Interviewer: JA

Interviewee: Dr. Jessica Martell

Jessica Martell (00:03):

So, hi, I am Dr. Martell. I teach in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies and in the programs of global studies and Watauga Residential College. This is Monday, November 25th, 2024 at 10:15 AM and I'm here with

JA (00:18):

JA. I'm a freshman and I'm majoring in marketing.

Dr. Martell (00:22):

And we're here in Belk Library, um, to do, um, kind of a short oral history interview about the fall semester. Alright. JA, do you have a first question to start us off?

JA (00:32):

Sure. So to start off, I was just gonna wonder, I was looking online and it looked like you've been around the world a lot to like Italy, Rwanda, New Zealand. So, I was wondering how did you end up here at App State <laugh>?

Dr. Martell (00:42):

That is a great question. I've actually been here for eight years. I was just thinking about that this morning, um, because Boone itself has changed so much since I first got here. But yeah, I, um, I was, uh, born in New York City and my parents are from the New York metro area and both sides of my family are, so I think I was ingrained with a kind of worldly sense. Um, I was born in a big urban area with, that was a very much a melting pot of global cultures. And so, I think that, uh, the idea of exploring the world was always probably ingrained in me from a young age. Um, when I was in middle school, my parents, um, had a kind of tragic, uh, experience in which they lost their business and had to move somewhere, and they could only afford to rebuild in South Carolina.

Dr. Martell (01:26):

So we moved to upstate South Carolina, um, I guess in the early eighties, and it was not the most fun transition for all of us. Um, it's a very small rural southern place and we all had a lot of culture shock and none of us were really very accepted there. So as soon as I kind of could get out after high school, I moved to Chicago to go to undergraduate, and I've really been moving ever since. And so returning to Boone later in life has been an interesting revisiting of being once again in a smaller southern, although albeit southern Appalachian town. Um, so how I got here, I'm not entirely sure, but it was a very long and circuitous, circuitous path. Uh, but really the job brought me here

JA (02:07):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (02:08):

Uh, to work at Appalachian State, which is a place that I actually really do enjoy working.

JA (02:11):

Yeah. And what exactly is your job?

Dr. Martell (02:15):

<laugh>? So I'm, uh, now a tenured associate professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. Um, I have a literary studies background. My PhD is in English, but I have always been a very interdisciplinary thinker. I've always been interested in, um, food studies and environment and issues of, um, colonialism and neocolonialism in, um, particularly in British and Irish studies. That's kind of my area of research expertise. Um, JA is taking my 2202 Watauga history class, which, um, was, was supposed to be a Transatlantic Ireland and Irish history class. It's, uh, modified a little bit because of the hurricane, but we can talk about that in a moment. Um, but yeah, so I, I really like, uh, I, I, I now work in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, so I get to do a lot of things. I like literature, I love, always loved, um, studying film and TV, but I've always had pretty broad interests that kind of revolve around food environment, nature and colonialism, um, in the, um, US and Ireland and Britain. So I get to do a lot of that work as a professor in interdisciplinary studies. Yeah.

JA (03:20):

And one last question about, about your background. I was wondering, I was looking online and you had a lot of publications about like food and history. So I was wondering what led you to have a passion for teaching on food and such?

Dr. Martell (03:32):

Yeah. Uh, great question. And again, it's sort of an unexpected journey. I don't feel like my life has had a very clear path. I have constantly been faced with forks in the roads and just kind of randomly chosen something and then it's led me to other things. My, um, I grew up in a family that really loved food and I think because they were New Yorkers, particularly in the South, which didn't have as like global a food cuisine we'll say. Not that I have not come to love southern cuisine. Um, and, and my husband is, uh, Southern and I, so he's really like, helped me embrace a lot of the food culture here and really seen the value of it, particularly, I mean also with Appalachian food and Appalachian cuisine. So I've learned to appreciate the interesting aspects of culture here. But food was always a way for me to experience the world, I think, in a small town. And so when we traveled as a family, we always, like, food came first. So we, we ate a lot of global food and food was a way for me to explore the world, but we, I don't come from a family with very strong food traditions.

JA (04:31):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Dr. Martell (04:31):

And so I don't have, like, I didn't know any of my grandparents. They all died before I was, um, I mean really, uh, before I knew them. And so I don't really have strong food traditions myself, and so I get to kind of self-fashion through food, I guess. Uh, so that's my personal connection to it, but starting to research it, I, I really wasn't interested in researching food until my PhD, which was, um, I guess I started around 2007, 2008. And as soon as I started researching food, I realized that the entire world exists in food. Like it's, it is a cultural product. So you can study different cultures, you can study history through food, but for me, I think the allure is, it also helps me study political and social systems.

JA (05:16):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (05:16):

Because the way in which food systems are built, and that's actually what my first book is about, is about, um, it's arguing that the, the British Empire sort of built the first industrial food system as we know it today. And I was looking at how that sort of influences a lot of early 20th century cultural products like literature and the arts and, and kind of destabilize people's understanding of the world around them. Because as food industrializes nature sort of has to industrialize and that really changes everyone's basic relationship with the environment around them.

JA (05:46):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (05:46):

Um, and so that is the core of my research and I really love trying to pull that in a little bit into the classroom, um, in, in small doses, I don't subject my students to my full research agenda, but it is really fascinating to me the ways in which food kind of enmeshes humans in nature in a way that's really, regardless of who you are and where you're from, you kind of have to have contact with nature three times a day, even if it is in its most plastic mediated artificial form, it still is a kind of natural product. And so it's a fun way to, to see the world in unexpected ways. Um, and just to say, I, I, um, often teach food courses in the Watauga Residential College where you're a student, JA, because I and I like teaching first years, um, basic food studies.

JA (06:32):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (06:33):

Because it's the first time in which most people I think have to eat on their own and start making choices. And so thinking about like what that actually looks like, not just on your plate, but like

JA (06:42):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>

Dr. Martell (06:42):

Sort of in the big systems that create the food that comes and appears on your plate is a good way of like learning how to critique big systems of power, learning how to interact with politics, um, learning how to find community, um, amongst, um, people who are maybe like-minded or trying to build bridges of people that aren't.

JA (06:59):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (07:00):

I think food is a good vehicle for that. So, it's a good like introduction to, um, to university 101. Yeah. Kind of.

JA (07:07):

Super interesting

Dr. Martell (07:08):

<laugh>. Yeah. Yeah. I know. So, you're a Wataugan in your first year now.

JA:

Yes

Dr. Martell:

Right. Do you mind if I ask like how your experience of 1103 has been?

JA (07:15):

Yeah. No, it's been super interesting. I'm currently taking a seminar with Dr or Professor Mar, or profess, Professor Fessler, professor Fessler. And it's on belonging, like, identities in the 18th century. So, the first half of the course or so, we're basically looking into several different identities throughout the 19th century. Like we're looking at slavery, women's rights, and we're reading it all in literature. It's been really interesting. I did a project myself on the writings of Harriet Jacobs, The Instance in the Life of a Slave Girl that was super interesting. And I made a presentation on it and talked about slavery in the 19th century, particularly as a woman. And it was just really interesting to research. And in the second half of the course, we're working with the Blowing Rock Museum of Art and History and we're, we are paired with a select piece of art from their vault and we're asked to write a research label on it.

JA (08:14):

So, we do a lot of heavy research into those pieces of art, and a lot of them reflect on the identities of the 19th century. And I'm currently working on, it's just a vase, but there's a lot of unique history to it because it's the art formed from a, it's called Carolina Cameo, and it's like a very unique style of art that formed in this area of North Carolina, but very little's written about it. So I'm getting to do a lot of deep research into it and write about that art style that hasn't been done very much, which has been super interesting.

Dr. Martell (08:45):

That's really fascinating. I've never heard of that either.

JA (08:48):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (08:48):

Um, and so it's a good, and, and what we're doing right now for this recording for, for audiences with a little bit more context is that classes in the Watauga Residential College, particularly the first year track, the seminars of 1103 and 1104, are double classes. And they do ask, I think, first year students to commit kind of double time to their learning right when they get to campus, which is a big commitment, but I think the payoff is that there's a lot of time to do exploratory work.

JA (09:14):

Yeah, no, definitely.

Dr. Martell (09:14):

You get to do like your own discovery processes like that, um, and to actually create things like a caption for a piece, like an artifact in a local museum or an oral history project, like what we're doing right now. So, I do think that's the, the payoff hopefully for the investment in the Watauga experience is maybe a little bit more, um, experience like guide, guiding your own research and being your own <laugh> I suppose like detective in some ways.

Dr. Martell(09:39)

But it's always my favorite time in Watauga is the end of the first semester for first years. So I'm not teaching in the first year track this semester. Um, just, I mean, the second year track, which is what we're doing right now for 2202. But it is fun to see like suddenly kind of some of the pieces start falling into place for students who've worked really hard and realize that, um, it kind of sets you up to like really direct your own learning process going forward. Because sort of after your first year, you're really kind of on your own and so these skills will really, um, I think help you find things that are interesting, but you seem to have a knack for like finding the interesting bits in everything. I think that's actually hard for students when they first come in to develop is like really trusting their instincts and you seem to do that very well.

JA (10:19):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (10:20):

Um, you always find, like in your written work, you always find like the moments in which, um, you, you see things that other students don't see, which I think is a gift.

JA:

Yeah, thank you.

Dr. Martell:

Going forward. But, um, yeah, I was gonna ask you a little bit about your experience of your first semester. Maybe. Um, you just talked about your Watauga class. But in general, as a, as a first year student at App, how has it been going and what are some of the things that you'll take away from it?

JA (10:43):

Yeah. So, in general it's been chaotic, especially with Hurricane Helene, but not looking at Hurricane Helene, it's been really interesting. I really, I came in and my original intent was to develop community. So I originally joined a bunch of clubs. So, like I joined a campus ministry, I joined APPS, which is the Appalachian Event Programming Society, basically. I joined the Appalachian, and I did, I do marketing with them, which is interesting. So I've joined all these different clubs and tried to build up this community and it's been, it's been really cool. And I've also been really into my classes. Like I'm taking

this WRC 2202, so I've been doing a lot of digging into historical inquiry and Irish history and all sorts of stuff. And my seminar, I've been doing a lot of research, so it's been a lot of research. And I've also tried to be building up a community within the university. And it's been, my takeaways are like basically just build up a community, get to know people. Especially with Watauga, I've gotten, made a lot of close friends and connections up there, have made a lot of connections with faculty and staff and got to know them. And I just say build a community and work hard and research, but don't work too hard. <laugh>.

Dr. Martell (12:03):

Yeah, absolutely. Finding that balance is important. Uh, you know, maybe this will help us segue into talking about Hurricane Helene a little bit. Because I do feel like one of the strengths of Boone is that it is, again, my sort of, um, resistance to growing up in a small town. Actually, I think I'm starting to see the other side of it now that I'm a little bit older and can appreciate the benefits of having a smaller

community because it really has been, I think, an important facet of trying to respond to this natural disaster that we're all living in. And so it was smart for you to build up a community of people before everything got really destabilized. Um, so maybe I'll just describe briefly like what happened this semester for the recording.

JA (12:42):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (12:43):

Which is, um, so we're, it's now in late November, but um, in late September on the 27th. Well, we had had a, a week of rain before this, uh, really freakish weather event. Um, a hurricane…

JA (12:53):

Saturated the soil.

Dr. Martell (12:54):

Absolutely. So yeah, so we were already kind of at breaking point of like, we could not take any more rain and a hurricane. Um, hurricane Helene came up from the Gulf and dumped an extraordinary amount of rain on the Southern Appalachians, uh, hitting Western North Carolina extremely hard. Uh, and our area was, um, unevenly impacted, but was, was still very much devastated. And so JA, you're from Black Mountain?

JA:

Yeah.

Dr. Martell:

And I lived here in Boone. So we have two different experiences of the same weather event, but maybe I'll just say before we talk about our specific experiences, that App State canceled classes for two weeks.

JA (13:28):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (13:29):

We had had fall break anyway, um, but the effect was essentially a very disrupted semester. It brought back a lot of baggage for people who had experienced COVID.

JA (13:38):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (13:38):

And those kinds of disruptions and the need to pivot. And so it really interrupted, um, almost everything about this semester, <laugh>. So, in addition to trying to deal with the trauma of, of Surviving a natural disaster, um, and then also trying to deal with the actual like problems. Like I've had so many, um, personal hardships because of the storm in my own, uh, life. But then trying to kind of come back to work and all of us sort of pick back up again, um, was a real challenge. Yeah. So <laugh> uh, yeah. So that's one of the reasons why we wanted to talk today and have a little bit of an extra time on the mic, was to talk a little bit about what it was like to live through it. So, um, do you wanna talk about your

experience either here in Boone or in Black Mountain too? Cause I know your family was in an area that was really, um, badly affected as well.

JA (14:22):

Yeah. So before it hit, I was actually here at university just doing normal classes. And a couple days before it hit, they predicted there would be flooding, but not of catastrophic portion, proportions, like what actually happened. But the night it started raining, I went to sleep. I mean, I woke up at like, probably nine o'clock that morning and didn't really think much of it until I went and looked out the window. And pretty much River Street was completely flooded, like the entire campus, well, not the entire campus, but the part of campus surrounding the creek was just flooded. I mean, there was stuff going, stuff belonging where it shouldn't just everywhere. It was crazy. But yeah. But Wi-Fi was out, power was out. So, we kind of had no idea what had happened outside of campus until two days later when social media came back on and the Wi-Fi came back on.

JA (15:16):

And then you look through the photos and you see towns are just completely destroyed. Swannonoa, Chimney Rock, Marshall, all sorts of places are just completely destroyed. About five days after it flooded, my mom actually brought my siblings up to Ohio from Black Mountain. And on the way she picked me back up and I went with her back at Black Mountain to help volunteer, 'cause they needed volunteers because there were so many donations piling in from outside that they needed people to sort them and stuff. But upon returning, I learned that the bridge on my road had completely washed away. Which this was a pretty significant bridge. It was pretty crazy just seeing it laying in the creek. So they had paved a way out onto the interstate for us to be able to drive out and in, which was annoying 'cause we had to drive like five miles down the interstate, five miles back up to get in.

JA (16:05):

But Black Mountain itself was, for the most part, fine, but the areas surrounding it were devastated. I drove through Swannonoa, North Carolina, which is right below Black Mountain. And if you drive down the main stretch of Highway 70, everything on both sides of the road is just completely gone. Like homes, businesses, all of it's just washed away, which was insane to me 'cause I had grew up for eight years there and all of that stuff I used to visit and drive by every day was just gone. And, but fortunately, the community had come together pretty much from what I heard right after the hurricane. And they

had done search parties, they had delivered donations to elderly people who couldn't get out. They had done a really good job of getting out and getting everything out. And within the next week, there were probably hundreds of different organizations that had came in.

JA (17:01):

Like, there were police from as far away as California who had come in to assist with keeping law and helping with whatever needs the community needed. And I mean, like the, even there was a Maine forestry truck there who had come to help clear out the roads and help people get to safety. But it was insane. But the community had come together and I mean, if it wasn't for the community, it would've been super bad. Like people would've been stuck for days in the mountains with no resources, no clean water, no food. And I can't imagine. But it was really humbling to just see everything swept away, everything destroyed, and yeah. But it was also really encouraging to see the community come together and help everybody.

Dr. Martell (17:50):

Yeah. I remember that time. Well, it wasn't that long ago, but it also feels like we've come light years ahead.

JA:

Oh, I know. Yeah.

Dr. Martell:

'Cause what you're, what you're describing is a very similar experience that I had. I'd say like maybe during the response phase, like the immediate response in the aftermath was very heartening. And you did see, yeah. It's like you, you see like between the lines suddenly like, it's like you see your society in a completely different way because the infrastructure, you know, is completely in some ways obliterated.

JA (18:17):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (18:18):

Um, and yeah, there, there was a, I think Boone the area up here also experienced Watauga County experienced the same kind of unevenness where the town and campus were weirdly, after all of those apocalyptic pictures that we saw the first week actually sort of recovered quite quickly.

JA (18:30):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (18:30):

And I'm in the western part of Watauga County towards the Avery County line, um, up near Banner Elk, and that was hit much harder.

JA (18:36):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (18:37):

And so, yeah, I, I mean, my experience now still is, I guess we've transitioned from the response phase, which was like all hands on deck, everyone coming from around the country to sort of try to stabilize things. And now we've transitioned weeks later into the recovery phase, which is much longer. And is also, I think, <laugh> in some ways, like stressing me out more. Because that sense of community is maybe, um, I don't know, everyone feels exhausted. Like people are losing patience and we're, we're seeing the cracks, like things were kind of band aided over for a while. And now I'm, I feel like I'm seeing the cracks that are more substantial that haven't been addressed yet. And it makes me very anxious about the future. But, um, but yeah, I had a very similar experience to like trying to volunteer to help with the immediate outpouring of all of this, like physical stuff. Um, but also like volunteer hours. Um, we are, my husband and I are connected to the Farm Cafe community here in Boone, and they were sort of a hub for people like dropping stuff off.

JA (19:32):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (19:33):

Yeah. It became, I mean, it's great that you and your mom went to volunteer to like, help organize that. Because a lot of my, our friends and colleagues, like definitely tried to help and say, what do you need us to do? We'll bring things to different places, like who needs what, because it's not enough to just dump a bunch of stuff and then people leave. Like, how do you distribute it? Who, who can't, um, can't even like, get into town. So all of those logistics I think were really challenging. So they needed a lot of,

um, hours of volunteers, so That's great.

JA (19:58):

And here in Boone, I think a lot of places had more volunteers than they needed, so they were kicking people out, which was crazy. Like all the people wanted, all the college students wanted to help, which is amazing to see.

Dr. Martell (20:09):

Yeah. Which is wonderful. And then, um, I feel like now is when people really need the, like are starting to need the help. Like this was, um, so, uh, this is Monday, but Friday was our first like winter storm. I mean, it wasn't that bad again in town, but it was like much, you know, there's much more snow up in Banner Elk. And so, and the temperatures were not that low. Um, but we lost power again on Friday night and I, I was, I mean, I just absolutely, I was panicked because I thought, I know that they put these power lines back up in 10 days. Uh, we were without power originally. Sorry, I, I should describe like during the hurricane, my house was without power and therefore water for, uh, about nine days. Um, we didn't have internet for about five weeks. So it was very hard for me to get back to work, um, after two and a half weeks.

Dr. Martell (20:52):

So I, it was very hectic for us. Um, and our area, our area we're like on the Banner Elk side of Valley Crucis up towards the Avery County line. So I, I was sort of like slung between two very, um, very damaged places. Valley Crucis was very hard hit, and Banner Elk was very hard hit, and especially Banner Elk on the way up towards like Elk Park. Uh, and so our house was sort of undamaged, but we have so many lingering problems. We have like trees that are still about ready to fall down and we can't get

trees services to come out. Um, our well is still contaminated, so we can't drink. Um, and it's been chlorinated so badly that we can't wash clothes or take showers. So I'm still like relying weeks later on other, the kindness of other people to help me through my basic, kind of the basic infrastructure of my life.

Dr. Martell (21:35):

But, um, all of that is a hassle. But again, I feel probably like you that I, I feel very fortunate that we were, you know, we still have a home, we still have shelter. We have power back on, we have the internet back on, and everything else is sort of like, um, just low key stress in the background. Uh, but we can kind of function. It's just not very pleasant. But I, I am thinking about the ways in which the recovery process has exposed a lot of weaknesses that I think are kind of long standing Yeah. In Appalachian communities and because of a lack of investment in infrastructure and a lack of forward planning. And so that is, um, harder to see. Like I was 10 minutes late to today's interview, <laugh>. I was telling JA, um, but, you know, I leave my house now, it usually takes 20 minutes to get to campus, and now I leave 45 minutes because I know that something is gonna come up along the way. There's always some either repair work or cleanup work or something unexpected like a pipe has burst or the road has fallen out again.

Dr. Martell (22:30):

And it just feels like we're, we're, we have just band aided things <laugh> to, to like be able to sort of get to town and back, but it doesn't feel, I'm like, I really hope there is some long-term plan here. Because, you know, the, the wreck that was on 421 this morning rerouted like hundreds of cars and trucks on Linville Creek Road. I think that's what it's called.

Dr. Martell (22:50):

It's not a safe, it's a tiny rural road that still has like, big places that are completely washed out. Um, so

they're down to like single lanes because you can't actually pass.

JA (23:00):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (23:00):

And, and it's just, it was a very scary trip to get into campus today. Um, and it just felt like, I don't know what the interruption was, but the, but the response to it was very chaotic and could have itself caused a lot of dangerous, I mean, really put a lot of people in danger by trying to get around, um, detouring people on this tiny country road, which was not able to handle this level of traffic. And I am, um, yeah. Thinking about the ways in which like, we have so much rebuilding to do and it's gonna take a really long time.

JA (23:29):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (23:29):

And so back to that original sense of community, I, I really hope that it holds enough for people to advocate for what's right in terms of rebuilding, because it just feels like everything is hanging on by a thread right now. It's, it's not the best feeling <laugh> in the world, particularly now that the weather is

coming. Because if the power infrastructure, if the grid is not rebuilt at a strong way, for instance, like now people are gonna start actually freezing in their homes. Like we had to pile, you know, into one room with the dog and like a bunch of blankets until the power came back on, you know, and it was like 32, it wasn't even in the twenties, like it can be in this, in the winter here. So I'm just, I'm a little bit fearful of the future, I have to say. Um, and so I hope that, I hope that there's an oppor—I think there's an opportunity to rebuild and, and keep a sense of community and to try and keep our values aligned with what we saw during the immediate response. But I'm really hoping that that is able to hold. Um, through the winter when people sort of, you know, retreat back into their <laugh> little holes and wait for spring. So I hope there's more work that's gonna be done. Um, for sure.

JA (24:33):

Yeah. I've heard the process is gonna take probably at least 10 years, especially in like areas that were so hard hit, like Black Mountain and Ash, surrounding Asheville and stuff. And it's gonna be like a long, long recovery process.

Dr. Martell (24:45):

Yeah. Just hearing the stories about Asheville's infrastructure, you know, I mean, again, I really hope, you know, but it's like infrastructure projects. I'm gonna get the details of this wrong, but I, I remember reading about an infrastructure project that Asheville invested in because of federal money from the, um, the Biden Administration's Infrastructure Act where they built like a, I guess they reinforced like a reservoir, um, or, or built a new dam or like tried to, to, uh, I'm sorry, I'm not getting the details correct. I will try and go back and add this in the transcript later. Um, but they invested a whole lot of money in like keeping the dam solid or keeping the reservoir solid. And there was like one news story about it that, that, you know, it was like millions of dollars. And I think there was a sense of impatience that infrastructure is just not sexy to talk about and doesn't really add to political winds, but if that dam had burst during the hurricane, like Asheville would be gone.

JA (25:37):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (25:37):

And so it was really necessary for them to actually do that investment in the boring infrastructure work.

JA (25:43):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (25:43):

Um, because the town is, I mean, it's still very hard hit, but it's still there. You know, I was just thinking about the ways in which, again, these kinds of natural disasters expose problems in the political system.

JA (25:55):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (25:55):

And so we don't have an appetite as a culture for doing this sort of grunt work, right? And doing the grassroots work that like helps people have better lives on an everyday basis. Um, and so it, it's, um, you know, maybe a good work for us who are good communicators, <laugh>

JA (26:11):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (26:12):

And doing work in like the interdisciplinary fields of that can sort of lend itself to marketing like you, or communication to like try and make people aware again of how important it is just to do the basics so that people can just have their, their basic safety. I think that's really something we could, we could really try and re-narrativize or like message in a better way going forward.

JA (26:31):

Yeah, I definitely agree with that.

Dr. Martell (26:33):

Yeah. Um, so anything else about the fall semester that we should get on <laugh> on drag other than Hurricane Helene? I mean, we had a very contentious election and we've had, um, you know, already our first kind of snow day.

JA (26:47):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (26:47):

Um, so it's been a very eventful fall semester, but, um, maybe like last thoughts for the recording for people of the future <laugh>.

JA (26:55):

I mean, it's been a crazy semester, but I'm really excited to see what the future's gonna be like, especially after this. And I'm really hoping to see the community grow together, JA (27:04):

Especially after this, like, we should realize the importance of community and everyone helping each other. And I'm really hoping to see that continue throughout the future. Uh, I'm also hoping to see, like you mentioned earlier, I'm hoping that the government will address these issues that the hurricane has pointed out, like infrastructure. And one big thing I've really been focused on is climate change. Like, if we hadn't have, like if we had, if there wasn't this, these gases going into the atmosphere for the past 200 years or so, would, this probably wouldn't have happened, at least not as bad as it was, but it did. And we feel like the government should address that and start putting more regulations on factories and carbon emissions. But with the election, I'm <laugh> kind of not hopeful at this point, but I'm really hoping that maybe after this presidential period we will see a president who will really focus on fixing the issues and helping to curb climate change because it's really a big issue that needs to be addressed.

Dr. Martell (28:11):

Yeah. I know, I, I feel like we're probably all prepared for a bit of a setback now, but it's a really good point, which is like the narratives around infrastructure, um, narratives around climate change and policy that addresses it is actually very challenging politically. Because it requires a long-term view. And so much of our political cycle is, is short-term thinking in order to gain points, right?

JA (28:32):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (28:33):

Two years, four years, like, and things just yo-yo back and forth so much between, you know, between 2016 to 2020 to 2024, like the voter or the electorate sort of going back and forth between these different views. No one really has any time to actually sit and like, think about big solutions and start implementing them. Um, and that's a really good point. And I feel like in addition to hope that there might be some policy, um, changes on the <laugh> longer term horizon perhaps maybe not in the next two to four years. But I think also people, it's a really good point to bring up climate change in the context of this natural disaster because in some ways everything that we've just talked about is, is going to start happening to more and more people around the, I mean, around parts of the world that haven't necessarily been narrated as vulnerable to climate change.

JA (29:21):

I mean, it already has like

Dr. Martell (29:22):

Yeah.

JA (29:23):

Islands have just been completely flooded over at this point.

Dr. Martell (29:25):

Right. So, you know, now that it's an our backyard, maybe it's an opportunity for people to start paying attention to it because there is nowhere that is safe. And, um, you know, to, to, I think part of the reason why Appalachia has had infrastructure challenges is because so many people are moving here to retire or second homing it, you know, um, people live here in the summer because it's cooler and live in Florida and other places in the winter. Um, and so that kind of like doesn't really, and and the university itself has responsible for some of this growth and some of the taxing of the infrastructure that they have grown without really understanding the tax that it puts and the pressure it puts on the systems that we have. And so again, this really needs to be a kind of joint, what we call a town gown pro like problem and a town gown solution is needed, right. We have to have both local government and the university

thinking about what it means to have, um, so many people coming to this area because like this morning <laugh> like maybe 10 to 15 years ago, diverting people onto Linville Creek was not such a big deal, but this morning it was like hundreds and hundreds of cars and it was like, you know, not exactly quote unquote rush hour in Watauga County, um, in this, in this, uh, situation. So we have to just start preparing better for, um, for that and also like understanding that climate change is coming for everybody and that means everyone needs to be prepared.

JA (30:42):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (30:43):

Um, you're exactly right that Hurricane Helene was like five times worse than it, you know, I mean the path was erratic. The no, the sheer amount of water that was dumped on this region, um, you know, that is supposed to be a quote unquote climate change haven for people to get away from the coastal areas. You know, no one is safe from climate change and it really is time to actually start addressing it. And maybe as you're saying that sense of community, you know, maybe is born out of some kind of trauma or disaster, <laugh>, whatever it is, you know, at this point I'll take it. I don't want any more natural disasters in my future, but, um, certainly we have the impetus and the evidence that we need to actually start advocating for better change. For sure.

JA (31:21):

Yeah. And I'm really hoping to see this generation grow up and stand up for a change.

Dr. Martell (31:26):

And also, I mean, I would like to see intergenerational

JA (31:29):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (31:29):

Partnerships and, and uh, initiatives and some solidarity between generations. You know, like some of you were saying in your oral history projects last week, some of the perceptions about is that Gen Z is like sort of responsible for fixing these things that, you know, no one else has. But I think that's very unfair and I think plenty, you know, if you're alive, you have time to advocate for things and you have time to build solidarity, um, you know, and so I really hope that there's intergenerational movements to fix things as well. Um, I am hopeful about, about y'all and your public spirit, but I also feel like it's everyone's responsibility.

JA (32:03):

It is, Yes.

Dr. Martell (32:04):

<laugh>. So Yeah. So it's not all, um, to be put on your shoulders.

JA (32:08):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (32:09):

Yeah. Alright, well I think that probably wraps it up for our, um, additional oral history.

JA (32:14):

Yeah.

Dr. Martell (32:14):
So, thank you so much, JA for joining me today.

JA (32:16):
Thank you too.