer and they made it really clear that if I was willing to work in Labor and Employment they had a job for me. What they told me was the other division leaders know you're great but they never got the chance to work with you or to know you so they're not willing to take a chance on you. And I was like funny how that works. And then I found out the kid who got all that praise, he had a mentor. We had mentors assigned to us. My mentor showed up the first week and took me to lunch, and I think I had coffee once with one of them. But they never really checked in with me. And I always felt bad. I thought I should go up there more and that I should really be building that and I should be proactive.

Thomas: Sure.

Jennifer: Then I found out his mentor, they had standing coffee three days a week. And she didn't let him turn in any other assignment to any other partner until she reviewed it first. So that's what mentoring is. Like I had had no idea. All the other summer associates' offices were like between three and four offices at like a really crowded part of the office. My office was like



at the far end of this like bottom floor. And it was next to like six offices that were usually empty. And so like when they had other attorneys come in those were like the hotel offices.

Thomas: Oh I see.

Jennifer: I had like one neighbor from like the tax group that I was like, I am not a tax attorney. So I wasn't even in the office talking with other attorneys. I was all like oh you guys hang out with the other lawyers that are next door to you oh? Ohhhh! Yeah! Yeah that was a terrible experience.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: The thing is the firm had won awards for diversity. The firm had a reputation as being a lifestyle firm where it wasn't so completely

Thomas Work Work Work?

Jennifer: So if this is as good as it gets? I don't wanna do this. Ummm and so I really stepped away from the firm. And I didnt wanna hustle and try to find another law firm job. And I spent most of my 3rd year without any job prospects. Like I graduated without a job secured, which is unheard of at Stanford. And they had just got the new Dean in. And she had come from a little lesser elite school. So she was feeling pressure and so she was freaked out that I didn't have a job, because I was ruining her stats. And so what ended up happening is that I would pitch a bunch of projects to stay and work with a fellowship to work on the film project. She was n't interested in creative stuff, she was more traditional. Which was such a shame because Larry was like how much money do you need. Yeah I will buy you a fancy camera, sure go make a movie no problem. I can fly you to a film festival no problem. She was like yeah no, we are going to focus on other areas that are a little more prestigious. And I was like alright. But she offered me something I call a pity fellowship. We'll give you a fellowship to go out and work with a nonprofit and you would build your resume and make you more employable. That's how it was couched.

Thomas: Sure

Jennifer: The supervisor told me she just rolled her eyes and laughed. Its because you don't have a five year resume and a 10 year career. First she's like, take the money and go do what you want to do. And I was like ok! I'll go do that. And she was like take the year. And I was like great. Yeah so I graduated that summer. I had a friend of mine who was JD-PhD. She was doing a joint degree at Duke, lived out in North Carolina when she wasn't in Stanford. And she had spent a summer working with this immigration attorney who had run a tiny little nonprofit, it was just him and his associate, that was inside another nonprofit, it was hispano. Centro Hispano Raleigh. He was doing immigration nonprofit work. She was like they're desperate, they're about to go under because they don't have any money. You could go work for them.

They'd love you. And they're doing some actually really cool work, but they don't have any resources. So that's how I met Marty Rosenbluth. Who was my first boss out of law school. He was the scrappiest ballerist, like activist I've ever met.

Thomas: A real fighter?

Jennifer: A fighter. He's just like this calm little Jewish man. Apparently he went to law school in his 50s? And before that he had been a country expert documenting human rights abuses in Palestine and Israel. So he's a total radical liberal. You know a pinko commie radical. I love him I love him. He's like I am the Jewish guy who documents palestinian human rights violations. So you know how well that goes over in Shabbat dinner at home. But he went to law school after he worked for Amnesty International for 12 years because his wife told him, "now that we have a kid you have to find human rights work that does not involve warzones." And he got into immigration law because of that. And so right, does organizing does you know civil rights stuff. Great guy. We used to volunteer and go to the Moral Monday protesters. Like that's what he does on his spare time. So I walk in on the first day, and he hands me a two foot, literally two feet tall, stack of files. He was like, "So I had never done gang based asylum, but we have six cases that nobody else in the region will take, they are all gang based asylums. Central America, Mexico. Our first hearing is in three weeks. You're smart you went to Stanford. Good Luck!"

Thomas: Oh Jeez.

Jennifer: "Let me know what you need!" It was like, I had taken immigration law, so I had basic knowledge. But I don't know anything about this law. So I learned it really really quickly on the ground. It was a great year.

Thomas: That sounds great.

Jennifer: We worked in a tiny office with these crazy cases. I was doing work that second, third, fourth year associates were usually not doing. I ended up being the lead strategist on the Fourth Circuit Appellate case. Yeah it ended up being a big deal. I had ended up talking to one of the attorneys at the firm, who was kind of cautioning me about being older, and having so much work experience. "You know you really need to make a point of being humble and that you're willing to do grunt work, they all think you have an ego because you used to be the boss somewhere." And I was all like, what I used to take all sorts of crap assignments. What are you talking about? Everywhere I've worked I end up taking the trash out, like that's not how I roll. But here's the thing, they were terrified about me because I was older and more assertive, and they were just all like, "well you just need to be willing to prove that you are a team player and pay your dues." I remember this conversation where they said, "when you're a lawyer you'll never get to make constitutional arguments. You'll never get to spend time doing case strategy and all that cool sexy work. Like a lot of what we do is grunt work." Especially as a first year, probably until you're a partner. And I was like you know what I'm less than a year out of law school and I'm

running appellate strategy on a really sophisticated case. I am handling like groundbreaking litigation. I am making constitutional claims, like the 14th amendment claims, like beat that bitches (laughs). So yeah I loved with Marty. And uhhh, two things were happening. Right after I had left North Carolina, I had gone to a design sprint which is like a hackathon but without the tech stuff, and looked for immigration and tech solutions for immigration. And I had been recruited by a couple of guys who had had a start up that were doing for profit immigration solutions. And they brought me on as a legal expert and a product designer for them. And I, so I was working with them part time long distance and I was flying about once a month to Silicon Valley.

And then the other thing that's going on is that we had a couple of volunteer attorneys over there that had been a good friend of my mine who is still one of my close colleagues. And she was my niece who had like quit a job on the West Coast and has moved home to help with family and reboot her life. You know she had broken up with someone who she had been with for a really long time and she had known Marty, she had done another internship with Marty at somewhere else before. And she was all like hey can I do some volunteer work and get my foot in the game while I am kind of taking some time off. So she and I, and a bunch of our, I had recruited a bunch of our volunteers from UNC and Duke were right there. You know so she and I had actually talked about how do we make this little nonprofit sustainable. We were running out of money. Marty actually had to take clients out on the side to pay his assistants and I think probably his wife was just paying most of the bills that year. So we had tried to figure out what it would look like. All of the major grant making foundations that do social justice work. They had all pooled all of the work they funded for immigrant rights groups. They had decided that they were no longer going to fund direct aid services they were only going to fund efforts at systemic change. And you know this is not an uncommon way of thinking. Why are putting ambulances at the bottom when we can build a fence at the top. We should push for systemic change. So they would only give money if you did impact litigation like the class actions the ACLU was doing or lobbying to create systemic change.

Thomas: Sure.

Jennifer: The problem was direct service organizations were starving and they were completely anemic and they had no funding and it was creating this compound problem where a lot of things like appellate litigation, that is important for moving cases forward, that require you to have your lawyer, and have your case represented in court at the trial level in order to take an appeal to say the Supreme Court. And if no one has a lawyer and no one gets representation on the ground we are actually missing this opportunity to do systems change. And our big question, our design question, was how do we create a program that looks at creating systemic change but does it in a way that directly increases direct representation. How do we marry two goals. So we spent a lot of time around that, brain storming around that and thinking around that. And figuring out how we would rethink this idea of a legal services organization around bigger concepts and more holistic integrated care, you know representation working with social services, doing trauma informed work, working with radical collaboration. We were bringing

graduate students in the philosophy department to research conditions in some of these countries. Because a lot of this work is not legal, its actually rhetorical and geopolitical. You know I had my first assignment from Marty was that we had a case where the case turned on whether or not a US citizen child could get adequate medical care if the family was deported to Mexico and had a pretty severe sclerosis so I had to research what are the standards of care for sclerosis in the country of Mexico and what access to medical services there were in countries of that condition. And how did that compare to US standards of care. Like that's not a legal questions, that's not even a policy question. That's a medical, public health question.

Thomas: Sure.

Jennifer: And I ended up calling two of my friends who have Masters of Public Health and being like how do I answer this question. So we were looking at how do we not just get law students and lawyers involved, who else can we get to volunteer.

Thomas: Right, and take that interdisciplinary approach.

Jennifer: Yeah, take the interdisciplinary approach. And also offload attorney work. A case can take 100 hours for a lawyer to do. But really there is 10-20 hours of work that requires legal expertise. And everything else doesn't. So if I was doing it with Marty, where I was handling most of the case work and hand him the file and brief him, where he would do the hearings and work directly with the clients a little bit. And so he was doing, we were getting 300 hours worth of work and he was only doing thirty. Right, and so that was freeing him up to hand him more cases.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: And do what he did best, right? We were looking at how do we do this and how does that map onto the system of change? And the big aha moment for me was, we had this case out of Central America, and the client had been a victim of attempted femicide. Ummm, so there is a lot of gender based violence in Central America and Latin America right now. So we were working on this case out of Central America, with gender based violence. And our client had been, her and a friend had been abducted. They had been driven off into a rural area, they had been sexually assaulted, they had been raped, and then they were both shot and left for dead.

Thomas: Oh my god.

Jennifer: One of the women died, and our client actually didn't. And I won't go into details because I want to protect identities that could make her identified. But it was kind of a miraculous freakish situation where they thought she had been shot and died when she actually survived and was able to be escape. And she pressed charges, and just by sheer luck again, um there is a federal special victims unit that came to investigate the crime. And they arrived before the local police. And they told her the local police are totally connected to these guys,

who have local narco-trafficking connections and local political connections. One of the guys was like the child of a high government official in the local municipal government. And then all of these cartel, narco-trafficking connections. So that was the issue. So she prosecuted the case, and she won. And her assailant, who the judge initially said the law required 30 years to life, because you know it was a double rape, attempted murder 1, and actually murdering the other. It was pretty severe. So he actually ended up getting six months of house arrest after someone absolutely paid a judge. And then the prosecutors told, "we can't provide witness protection, you are going to have to leave the country." And so that was kind of the foundational case. And it was a Friday afternoon. Our filing deadline was the next Monday, and we were about 3 and a half hours from Charlotte where the court was. And basically we had to have it in the FedEx by that afternoon. This is before it was a Saturday pick up. Like we had to have our filing in the mail by 6 PM on Friday to get it to the court by Monday morning. And I was pulling together and printing off all the documents and worked on this big brief and had done all this research.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: And our core piece of evidence was this, um, police report and the court file from the criminal case from in country. Umm yeah so I was I was pulling all this paper together and we had this document that was like 35 pages of the case file all in Spanish. All like faxed from in country. And I realized we had done, like all of this had copies of it. And we had been working off this in Spanish. Most of us had enough Spanish that we could work with it, and there were notes in English and outline in English. Nobody had actually done an actual literal translation. And in order for it to be submitted to the court it has to be translated into English. And this was our, like, like our whole case hinged on this. Like if we couldn't submit this we were completely S.O.L (Sh\*t out of luck). And it was really bad. Like it was Friday at 3:00, our, you know our Spanish speaking intern like was gone for the weekend. And our native Spanish speaking paralegal was out of the office already. And I was just like oh crap. Like we have to get this done. And we can drive the file in. We can drive down to Charlotte first thing Monday morning. But there was no way this was a 35 page legal document, forensic report, court transcript. You know like this is pretty sophisticated. This is like at least a week to a two week translation project if we were able to get someone to do this for us, and that's if someone really knows their stuff. Ok, time to crowdsource. So I scanned it, and I found some online cheapy OCR software. Scanned it into PDF. Transferred it to OCR. This was still five-six years ago, so OCR got even better. And I just dumped it page by page into a google doc. And I just put out the bat signal to all the people I knew. I went on Facebook, I started texting. Everyone I knew who spoke Spanish, I had a bunch of friends who had been like Mormon missionaries in Spanish speaking countries. I was like I know you don't really do translation but I was like just give me an hour or two. Just do a page or two. One of my friends, the attorney that's the woman who had connected me who was there in North Carolina, her mom was a retired Spanish teacher before she had been a principal. And so I called her up and I was like, "Irma, help me." And we had about a dozen people volunteer. And they all spent an hour or two translating a page or two. And we translated all 35 pages by the next morning. And had it completely and verified and certified and ready to go to court. Like by within a day.

Thomas: Yeah.

Jennifer: And I was just like ok, that's cool. Ummm and really what ticked me was realizing we were profoundly grateful, but everyone I reached back out to all the people who volunteered and told them thank you. We were able to get it done. And everyone reached back out and said thank you, is there anything else I can do?

Thomas: Wow.

Jennifer: Like they thanked me for the chance, and asked and begged for more. More opportunities to volunteer. And I was like, yeah. But this is really, you know, kind of a logistical nightmare. But I realized, you know, what if we were to do this at scale. What if I could have people from all over the country whether they were students or not volunteering to support legal cases. And we had already been doing that internally. What if we could create models of collaboration.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: Reduce all of the transactional friction. Which is excessive, especially in a legal space. Right? We could actually off load a ton of work from attorneys. So instead of hiring more lawyers to do more work, which is something that is desperately needed. What if each of our non-profit attorneys could take twice as many cases? That has direct impact, and that is systemic change. And so we spent most of that year kind of figuring out was that something we could build out in North Carolina. Got to the end of the year, and. Two things. One we realized we just didn't have the resources in North Carolina. I didn't have the relationships in the community. My boss, who is an amazing attorney, does not actually like being an executive director and fundraising. And I was all like, "Yeah but you know everyone." You know so it's kind of one of those we just don't have the team to do it here. And I, at the same time, we had kind of hit a wall at the start up that I had been working with. And I realized it was time I part ways with the CEO, and I didn't have a consistent vision of where I was. And so I started over, you know, it was like October or November and the year is almost up. And I was like well I could get a job. But what if I could build this, but not in North Carolina. What if I could build this where I did have the resources and I have the connections. People in Silicon Valley. I have connections in Utah which actually has a pretty big tech community.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: Maybe I could do something like that. So I spent the next two years, and that became Torchlight, Torchlight Legal. And that was kind of the, you know, it was the tech solution and it evolved but that was kind of the banner that I was working under. So I spent the next two years, I had been living at home for a year. Then I ended up having a falling out and then spent some time on a friend's couch in Sacramento. Which was supposed to be three weeks but turned into a year. And really was pushing and trying to find ways to build radical collaboration in

immigration, asylum cases, and did a lot of cool stuff. And met a lot of great people, and just could never quite get the funding and resources to move the ball significantly forward. Very start up story, failure failure failure. (Laughs). I did get to present twice, at two back to back panels at South by Southwest Interactive.

Thomas: Nice.

Jennifer: Which was kind of a big deal. I went to a couple of other startup conferences. And so we had a lot of enthusiasm and I had some folks who were working with me and they were volunteers and they just didn't have the capacity or the bandwidth. You know it was one of those things where we couldn't get the right team together.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: Meanwhile I am hustling on the side doing like, side gigs, living off savings, eating a lot of ramen noodles. I mean I was in college level poverty. Writing terrible marketing blog copies for marketing content blogs. Ummmm, (Laughs) on all sorts of random topics that were like 15 cents a word. I was just picking up side work wherever I could so I could do this. And it was interesting because right before the 2016 elections. It was right before immigration really heated up. There had been a lot that had been happening in the Obama administration, it was right before it had hit that tipping point in the public discourse. And legal technology was still a very new space in the tech world. It's still just starting to hit adolescence right now.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: I could, I could name like every single tech startup that's in the legal tech space and I knew probably 90% of the founders in person. Like most came out of Stanford. Like it was a really small world, and there wasn't a lot of money there. You know and I was trying to do this thing where we were working the nonprofit space and doing humanitarian work and trying to develop systems and technology that could be monetized in other areas of the law. So I had this whole theory of how a system of collaboration in asylum law really maps onto patent litigation and for profit models. But it was a little too out there for a lot of folks. It was too much of a risk for a lot of folks, and the start up world has really shifted. Funding had dried up. People weren't funding ideas anymore. You had to show like a product that was making revenue to get any venture capital and donations. But a lot of it was like I just didn't have the capacity by myself and I couldn't get enough people with the right skill sets so it's just a struggle. Worked with some incredible folks though. And I just couldn't get into a point where I just had to say, "Ok I've got to radically rethink this." So I went home for the holidays to go see my sister. And lets see this was Christmas of 2016. I gotta figure out ok, 2013 I graduated, 2014 I was in North Carolina, 2015 I was in Utah. Christmas of 2016 I was in Sacramento. And Christmas of 2016 I came home to Sacramento and found my sister in complete crisis. Ummmm, had a really her marriage had fallen apart. And she has mental health diagnosis, that she wasn't getting proper treatment. She had a really traumatic labor and delivery with my nephew, and had to go back to

work after that. And she had to work her jobs. She had a severe illness. She had three major infections, she had all sorts of crazy infections. An ear infection that made her go partially deaf. And was suicidal, and just a mess. And working two jobs. And a really bad marriage situation. And so I got there and was like ok, nope, this is not ok. And I ended up actually staying with her for about three months. And taking of her, helping her get a little bit of breathing room, helping taking care of my nephew. Ended up arranging, my grandma had had a stroke a year before. And my sister's career had been nursing homes and healthcare. She started out as a nursing assistant and she became a director of recreation therapy. So you know she does geriatric care. She needed to get away, she needed a way to get a break. And we were all like well, we can move to Fresno. So I got her and her son to Fresno. And he (husband) stayed behind to finish school. He ended up moving back to his parents again, they're now divorcing. Ummm got her to Fresno, oh she had a cancer scare the same time.

Thomas: Oh my god!

Jennifer: It was bad. It was bad. It was terrible.

Thomas: Oh my god!

Jennifer: You know all three of the girls in my family are pretty estranged from my parents so we didn't have family support. I was it. And she's ten years younger than me and then my other sister is a year and a half younger than her. And so they're both just college students and newlyweds and trying to get through life. And I went ok well, I don't really have any money. I have freedom. So I stayed and worked remotely. So I stayed there with her for awhile, and got her to Fresno. A week or two later she called me and said this was overwhelming, Grandma is worse than we thought, I am trying to do 24/7 care for her while watching my kid. And I got to go to the doctor. And no one can watch her or Ray (Jennifer's nephew). So can you come down from Sacramento for a week. And I was like ok I haven't even unpacked my car. Like my parents had made me take all my storage out of their house. So I had all of my belongings with me. Had all of my belongings in my car. Had spent three days in Sacramento trying to catch my breath. I just got home from South by Southwest the second time.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: Well I'll come down for a week and help out. And I got there and I was just like well I am just going to move here. And she was like, "No. No, it's just for a week." And within a month it was really clear like ????? and I needed to stay. And so it started out and I was like I can work remotely. And it really quickly devolved. And it was just too much. And so I put everything on hold. Things had kind of fallen apart with the org that I had been working with. You know we hit some snags. So torchlight was dying basically. I didn't have the energy or the money to take like and revive it and all of my time was taking care of family. And ummm, so you know I kept doing some sidework. My uncle has a company manufacturing nutritional supplements and things like that. I sort of did regulatory compliance for them, I was helping them with that you know...so I



was doing a little bit of sidework, but I wasn't engaged in my career at all. I spent a year there, just...you know. Keeping grandma and Tina (sister) alive. And helping her make the big decision to file for divorce, and separate from her ex. And you know she had a two year old going on three, who was just in crisis. So I was taking care of him most of the time. Yeah so I spent, it ended up being about a year. And at the end of that, that spring, we kind of devolved. I spare the world my family's dysfunction and drama. Got to the point where my grandma's health had stabilized and asked if she could go to a nursing facility. And actually had, you know, survival possibilities. She had a heart condition that was just totally unstable but we did a procedure that stabilized her heart. But none of the cardiologists wanted to do it. Because she's 87.

Thomas: Oh wow.

Jennifer: was so unstable with her medications and getting assisted care. And you know like this will kill her. So finally we were able to get someone to get her stable, you know my sister got her stable. She got her stabilized again. And we were able to get her moved into a nursing home. And things kind of devolved with my uncle. And so it was time for us to go. And so my sister had you know the, she had all of these medical bills go into collection in her name because the ex didn't handle any of the finances. And so she had no credit, and she had been paid cash. She didn't have any tax history for a year. And she hadn't worked for a little and she doesn't have a job. So she couldn't get a job. She was all like I know I can get a job. I am employable. I can go back to the company but I don't have a place to live, and I don't have a place right? So I found her a place of a friend of mine in Palo Alto who had space. And he took her in for 2 months. And so I arranged for her to go to Utah for a few weeks to visit family and went back to Palo Alto and spent two months there, just sort of catching her breath and finding a place to live and a job. And I was just like I have to get out. I was so burned out at that point. Caretaking is exhausting. And I was like all of my projects have died. I have no job, and I have no career. I haven't talked to most of my colleagues and connections in almost a year. And I can like barely function. So I had always wanted to work on my Spanish. I had always spoke Spanish poorly. And so I found a program in Cuernavaca, which is south of Mexico City, which is really cool. I had a little bit of savings, signed up and took a month. Lived in a friend's house down there. And it was just really fantastic. I just needed to get away and I just studied Spanish for 8 hours a day. Which is intense and exhausting.

Thomas: Yeah, it sounds really intense.

Jennifer: It was relaxing because I was in a classroom for six to eight hours a day speaking Spanish and reading, you know doing intermediate to advanced language work. Which is actually a lot of work.

Thomas: Which it is.

Jennifer: But its not caregiving and then I spent about a week and a half traveling after that. I went up to the Yucatan to visit a friend. Actually she was a deportee. I knew her through

Facebook and she grew up in the states and ended up being deported for 10 years waiting for her ban to be lifted. So we finally got to see each other in person, which was great. But I didn't have the bandwidth to make real follow up plans. And while I had been there I reached out to a good friend of mine Joanna Brooks. Who I had known, she and I knew each other through a whole community of former/ex Mormons, progressive Mormons, and Mormon feminists. She and I knew each other through Mormon blogs and community groups. We met a few times, done a camping trip with a bunch of friends, so we had known each other for the last like seven or eight years. And I had just reached out to her, I need someone to talk to, I just need some advice and some sound soul and some care and I don't really have parents right now and I don't really have a big sister, and I haven't...nobody knows what to do with my life. Well she said why don't you be a lawyer. And I said, "yeah well that's kind of complicated." And she and I had been talking, and was helping me get my bearings again. And she was all like why don't you just come here to San Diego. She was an administrator at SDSU. She was like, look my kids are going to be in summer camp. Look there is lots of immigration stuff going on here. I've got friends who are immigration attorneys in Texas. So just come over and crash over here, and we'll fix. You know you just need kind of a home and somewhere where you are not homeless and scrambling to survive. Because she is a lovely human being. And so I did, I had a plane ticket to LA. So I bought, I think she bought me a train ticket from LA to San Diego because I was completely out of money. So I came down and crashed on her couch. I got there on a Sunday, June. Lets see I flew in on June 24th. I took the train down, she had just been at a demonstration against the family separation policy had been in place, and had really gotten some publicity. And so people were really responding to that. She had just been at a past event for immigration. And like picked me up on her way home from the picket line (Laughs. You know and took me to her house and you know and tucked me in. And welcomed me. And just was wonderful. And said, "Oh by the way, I am having a house meeting tomorrow. I invited a bunch of my colleagues and my friends and neighbors and everyone is really really upset about what is going on in immigration and family separation and we want to talk about ways to organize and take action. So will you be our guest speaker." I was all like, "OK I guess we are doing this." This was my second day in San Diego. And the end of that meeting was a decision to write letters to detainees, and that became Detainee Allies. Two days later she said, "Do you wanna get arrested with me." And I said, "Sure why not, that's on my bucket list." So we joined a demonstration a demonstration march led by Mi Gente, which is an amazing community organizing group. And she and I were in what they call a red group, blockading a federal building downtown. We planned and prepared, we had spent the whole week going to trainings learning how to be arrested and dragged away and things like that. They were just about to call, the police officer you know on duty there was just about to call for our arrest. And one of the senior administrative folks showed up. All I know is this guy walks up in a suit, and you know he walks up to the like, you know heavy set very white looking police chief and goes, "Yeah they have every reason to be protesting, so you're going to stand down." And so the police stood down. And like, I guess we won the protest. I guess that's how that works. We were torn between like yay this is great, we made our point. We were able to raise some awareness and make a point and also we were really disappointed, we were all set. We had National Lawyers Guild written on our legs and our markers. Like we were all ready to go.

Thomas: Mhm.

Jennifer: So that was my second week in San Diego.

Thomas: Very dramatic.

Jennifer Yeah! It was, it was (laughs) like a Lifetime movie lord. So I spent the summer we started doing the letter writing and organizing Detainee Allies, and it became really clear that that was a lot of what I thought in terms of collaboration. It was starting to come back into play. I moved into this different context and a different starting place but I was seeing a lot of parallels. We'd talk through how to do this and I would say, "Oh, I've already thought through a similar problem. I have a flow chart from two years ago that would fix this problem." Right? So I decided you know, maybe I need to stay here. Right around the time I had come to San Diego, my sister found a place to live in El Cajon. And she had decided to move down to the area. And it was just sort of unplanned serendipitously we were in the same area. And so I decided well if I stay I'll need, you know, I found and was able to get on as adjunct faculty teaching a writing class which I had done years ago. That was enough money to pay some of the bills and survive. But I could not afford to pay rent in San Diego. But I discovered I could afford to pay rent in Palo Alto err Tijuana. God that's even worse.

Thomas: (Laughs). I was going to say Palo Alto?

Jennifer: So I ended up moving to Tijuana and living in an Airbnb for six months and had a few friends, including Joanna, who helped me with that. And the rest was, that was a year ago, and yeah everything has kind of flowed from there. So, that's my story (Laughs).

Thomas: It's a good story.

Jennifer: It's a crazy story.

Thomas: I mean, I've heard it, and now I am hearing it again. And it's like wow, it's always riveting to hear. Its a good story. It's been decent conversation, but I just wanted to ask, something that you said about, you know, you were a law student you were doing the work in film and obviously there is a critical, no matter whether its fiction or nonfiction, there is a critical narrative component and narrative structuring. And I think in some of the case work there is like that, you know, that narrative import, especially for the work in North Carolina that you were talking with. So I was wondering if you could talk a little about, and of course in organizing and advocacy work narrative and creating a narrative is so important. So I was wondering if you could talk about what, one what Detainee Allies, and you in Detainee Allies, have been doing to change the narrative and create a narrative about the humanity of Detainees but also, I think, sort of what, narrative and what it means to you. And why its important to you and if so why?

Jennifer: Yeah, so yeah that's a great question. So we just went through the process where we went through some strategic planning where we went through the moves of thinking what is our organization. And one of the things we did is refine our mission. We drafted a mission statement. So we have a working version of that. And one of the elements is we educate and alter public discourse around migration by sharing the stories of those in public detention, urging public engagement, and speaking truth to power through our advocacy efforts. And, you know, one of the things that has been, I think, profoundly inspiring, and fulfilling is the fact that all of the work that Detainee Allies does has grown out of the simple act of writing letters.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: You know we've started coding letters in the research. You know we've shared stories. And all that really starts with, like. We hadn't thought well how do we do advocacy work, how do we do policy change. Oh we tell their stories. It was just like oh let's make a human connection we had this sort of mass of letters, mass of stories. We realized we could be a microphone for that. And yeah stories, storytelling is a really interesting piece to all of this. I think the core of storytelling, especially in this state, is to push back against the narrative that marginalized people, and in this case migrants, refugees, especially from certain areas of the world and ethnic and racial backgrounds, really are seen by the US government and by a lot of folks as less human than American, white Americans.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: And that's how we justify doing things to people that we would never do to our own children. Is, it's an act of dehumanization. And so storytelling is, to me, a radical act of proclaiming humanity. And it's interesting, because you almost get tessellations and fractals of stories. So we have all these individual voices. Telling stories about why they left their home country, what their journey has been like. And how they ended up here, and what its like to be here. And you can take any one of those letters and you can start to put them together and you can map all of those stories onto policy, and legal principles, and all of the sort of technical side of making social change and ??? change. And what we realized is that in the story telling, and in the story, and in hearing the stories, that we connect our own humanity to what's happening. One of the biggest challenges that I've seen in the immigration space in terms of advocating for change is that this is an issue that actually affects a small number of citizens in lots of ways. And there are definitely a lot of mixed status families that have the terror of you know having a parent deported or living under the shadow of deportation. But there is this great quote Pam Karlan, is this professor at Stanford who has kind of been perpetually on the shortlist for the Supreme Court and served in the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties division of the Department of Justice over the voting rights area. I don't know, one of those civil rights things during the Obama administration. She gave a speech, and she talked about, she's LGBT, she's gay and so she talks about the movement for Gay Rights and the movement, and how that was built on this really early push in the 70s and 80s for people to come out. And she said, "You know what radically changed the story about gay rights was that people realizing that their child and their

neighbor and their friends and their teachers and all these people came out as gay. And suddenly it wasn't those people over there it was my people." And at the end of her speech she says something to the effect of, "Oh what would a world we would have if our children would come out as black, or undocumented, or female." You know. And so immigration suffers from this inherent compartmentalization in communities, and stories are a way for me to say, you know what that could be me. Something I asked my, so my sister is one of our core volunteers right now, she's apart of our organizing team. I've brought her to a few events, and I've asked her myself, "What is it, I know you started doing this because I started doing this and its nice to have family." But what is it, you know she's a single mom trying to go back to school, her kid just got an autism diagnosis, she's been through this divorce and mental health. You don't have space to be a volunteer, so why do you keep making space for that. And she said, "You know that summer when you left for Mexico I was homeless. I had nowhere to go. I had nowhere to feed my child. And I relied on the kindness of people who were friends of my sister, not even my own community to get me just enough to where I could survive to get me to just where I could get on my feet. When people talk about wanting to go to a place where their children can be safe, and they can provide a good life for their kids. I get that at a deep level." And she's like, "I was worried about living in my car, and not having grocery money. Like these are people who are worried about their children getting kidnapped and tortured and killed. And I can only imagine how much more extreme it would be to be coming from that situation. And be homeless and alone." So she's like, "I get it, I get it. I feel this profound connection because their stories resonate with my story." And you know as we read these letters and share them I may not know what it's like to run away from a cartel, but I know what it's like to feel that someone I love is in jeopardy, to know what it is to feel abandoned, to feel alone, to feel scared, to feel marginalized. I understand those emotions. And I can connect their stories with my story in a way that I can see myself in them. And that has really made this an issue that, you know as somebody who isn't immediately touched. You know I'm a citizen, my parents are citizens, my grandparents are both naturalized. My grandfather was undocumented when he came to the US, and my grandmother was a refugee from Germany. They left in 1938, right before the borders closed. And that kind of drove me into this space. But I am like, this is personal now. These are my friends.

Thomas: Mhm,

Jennifer: We actually put together a database, and one of the things was what do we want to call the people we write to. Because detainees feels very....

Thomas: Impersonal.

Jennifer: ?????, impersonal. We had kind of had data labels, yeah that's actually a fun little question. So we referred to them as our detained friends. You know, we talk about Sergio. Oh Sergio! You know who just wrote us a letter about this. Like these are our friends, our people who are like us, these are our neighbors, they live in our community. And just because they live in a detention center does not mean they are apart of our community. So we claim them. And I

think stories are a way that we claim one another. And, you know, from the very early days when I was in North Carolina, one of the things that I realized is that, two things. One there is not a lot of understanding about the immigration system, and so even folks that I knew who are very conservative. When I sit down and say, "Listen this is how the courts work. This is how due process works. This is how the Constitution is not applied in all of these spaces." Even people who are fairly antagonistic, and a little more nativist in their policy positions are like, "that is so unfair and not ok." Because there is a lot of belief, that like, you know, the people who are being kept out are not the good people, are not the ones we want, are not the ones we help. And like no, no, no, we're actually hurting people who you would consider more like you.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: And so I found that education can actually have a profound effect on opening people's openness to understanding this policy and to think differently about these issues. But I've also found that if they can touch a case, you know all of the people that helped me translate this document all came back and said, "I want to help another person." None of them would have shown up to a march. Maybe one or two. But now all of them want to take action. And you know, direct action and social change, we can talk about protesting and letter writing and all of that. But sometimes direct action is I am going to be a friend to someone who is marginalized. I am going to send them \$20 to let them buy toothpaste and toilet paper and soap that doesn't hurt their skin. And cup of noodle because the food is rotten. And that to me is a radical act of claiming shared humanity with another person.

Thomas: Absolutely.

Jennifer: And I don't think you can do that, even by email. And not think, well if I am going to vote for so and so, are they going to protect my friends. Or are they going to contribute to the harm. And suddenly this becomes a personal issue for people who are generations away from an immigration story. And that to me is powerful, and impactful. And you know at the end of the day, as lawyer I both know the power of things like the courts and legislation. And I know their limitations. And the truth is legal change means nothing if the culture doesn't follow. And so we not only need to create political will to change these things, but we also need to change hearts and minds so we view this issue through the lens of shared humanity and compassion, instead of othering and competition and all of the you know.

Thomas: Yeah.

Jennifer: All the way down the line. Until we get to just straight up

Thomas: Hate.

Jennifer: Hate. But even if those, I think, who aren't in that camp. They're looking at it through a different lens, you know.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: Why are these people doing what they are doing. And the question I always tell people is, "What would it take for you to leave your home and everything you knew and go to a place where you knew you were hated? How scary would it have to be?" So if that's what it takes to get you to do this, can you imagine, can you assume, can you accept and give benefit of the doubt that whatever folks are fleeing in their countries is at least as half bad? And that means assuming that they think like you do. Right?

Thomas: Right!

Jennifer: Right. And that makes people uncomfortable. They are like well yeah and but no. And if that's what it would take for you, that's what it would take for someone else. Because they are not that different from you. And once you break that. Once you have that shared story. You don't have a lot of choice but to stand up.

Thomas: Well it becomes almost like defending your own community.

Jennifer: Exactly.

Thomas: What you are talking about is as someone who comes from a community organizing perspective, and one of the most interesting and powerful things is as you described it to me, it seems you were building community across the walls of a prison. Which is ummm, actually made me feel that it incredibly powerful, I guess.

Jennifer: Well and the way I think about it is that we are not at the point where we knock down the prison wall. But if I can make a crack in that wall just big enough for a letter to get out. Just a little little light to get in, and a few lines of words to get out. I can amplify that voice. I can share that. And that can create change. Because at the end of the day, one of the things that we are conscious of and constantly checking and feeling the tension of, is that we don't want to speak for people.

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: I mean our organization is mostly upper middle class professionals, it's mostly white people. I mean it's evolving but we bring in a lot of the student interns that are coming have very personal connection, and we have amazing diverse students. But a lot of our organizing staff is very privileged. Even our grad students are very privileged. I mean they are grad students. And we know that like, we don't all have authority to speak on this issue from a personal perspective, and so our job is to amplify their voices and be a microphone and to get out of the way. And that's a constant tension, because, you know, it has to be mediated. It's mediated through letters, through our sharing of it's letters. Its mediated through our redactions of those letters to

protect the privacy and confidentiality and yet have stories that are still out there. It's a constant tension. And we're, we live in that space where you know we haven't figured it out. We just are navigating every way it comes through. But knowing that this is not Detainee Allies doing this work. This is Detainee Allies creating an avenue and a resource so that people in detention centers can advocate for their own liberation. That's the goal. And it had to do. And I don't know that we do it well all the time. I am sure someone will listen to this and be like, "well you sure failed at that one." (Laughs).

Thomas: It's almost an impossible standard though.

Jennifer: It's an impossible standard, and that is where we stand is we will strive towards that impossibility knowing that we are falling short every step of the way. But you know it's the star that guides us, because it's the only way it really works.

Thomas: Mhm.

Jennifer: Otherwise we would become complicit in exploiting people for our own gain, whether that is prestige or status, or even just standing in the movement. You know, and that is not, you know.

Thomas: That's not kosher.

Jennifer: Well it's being complicit in oppression.

Thomas: Yeah.

Jennifer: And to the extent that we are active in pushing back against that complicity, that is what we try and do. So yeah, it's interesting to hear. Narrative has always been a part of what my work has been all the way back. I mean I did a lot of work, I studied literature, and I did a lot of work of narrative through argumentation and telling stories. I even took a class, one of my other classes I took, was narrative in law. And it was, my professor, what was his first name? Goldberg. Can't remember his first name right now. Goldberg was actually an alum of Stanford. He just taught this one class. He flew up from LA to teach this class one term. He right now is the general, when he was teaching, he was the general counsel of the Writers Guild of America. And he had been a television head writer. He was the head writer for Silverspoon, he worked on LA Law. He graduated from law school and worked on the Voting Rights Act for a congressional office back in the 60s.

Thomas: Oh wow, ok!

Jennifer: And he said after the Voting Rights Act passed he went down to Alabama or somewhere in the South. And had given a ride to Martin Luther King Jr and someone had seen him and taken a picture, and it was considered a conflict of interest for a federal employee in the



Civil Rights Division to be working with organizers. And he kind of lost his job that way. So he went back to LA and became a projectionist for a movie theater for a summer or a year and was retooling his life because he watched the same movie like 20 times in a row. He started to reconstruct storytelling and how to do screenwriting. And he was in the hospital like six months having back surgery or something. And wrote a spec script, someone was like, "you should write something." So he wrote a spec script and someone passed it on and he got hired as a writer and he worked for years and years as a writer in Hollywood. And he went back to law to be the general counsel for the Writer's Guild. So he taught this class where we learned storytelling structure from film.

Thomas: Huh.

Jennifer: Which was great, because instead of reading books, we had to watch movies for our reading assignments. And then we would, we would, he would talk us through how these movies were put together. What was the act structure and how they were put together. And sometimes you make legal arguments and a lot of what you are doing is crafting a narrative that the law can then read. So we would take these real life situations, legal cases, and political cases, and we would talk about how would you craft a narrative in order to create a legal change in these different spaces. Looking at impact litigation, looking at movement work. It was the funnest class. I loved that class. We all had to write a film treatment just to learn how to do it, and they all came out as these sappy Lifetime dramas because writing drama is actually really hard and writing comedy is even harder. (Laughs). So yeah, everything that I have done has come back to, how do you tell a story? If you tell the story the right way, if you frame the story well, it both resonates as deeply authentic because you have gotten to the truth of something, but also deeply compelling. And that's true whether I am applying for a job, and trying to craft a resume that tells a story about who I am, right? Or I am organizing in a community and trying to build a movement. Or putting together a contract for a couple of clients, or filing litigation. Like it all comes down to story creation. So it's been really cool to come and see that play in, you know, and find work and find this project in Detainee Allies that is about sharing stories.

Thomas: At its most basic, at its most fundamental. I mean it's, just listening to your story that seemed like such a wonderful throughline tying your story together. And it comes to Detainee Allies and it's just like, and what you guys do is share other people's stories, and encourage folks to tell their story. And it's such a beautiful like.

Jennifer: Yeah it's such a beautiful realization. And its starting to come face to see that clearly I have had random professional life. I tell people I have professional ADHD. I mean before grad school I did publishing, right?

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: But seeing all these pieces come together. Actually I have this client, who is a doctor who is just mired with litigation with some other business partners, and I have been key on that.

At the law firm that I work at part time that pays my bills. And we had a conversation and then we kind of got on a tangent. And she is from Australia. And so, I had never mentioned my advocacy work to her. She doesn't know me out of, you know, I am the person on the phone that drafts complaints. You know?

Thomas: Right.

Jennifer: And I was like, oh yeah this is kind of what I do in my other life, and I sent her the website and the New York Times article done about us a few months ago. And she was all like, "We need to do something. We need to do a film project. This would be amazing." Like I kind of did film in law school. She is like, "Woah woah woah. Why have you never told me this. I've known you for nine months." So now she's off trying to get me a camera and a cinema verte sort of like documentary go bag.

Thomas: Nice.

Jennifer: Sort of we just need to, you just need to start filming. I was like, "Well I can shoot ok, but I am not a pro." And she was all like, "I've got directors of photography who know what they are doing, and we can just bring you up for a weekend and show you what to do." This would be great. (Laughs) She is like we can fix a lot in post production. We just need to catch the story. She was like, "I am an immigrant how did I not know about this." I was like, "it's all in letters and you cannot bring a camera inside of prison." She said, "That's not the point. We will figure that out." (Laughs). So look, so by the way, maybe you can go back to filmmaking. It would be a nice little you know, story.

Thomas: Yeah right.

Jennifer: I always said if I had the choice between premiering a film at the Sundance Film Festival and clerking at the Supreme Court I would take Sundance in a heartbeat. (Laughs).

Thomas: (Laughs) Depends on the, depends on who you are clerking for at SCOTUS.

Jennifer: Yeah but the path to get their, is so old school. It's so not me. It's so traditional. That like I am like yeah that doesn't sound fun to me.

Thomas: Schmoozing at, constitutional law.

Jennifer: Telling stories is way more powerful to me, than legal research. Even though legal research is important and valuable and has its place. Given the choice, I'll take Sundance any day over SCOTUS.

Thomas: Right on, Right on.

Jennifer: So there you go.

Thomas: Thank you, thank you so much. I was like, going through my questions and it was like by happenstance even though I did not ask that many, you answered all of them.

Jennifer: Good.

Thomas: Thank you so much, and thank you so much for rerecording this, like.

Jennifer: Of course, of course.

Thomas: Like it means so much.

Jennifer: Like I've been there, oh crap. Like how many days till finals. I am glad I could be available.

Thomas: Thank you very much.

Jennifer: I will see you guys Friday.

Thomas: It will be good, there will be Ethiopian food, or Somali food.

Jennifer: it's all about that food.

Thomas: And I have to say, as someone who is an, who does organizing, like if you don't have food, that's like missing the point, it's like missing something.

Jennifer: There should always be food.

Thomas: Both for sustenance, and for the community building.