



2013

Marsha Guenzler-Stevens

Marsha Guenzler-Stevens '78

Illinois Wesleyan University

Taylor Washington 2013

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Recommended Citation

Guenzler-Stevens '78, Marsha and Washington 2013, Taylor, "Marsha Guenzler-Stevens" (2013). *All oral histories*. 51.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/51

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Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, The Ames Library
April 12, 2013

Taylor Washington: My name is Taylor Washington, I'm a student here at Illinois Wesleyan, and today is April 12, 2013, and we are in Ames Library, and we're with one of our alumni, so for the record could you please state your name?

Marsha Guenzler-Stevens: Absolutely. I'm Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, class of 1978.

Washington: Nice to meet you.

Guenzler-Stevens: Nice to meet you!

Washington: Okay so, why Illinois Wesleyan?

Guenzler-Stevens: Back in the day? You know, it's one of those weird things. I grew up in a really large suburban Chicago high school, and I think that had great influence on college choice. I mean, it was a really large graduating class. I graduated with 1300 people, so Illinois Wesleyan was tiny!

Washington: Which high school?

Guenzler-Stevens: Richards High School, which is in Oak Lawn, Illinois. But both my folks had gone to Illinois Wesleyan. And my older sister's a year older than I am, and she was at Illinois Wesleyan as a Music major. And so in some ways, while I looked at other institutions and applied to other institutions, how college was translated to me was always Illinois Wesleyan. And so I remember thinking, I guess this is what you're supposed to do, in some ways. And in other ways, I think I wanted to chart my own course in terms of what my intellectual curiosity was. Biology was what I was interested in. And so Illinois Wesleyan was great for that. And as much as I felt like this was a small place at 1650 students, in other ways, the intimacy of it was really exciting to me, about knowing people and being in a smaller community. So, in some ways it was a family legacy and in other ways it was what I needed at that point in my life—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —as well.

Washington: Yeah, that's why I came here too, actually—

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah!

Washington: —the small environment, I really liked that. I didn't want to go to U of I like my mom, it's way too big—

Guenzler-Stevens: No, no. And that's the world I work in now. And I adore it. And boy, you could make any large institution small by finding your niche. But this place was a singular community. You could

know Music majors, and you could hang out with folks that were very different than you in terms of where they'd grown up on a farm or whatever it was.

Washington: Okay so you were a Biology major?

Guenzler-Stevens: Mhm.

Washington: Did you intend to do anything with—?

Guenzler-Stevens: [laughs] Yes.

Washington: I mean, because a lot of people—

Guenzler-Stevens: Did I have a dream?

Washington: No, a lot of people do Biology—

Guenzler-Stevens: Yes.

Washington: —and they want to go pre-med with it.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh absolutely, that's what I wanted to do.

Washington: That's what you wanted to do, okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: You know, I think, I envisioned myself the world's great doctor and I also quickly had an interest in political science, so I took lots of political science. We didn't have minors then. Had you had minors, I definitely would have had it because I had so much coursework in it. So, I couldn't decide pre-med, pre-law—

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: —so my Junior year was one of those times of great preparation for whatever. But at some point I made the decision that my friends who I was in classes with were passionate about law school, medical school, dental school. I wasn't sure that was my passion. And so I remember taking all the standardized tests and making applications my Senior year, and believing the passion would come, you know?

Washington: Right.

Guenzler-Stevens: You'd run home—I lived in a sorority house—I'd run home see if I got a thick or thin letter, because in those days you got admitted by paper over the mail, through the regular mail system.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: If it was thin, it was—

Washington: Not good.

Guenzler-Stevens: —not a good thing. Thick was good. And so, in some ways I had options at the end of undergrad but I didn't have passion. And so I came to take my younger sister to look at Wesleyan and they're like, we want somebody to work in Admissions! And so, do you know anybody from your class? And I had been a really involved student leader and had been on the Admissions committee. And I said, well, maybe me! And that was weird, because I was the first woman ever hired in Admissions.

Washington: Wow!

Guenzler-Stevens: And so I don't think that was the definition of an Admissions counselor, was a woman! And yet in some ways, what a wonderful experience that was, because two years of working in Admissions gave me a chance to say, what am I meant to do with my life? And it gave me a chance to say goodbye to Illinois Wesleyan. I don't think I was ready to go when they said it's time to go! I was like, really? So two years later, I was ready to go. And in some ways I put together a dream again about going to law school, got admitted, decided not to go, but also had mentors who said, you know what, you're meant to work in higher education. So I did my Masters in Counseling, sat in classes thinking, this is exactly what I was meant to do, and then went on, did a PhD. So all along, I think I was seeking that which gave me passion.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: And I would never ever regret—I don't regret being a Biology major because I learned how to learn, and I learned how to struggle and persevere, and I teach freshmen every fall who are all Biology and Chemistry majors, and I teach them the life skills and self-exploration course that they're required to take, and I have such an empathy, because I'm like, I know what you're feeling.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: But I wouldn't trade it at all.

Washington: Biology is the hardest major.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh, God it's so hard.

Washington: Everyone who takes it says it's such a struggle...

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah.

Washington: ...the first semester is the weeding out period.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh absolutely! Well, you know, and I still get—I could probably get night sweats over Organic Chemistry!

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: But, I also knew that I had this teacher in Comparative Anatomy, Dr. Franzen who was scary! And she was my only woman teacher in the—in—I think I only had her and another woman who did chem labs. That was the only women that were in the Sciences—

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: —as teachers. And she used to have all of us over to her house for Christmastime. Any women Biology majors, she got invited to Dr. Franzen's house. And there weren't a lot of us. And I'll never forget that in some ways, Dr. Franzen who scared the bejeezus out of me—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —also taught me to be a feminist, and a scholar, and to sort of roll with the flow, and yet really advocate for what you needed. So I wouldn't trade that for anything.

Washington: So what majors were your friends?

Guenzler-Stevens: All over the map. So I had Nursing major friends, right, and they would always talk about how hard their lives was, and as a Biology major you'd be like, oh yeah, sure—

[Guenzler-Stevens and Washington laugh]

Guenzler-Stevens: No, like, you—just like, really. My sister was a year older than I was. She was a Music major, so I knew lots of Music majors. I—my folks are both musicians, so I continued to sing in the choir, and do lots of things that kept me musically engaged, so I had lots of Music major friends, lots of PoliSci, because I was taking classes with them.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And then I think when you live in a Sorority houses, in Ferguson, or wherever you live, you collect friends who are Business majors or Accounting majors. So I tended to eat some of my lunches in the Dugout, which is—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —is it still called the Dugout?

Washington: Yeah it is.

Guenzler-Stevens: Okay good. And at that point, you could sort of tell what people's interests were by where you sat in the Dugout. And so I had Music Theater friends, Music, and—you worked the zones of the Dugout based on who you were having lunch with that day.

Washington: Oh. So what dorm were you in your Freshman year?

Guenzler-Stevens: Ferguson. It was all women, un-air conditioned, right? Is it still un-air conditioned?

Washington: I have no idea.

Guenzler-Stevens: Seventh floor. Yeah, Munsell-Ferguson. The only—were all women—the only co-ed dorm at the time was Gulick. Because Magill and Dodds, and all those ones right there, would have been all men.

Washington: So Ferguson and Munsell were...?

Guenzler-Stevens: All women. Pfeiffer was all women.

Washington: Oh! And then the rest of the dorms were all men?

Guenzler-Stevens: Yep.

Washington: And Gulick was the only—

Guenzler-Stevens: —the only co-ed, started as co-ed hall my Freshman year.

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh that is something—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —which is kind of funny because when I was born, my dad was back here doing a Master's—Wesleyan used to have a master's program in music. My dad had been in the army in between, and he came back to do his master's and my mom and he were dorm parents, and we lived in a dorm that's in the—where the parking lot is from Gulick—for Gulick. And I was—it was being built the same year I was born. That's how old Gulick is.

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: That's old, yeah.

[Washington chuckles]

Washington: So did they not have freshmen's dorms and then upper-class dorms?

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, you know, to some extent, no. So, I think more and more freshmen lived in Munsell and Gulick but they were also—Munsell was particularly popular because it was air conditioned.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: And it was one of the few. In those days they weren't combined, so that you couldn't—there were no lounges in Ferguson—

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: —the lounges were in the Munsell side.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: And so on my floor, there were a smattering of Sophomores, or Juniors, but most of us were Freshmen. And we became pretty darn tight. It was a small floor, because you didn't bleed into Munsell, you were just Gulick—you were just Ferguson.

Washington: Yeah, also in Ferguson they just—

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, yeah, you can walk between—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Which makes sense, but in the day, no. And in those days, you moved into your room. And I remember the only electronic apparatus I brought was a clock radio, and a very old stereo you could play your LP's on, and the little coil that you put in to make tea in a hot pot. That was it. And so

you went downstairs to watch TV, to the basement, where you had a big TV and everybody would watch together and you would dicker over which show you were going to watch so you had some people from all over the building—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —because that was the only place to go and hang out.

Washington: So when did you go and live in a sorority house?

Guenzler-Stevens: So in those days—not the healthiest way—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —to probably choose but you would go—you'd come to school early your Freshman year with football players and women interested in sororities and you'd go through rush before school ever started.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: So I was kind of meeting upper-class women in sorority rush before I'd even started my classes. So I knew what group I was joining before I'd started classes.

Washington: Okay so when did you become a sorority member?

Guenzler-Stevens: So I pledged, I guess joined before school started my Freshman year and lived in the residence hall my whole Freshman year—

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: —but by probably second semester I'd been initiated.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: And then would move into the sorority house my Sophomore year.

Washington: And what sorority was this?

Guenzler-Stevens: AOPi. It's not here anymore—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —it's down on the corner at the—corner of Fell and Phoenix.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: It's an old house that somebody bought that was going to do something great with it but it really looks like they haven't—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —done anything with it and it's sort of crumbling. It was an amazing group of women and was sort of an award-winning group when I was here and then slowly but surely, I think probably in the 80's, the numbers declined. Folks at Wesleyan would say, oh it's a long way away; it's a block off campus—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and people would be like, oh that's such a long way away. And there was an incident that occurred right after the year that I graduated that involved a man breaking into the house at gunpoint and sexually assaulting some women, and I think probably that affected how we all look at safety because you live in a Wesleyan bubble.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And it probably affected how people perceived it being a long way away.

Washington: Yeah some of the houses are a little ways away.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, so it's not here anymore, but gosh it was a great group. It was a great place to be.

Washington: Did you join any clubs?

Guenzler-Stevens: Tons. I couldn't stop myself.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: I'd been a student leader in high school. And so for me, that combination of learning in and outside of class—you learn a lot by figuring out how to help your friends to succeed or getting a group to work towards a common mission or taking on leadership and then blowing it and then learning from your mistakes. So that was a part of my high school career, so I knew I wanted to get involved. So for me I got really involved in things like the Senate, Panhellenic, so the coordinating group for women's sororities and would later be the Panhellenic Rush Chair—Recruitment Chair. I was very involved in orientation. So I—they did it differently in those days. They had orientation in the summer. You'd come down for two days, your parents would come with you, you'd stay overnight in the dorm, you'd meet everybody. And I think they had five or six sessions a summer. So two summers I stayed here all summer and I was in charge of summer orientation with another student. And we also worked summer conferences which were great fun, like cheerleading camps and all kinds of stuff. And I was also really involved—I was Homecoming Chair my Senior year. It was a big deal then we still had a parade. I sang in the choir, I was a work-study kid. I wouldn't have been at Illinois Wesleyan were it not for financial aid. Both my parents were teachers; they had two kids in school at the same time. So my work-study—I worked in Saga my Freshman year. I made doughnuts—

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and I poured juice every morning. So I'd get up every morning at 4:30 or 5 and make doughnuts and then go to my eight o'clock class. And then I worked in the library for two years as

my work-study job, and then I worked for the dean of students, because by my Senior year, I was pretty darn involved, and so I was kind of known by the dean of students in a positive way.

[Washington chuckles]

Washington: So which classes did you take that you really liked?

Guenzler-Stevens: I have to say that probably the—like would be an overstatement in terms of organic chemistry. But I had a teacher by the name of Dr. Starkey who would leave at the end of the year, who was an amazing chemist who went to work in industrial chemistry. And I got a C in my first test in organic chemistry and thought life was ending—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and so I went to see Dr. Starkey and he was the one who taught me a lot about us taking strategies and learning how to learn and he would come up to me in the middle of my later test and say you should be on question three.

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: You know, like how to pace yourself. So while that course was incredibly difficult and I struggled to do well, it was this incredible experience I had with this faculty member about learning how to learn and learning how to take a test in a way that showed you know how to learn. I loved—I was in Model UN—I loved international politics. I still do. I travel all the time globally, and I can talk sometime about some friends I have that are really cool friends and so Dr. Leyh's political science classes that were about international politics, I loved. And then I did Model UN two years. And one year we were Syria at the Model UN and one year—gosh, who was I?—the PLO, I guess, is what we were? I mean we were these really amazing characters that you had to play out for four days. I really loved—I was a budding feminist. And so I remember taking a women's history class and a marriage in the family class, and really feeling like I was learning about literature, about women, about women's suffrage, about women evolving. The time that I was in school was the big equal rights amendment push, so I was particularly enamored with this idea of equal pay for equal work and learning all of that. So those were courses I really appreciated. I loved humanities. It was a requirement you took your Senior year and so it was about lit—it was the intersection of history and literature so Mike Young was my section leader, and I loved Mike Young—

Washington: Yeah he's awesome.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh my God he was great. So, I loved that class because it was really about the intersection of learning between art and music and history and literature. It was just terrific. I took an art history class because it, I think, fulfilled a requirement. But for me it's one that comes back regularly. I love art, so to go to an art museum and be like, ah, de Kooning, I know that—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —and I really appreciated that. I had to take PE—did you—do you still have to take PE?

Washington: Yeah you still have to take PE.

Guenzler-Stevens: So I am the worst athlete because I have no hand-eye coordination. So I took bowling, badminton, anything you could do that was low requirements. But then I took a relaxation course, which you could take for PE credit and you had to learn to use neuromuscular relaxation to relax. And I think it was a really important skill about—it probably wasn't yoga before yoga was yoga but this idea about letting your body relax. And so that was a really critical life skill of course. The other thing I would say is I think so many of the important courses I took weren't in the classroom. They were lessons learned about leadership, or about multiculturalism, or about communication, or whatever that happened outside of the classroom.

Washington: So what was the diversity level?

Guenzler-Stevens: Mm. Not that great. Because again, I'd come from a school—well it was in the burbs of Chicago—

Washington: Mhm.

Guenzler-Stevens: —I was the first class of my high school that had purposefully been integrated. So, at Richards High School, it would've tended to be more white, but they were at the start of my Freshman year bussing students from Robins, Illinois which is a predominantly black suburb of Chicago into our school setting. There was some Latino, some Asian-American, but definitely my high school, it intentionally forced—was being integrated. When I came to Wesleyan, I think the diversity was interesting. Socioeconomic, I think there was great diversity, because there were those of us that were—thank God for federal work-study—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —and there were kids with great needs. I think diversity by way of origin—many of us came from Illinois, many of us came from the Midwest, and you were like, Chicago—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —city—

Washington: Same here.

Guenzler-Stevens: —or suburbs. Or you're farm kids, who I learned a lot from my friends who, tail-end of our college experience and the years just after, when farming went to hell in a hand basket and the economy tanked, and these kids who had been very wealthy suddenly were hurting suddenly like nobody's business. So you learn about differences that were related to place of origin. Racially and ethnically, there was an intentionality at recruitment. So there were strictly black sororities, but they might only have three or four members. I had a friend who was Indian-American who, our Senior year, went off and didn't—we used to have January term rather than May term—

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: —so she went off during January term and went to India and got married. She didn't know she was getting married. So there was both influence of culture, right? And there were international students that were here, but not at the level there is now—

Washington: Yeah there are a lot of international students now.

Guenzler-Stevens: Right, right, so I think, was there a critical mass? Because I think at some points, numeric numbers are critical for students to feel more warmed and welcome and a part of the climate. I don't know that there were huge numbers, but I think the community was active. This was a period at the tail—I came in '74. You know, Civil Rights really had ended. But we were still having in chapel, really bring out Civil Rights leaders come and we are talking about it still. We were talking about women's rights. So it was in the rhetoric. It was a part of who we were. And I think—gender identity—did I have friends who were gay and lesbian? Absolutely! Did we talk about it much then? No. Could they be out? Sure, they could be out more easily if they were in certain majors—Music, Theater. Was it as embraced if you were in your fraternity and gay? Probably not. But were there? Absolutely! So some of them waited till they left college to come out. But I like to believe that we engaged in this really critical thing which was sharing our stories. Whether that was sitting around in Ferguson or in the living room with a sorority house or when you're supposed to be studying in the library, instead you have these really terrific meaning of life conversations. And sometimes you'd learn really hard things, like your friend who you knew really well was also the victim of sexual assault. You didn't know that. Suddenly you'd have this much greater appreciation of the depth of her grace. So I think was there diversity? Yeah it wasn't always race and ethnicity, a lot of times it was in other ways.

Washington: Did you have study abroad opportunities?

Guenzler-Stevens: Yes! Particularly during January term, that's when folks would go abroad. You'd only take the one course. I had been an exchange student in high school. I lived in Indonesia—

Washington: Wow!

Guenzler-Stevens: —which was really crazy because I didn't even know where Indonesia was when I got my AFS—was—I went to the American Aid Service—

Washington: I did that too.

Guenzler-Stevens: Did you really!

Washington: Yeah I did!

Guenzler-Stevens: It was the best! And they just assign you to this family. Where'd you go?

Washington: I went to Panama for the summer.

Guenzler-Stevens: I did a summer program too because they—Indonesia had just had a communist coup. Like if you ever watch the movie *A Year of Living Dangerously*, it's an amazing movie, but it's about that era. So the communist coup ends, and they had had amazing AFS students coming from Indonesia to the U.S. for that and then going to Indonesia, but after the coup no one went back. So we were the first class to go back, and they weren't ready to have us come for the year because it was too scary. But we

were like, Hollywood, because here were sixteen American students coming in, and the government really wanted it and it was right after the Vietnam War, and Indonesians really loved the U.S. So my family was Muslim, my family—I went to school, because summer, everybody goes to school, so I had to go to school. And it was life-changing.

Washington: What language did they speak?

Guenzler-Stevens: Indonesian, which is sort of a recent language. Every island has a dialect, so—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —Javanese, I lived in Java. But Indonesian, no verb conjugations. So if you went to the library yesterday or you go to the library tomorrow, it's all the same verb. And particularly now, I think as we struggle with how we interpret what is Islam, for me it was this amazing experience because I learned what it was from my mother. Not my real mother, but the mother I loved who let me watch her pray and taught me—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —what I needed to know. And it changed my life. So for me, I didn't have as great a hunger to travel in college, because I felt like I had done it, and I couldn't—I don't know that I could've afforded it. I was pretty much living on fifty dollars a month—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —after I paid my bills, and so, in those days you could do it. But—and I also felt indispensable. Like if I left the campus they would shut it down, I felt like.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: And maybe that's the ego of a student leader, but I didn't go. My brother-in-law, who was a student here at the same time, traveled abroad twice when he was here. But my sister Susan and I didn't. Now my niece who is here now, I wish it for her. I will help to make it happen. Because for me now, we travel every summer with high school girls, and we've been everywhere. And the world is a global village, and if you've been there you can feel it, and you know what it's like, to have been in Panama and of the community.

Washington: I studied abroad here too—

Guenzler-Stevens: Did you?

Washington: I went to London.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh I love it. We're going to go there this summer, to Oxford, my husband has to do a course at Oxford, so. Isn't it great? Oh I love London. Yeah, yeah. Now, I haven't been to Antarctica or the Arctic, but I've been to every other continent. And sometimes more than once and I wouldn't trade it for the world, and I think it's so critical now, but back then, a, I couldn't have afforded anything, and secondly, I think I had had this amazing experience I wasn't quite ready to replicate.

Washington: They actually had a—they include it in the tuition basically now.

Guenzler-Stevens: Which is so cool.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah. Back in the day it was—yeah, it was an add-on. So it would've been outside of my financial aid package, and—

Washington: Oh yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —I couldn't have done it. I couldn't have done it.

Washington: Did you ever go back to Indonesia?

Guenzler-Stevens: You know, it's really weird. No. And as close as I've been—I mean, I've been all over that region, but not back. My family was—we stayed in touch and we're very close. And there was a fairly significant change in the Indonesian government. My father was in charge of the sugar industry, and was a part of—and things happened, and my family left where they lived, and I would go to the embassy because I lived close and be like, I can't find my family, they're not responding to my letters about coming back. So I have friends who are Indonesian who'd go and try to find and see what they could do, and, yeah, it's been weird. I haven't—I went through AFS, and something happened, and to this day, they're missing. And it's—someday I think I'm going to go back and just go to Semarang and do the best I can to try to...

Washington: When did you go to Indonesia?

Guenzler-Stevens: 1973.

Washington: So you were...

Guenzler-Stevens: Sixteen. I turned seventeen when I was there.

Washington: Senior year.

Guenzler-Stevens: I had my seventeenth birthday. Yeah through my Junior-Senior year—

Washington: —my Junior and Senior year.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah you too! And my Senior year, a woman from the AFS was living in Germany in the community, and her family subbed. So she was getting sick, like stress-related illness.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: So she moved in with us in October. So then she lived with us her—our Senior year was joint together for the year. And we stay in touch all the time. I go to see her—she's a psychiatrist who lives in Munich. She has multiple sclerosis which she got—when she was diagnosed with when she was young when she was in medical school. My mother has multiple sclerosis, and so the two of them talk all

the time. And I wouldn't trade her. I mean, she's part of the family. So, in some ways, do I have an AFS family? Absolutely. Have I lost a part of it? Absolutely. And it breaks my heart.

Washington: Yeah. I haven't been back to Panama. I do want to go.

Guenzler-Stevens: Do you stay in touch with your family?

Washington: Not really. They weren't—

Guenzler-Stevens: Were they not good?

Washington: They weren't the best family, but I stayed with my friend's family—

Guenzler-Stevens: That's great.

Washington: —and I really liked them.

Guenzler-Stevens: That's great.

Washington: Yeah. So my friend had an older sister and a brother that was around her age.

Guenzler-Stevens: Aw.

Washington: I really liked them.

Guenzler-Stevens: Did you go to school when you were there too in the summer?

Washington: No.

Guenzler-Stevens: You didn't have to.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, a lot, like this part wouldn't go to school but in the southern hemisphere it's the winter. So you might as well go to school.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: You know, it's so funny. A faculty member at Maryland who was on my dissertation committee years later, was—he and his wife had 22 AFS students—

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: —that they hosted in the U.S. And when he retired, they did a world tour. 22—they went to see 22 of their kids.

Washington: Oh that's nice!

Guenzler-Stevens: Isn't that the coolest? And so I—we would always have these great conversations about AFS—

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and we would be like, oh my gosh! But I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And you grow up a lot when you're sixteen years old and living on your own.

Washington: Yeah, in another country.

Guenzler-Stevens: And learn crazy stuff. We didn't have toilet paper in Indonesia.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: Crazy! We didn't have toilet paper. Yeah, no. My family would buy it for me, but that was not—it was apparent.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Crazy stuff.

Washington: My host father, he was involved in politics. He was running for some kind of office.

Guenzler-Stevens: Wow.

Washington: Don't remember what it was, though.

Guenzler-Stevens: You know, I think in part because of that experience, I always feel like it's my privilege to help international students or others coming into this culture, because this is a tough culture! The language sucks, it's hard, and I think we make it difficult sometimes to be different in this culture. So, right now I'm mentoring some young women from Afghanistan—

Washington: Oh my.

Guenzler-Stevens: —who I adore, whose stories break my heart, and yet they are not giving up on their country, so, this one new woman, this Senior in high school right now, and she has collected all these books, and got a grant through Ann Taylor, like the Loft, to do libraries in small communities in Afghanistan. So last weekend I don't know if you heard but some military folks and folks from the U.S. were buying books from the embassy and they were blown up. So for the last week she has just been in mourning. She thinks her books cost somebody to be killed. And I can't tell you that those were her books or not, but, yeah, yeah. So, I think she's one of my most significant teachers right now. I've learned such strength from her.

Washington: And this is University of Maryland?

Guenzler-Stevens: No, she's a high school kid.

Washington: Oh, she's in high school, okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: She's a Senior in high school.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, amazing.

Washington: Mhm.

Guenzler-Stevens: Amazing. So yeah, I wouldn't trade that. But yeah, I couldn't afford to go abroad, I think, when I was here. But oh, I think it's critical.

Washington: Yeah. Did you have any internships?

Guenzler-Stevens: You know that's so funny you ask that. Back in the day—alright, so the Career Center moved from—it was in the Gulick basement, right?

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: And it stayed there until that building was built, and that ain't that long ago.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: That's been in the last ten years.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: So no, I didn't go to the career center. That's how bad it was.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: I don't know what I was thinking. I think I was thinking, I'm going to go to professional school, so you're going to go to school and not worry about a career, right? You're going to go to professional school and then you can worry about what you're going to do. You're going to go to med school, law school, whatever you're going to do. I didn't do an internship. Later I would figure out that the fact that I worked in the dean of students' office was indeed an amazing internship. Because they're all I have now, as the dean of students. So who knew that back in the day the kind of things I was doing working in the summer with orientation or working with high school programs that were brought to campus to do college credit, I mean, those were absolutely internships. But the intentionality of planning a career—

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: —I think I was a little behind. And yet, I was absolutely right on target in retrospect.

Washington: Yeah. A lot of the freshmen are encouraged to go to the career center.

Guenzler-Stevens: Which is so amazing and great. Yeah back in the day, we did not do that.

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: And they started this really cool thing I remember, they had like these peer career counselors and everything, and I had friends who did that. I should have taken advantage but, I was too busy to worry about then.

Washington: Yeah. But did you go out into the Bloomington-Normal community?

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, I did. There was still a bit more of a vibrant downtown, like downtown Bloomington, there were still some department stores down there. Eastland was the big mall there was now over there—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Got Von Maur over there, whatever that was. We went—alright, so there was a truck stop called Brantville. Huge truck stop, big. Down where—alright what's the ribs place? Dave's—Famous Dave's? Do you know where that is?

Washington: No I don't.

Guenzler-Stevens: Alright way down there. So it was open 24 hours, because it was a truck stop. We would go there probably four nights a week, often at two in the morning.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: We would be studying and someone would say, want to go to Brantville? Course you would! And you can make two dollars go a long way. Even if you had to share fries with somebody, you'd go for the company! I—we were working for the ERA my Senior year, the equal rights amendment, so there was some connection with the political community in Bloomington-Normal. I also went to Second Presbyterian Church on Sundays. I think for me it was grounding. It was what I knew, it was what I grew up with. I grew up a Methodist. And yet, I really loved, at the time, Second Presbyterian, and kind of who the minister and the music was, and it was hip and there was a lot of folks from Wesleyan that would walk there to church on Sunday morning. I did some community service. Back in the day, it wasn't necessarily as integral into what a campus experience is but we would work in places like Baby Fold. There were some—there were fewer, but there were a few shelters now, and we would do some work that way. Mostly through a sorority at that point. Or you'd be a part of a walk to raise money for something. And my interface with the community was there were some students here, and clearly one of my best friends, who lived at home, and went to school at Wesleyan while living in Bloomington. So I would become aware of issues of the town or who was from the town or what made Bloomington, Bloomington or what made State Farm State Farm or whatever through friends who still lived at home, or called this Bloomington-Normal area home.

Washington: So what was your favorite activity here? We have activities up in the Hansen center, events—

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, yeah. Hansen center was still a gym. That's where I took badminton, and relaxation, in the pool was underneath it—

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: —and it was really scuzzy but true. But for me, alright so here's some of my favorite—so every weekend we'd go to the movies but it was in the main lounge and you sat in those really hard, metal chairs. But it was only fifty cents! And so I'm like, it was pretty cool! And I think you got free popcorn for like fifty cents. So I would do that in a heartbeat! Because I love movies—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —and it was cheaper than going down the street. But I would also take advantage of movies anywhere in any of the theaters in town. I, being Homecoming chair—that was in the days when Homecoming was a whole week of activities. And you would—there was a parade, and you'd be working on your float, and you'd be working on a skit, because there would be a skit competition and that was the beginning of lip sync, it was kind of like at the very beginning of that. And so that to me was totally cool. I have such fond memories of Dad's day in the fall, and Mom's day in the spring, when your folks would come down, and there was a football game in one instance, and other stuff going on, and this idea about knowing other people's families—

Washington: We have a parent's weekend.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah, it's all combined.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: And this idea of meeting each other's families and knowing the whole story—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —I must admit that my feminist sensibilities—now, I look at this and think, what the hell?

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: But there was this thing called Sigma Chi derby days, where you would chase down a bunch of Sigma Chi's, and they would be running in, and you'd have to get—but there was a whole week of events there too and there was relay races, and it was pitting sorority against sorority—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and contests and all this kind of stuff. Well, on the morning—the big morning of the actual day, you would go get Sigma Chi painted on the back of your...cutoff jeans—like, your shorts. Which, in retrospect, what the hell? And I remember by my Senior year, I was like, this is ridiculous. But you did it, with social pressures being what they are. And now I look back, the guy, Kevin Dunn, who is an actor, who's in Veep right now, and who was in the Transformer, and lots of other great movies that—I just ran into him in Baltimore the other day.

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: He was our guy that was our Sigma Chi—we fixed a skit for him. He was our Sigma Chi rep that was our skit guy. I loved the theater. So for me, I had friends who were in the theater, but you

go into the productions, they were amazing! And so I would go to McPherson for productions in the Lab, they were amazing. We had very few concerts. There were some—

Washington: We don't have that many concerts now.

Guenzler-Stevens: We would have comedians, or something else to do with Homecoming. So I remember Robert Klein who is sort of a has-been now, but then was really big, was my Senior year, Titan Games was still a big deal then, which, it kind of is now, with races and all of that. For me, I think the drinking age was 18, so—

Washington: Was it?

Guenzler-Stevens: —yeah. You were legal at 18. So the idea of pre-gaming and drinking before you went out—people didn't do that that much, so, do I think people got drunk? Absolutely! Do I think people had to be transported because they had been drinking to excess—I don't know that that happened that much. Did it happen? Oh absolutely, but not probably as much as it does now. So I'm still an advocate for 18, because I think it teaches you to—I never learned to like alcohol, try as others might want me to, and for me I was really fun without it so that wasn't a big part of who I was. Would I go to bars? Absolutely. Would I drink sodas, yeah. But that wasn't that big a deal. It wasn't a critical piece. Fraternity parties, did I go? Absolutely. It was—I had a great conversationalist, yeah. Was I the sloppy drunk? No, not at all. You know what, when I guess I look back on all of it, the thing I love the most about this place was just the people. You know, whether it was the conversation you had, or the fact that you knew somebody had your back. There was a particular time when I was overwhelmed with all I had on my to-do list, which I think we get.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And I think I was stressed out. And I remember—I lived in a sorority house, which meant that on Valentines, everybody got flowers, except for some of us who weren't dating anyone. So we would always laugh, like stay away. But that day I think I was overwhelmed and yet I had really amazing mentors and friends, and somehow they had gotten together and said, today is Marsha's day. Flowers came all day long.

Washington: That's really nice.

Guenzler-Stevens: And it was this way of saying, "You matter." There is a community of care out there for you.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: So when I look back, that day, was just this really terrific example of the fact that I never felt alone here. To me I was lonely on occasion or I didn't have my shit together but I never felt alone.

Washington: So what is your involvement with Illinois Wesleyan now?

Guenzler-Stevens: So...ah! I forgot one more thing, Chapel. We had Chapel on Wednesdays at eleven o'clock, and you never had classes at the same time. Do you still have class at eleven o'clock on Wednesdays?

Washington: No, there's a class.

Guenzler-Stevens: Okay, so eleven o'clock, no classes on Wednesdays, never. And so you could go to Chapel. Eh, probably a hundred, two hundred kids would always go to Chapel on Wednesday, which is out of 1600, pretty damn big. Faculty and staff would go. Amazing speakers, amazing. And, Reverend Abernathy, from the Civil Rights movement—amazing music, speakers, it was always in Presser Hall. It was what enlivened my intellect sometimes, or stoked my passion.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And then there was a thing called Fine Arts Festival, whichever you brought, an artist to campus, could be a visual artist, could be a performing artist. One of the years I was here was Frank Capra. I love film. Frank Capra did "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," "It's a Wonderful Life," all these amazing films. I sat next to him, watching "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," which is my favorite of all favorite films. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: So that kind of like, whoa, was pretty amazing. So, since then. So, I worked here for two years. So for me, that meant that I had an extended set of friends, right? Folks that maybe I recruited to come to Wesleyan and that I sort of kept up with them from when they were here shortly after I left. And then, for me, it was getting involved in the Alumni Association when it started it. There was an Alumni Association but it didn't have an Executive Board, it didn't really do much. So they began to start a group and I started on that. By that point I lived in Washington. I wasn't making that much money. I was working in higher education I think when I started, so it was \$19,200. So to come back to Chicago was a big damn deal. And so I saved usually those trips for Christmas and maybe one other time during the year. But I would try to get back for Alumni Board meetings as time progressed and I got more involved in that, and then over the years, that group became a really important community to me. So I would come back for Alumni Board meetings and come back for Homecoming, and I got more involved in the leadership of that group. So for the last three years I've been president of the Alumni Association. That also meant that I was on the [Board of] Trustees. And so, the joke my husband always says is, do we need to buy real estate in Bloomington? Because you're there so often.

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: Because—I was here, last month? This month? I'll be here next month.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: So once a month I feel like I've been in Bloomington. So it's a lot cheaper to live life certainly not on fifty dollars a month anymore. But I think it's really important. The other thing that I'm really proud of is, maybe about seven years ago, an Alumni Board meeting, we were talking about statistics about women in college, and particularly about women at Illinois Wesleyan. There was a series

of statistics that suggested that Illinois Wesleyan young women, women like you, came to Wesleyan with higher grade point averages, exited with higher grade point averages, but lacked self-confidence, as compared to their male colleagues, who had less academic credentials, but they were more confident. And so, that wasn't that different than national statistics. For me, working with young women had become a really critical thing that I did in my profession as well. And so, I decided I needed to do something. I couldn't sit back and let generations of young Illinois Wesleyan women not have the skills or the confidence necessary to go into the world. And if I could help that, well I was going to do something. So I got a bunch of folks that I adore and love on the Alumni Board and then Pat Wilson was just coming—Dick Wilson was just coming to president—Pat was coming, she joined us, folks from Alumni, Darcy Greder, who I had been on her search committee, when she was—I was a Senior when she came. So we all had a year where we talked about, what could we do? What could we do to help young women in college? And we started this thing called the Council for IWU Women—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: And I now look back on that as probably one of the greatest things I invested myself in because while it isn't perfect, it's evolving to be something that brings young women and alumni women together in a way that says, you matter, and I'll help you make your way in whatever field of study you want, or I'll tell you about failures I've had so you don't feel so bad about your own or I'll introduce you to my network. So here's sort of the prime point. So over the years I've mentored lots of folks at Maryland. And one of my favorite mentees was—is this amazing young woman who was a big protestor when she was in Maryland, particularly for Asian-American studies. She's a young Filipino-American woman who, in her Freshman year, took an Asian-American studies course and then found out there were no others—

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: —and wanted a major. And so I met her in her Freshman year and she would go on to do amazing things as a student leader, and she was my Senior intern. So she went on to grad school. She was a White House fellow, she worked in the White House, she did these amazing things in the federal government, and then decided to travel the world, kind of like “Eat, Pray, Love.” And she was in Buddhist temple, she was—she ended up in India doing dance, yoga, and then working with young women who'd been sex trafficked and rehabilitating and providing school and all those. So I was here for IWU Council for Women and I met this young woman who said she was going to study for grad school in India. So I was like, oh my god! You need to meet my friend Christina she's in India right now! So, woohoo! Here's her email, I'll connect you, blah blah blah. I didn't think anything else of it. Christina and I stay in touch all the time, and she's in India, and she has this idea where she's going to ride for—she says for fifty young women who've been sex trafficked, I'm going to ride for fifty days through India, small villages, through talking about why you shouldn't let your children, or how you should alleviate the pain. She's on occasion able to email me, and she'll say, your girl Kari is doing really well. And I had tried to get Maryland students to ride with her, but I didn't have success and I thought, well who is Kari? So I get the Illinois Wesleyan Magazine months late, and there's a story in there about this young woman, Kari, from Illinois Wesleyan, studying in India, who's just finished a fifty day bike ride.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: And that was her. And the only reason she did it is because I gave her this contact, Christina, and they became friends, and she did this fifty day bike ride that sort of pushed her to the limit. Well that friend, Christina Lagdameo, my friend, from the University of Maryland, is the Deputy Director of the White House on Asian-American Pacific Islanders now. She's how I got to go to the Oval Office. And I think that's what it's about.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: It's about networking people. It's about saying, oh my God, you're going to do that? Have you thought about blah blah blah? Have you met my friend so and so? You're an AFS student? I'm an AFS student. Suddenly we're all connected. That's what Wesleyan should be about—

Washington: Right.

Guenzler-Stevens: —could be about, is about. So that's what's kept me involved, is just this desire to repay a debt. People cared for me, and they helped me to make my way into the world. So it's my responsibility to do it for somebody else.

Washington: Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

Guenzler-Stevens: You know I think...just the other day I was having this conversation with one of my favorite students, and...we were talking about how difficult college is. It's a difficult stage of life and people say to you—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: —these are the best days of your life, right? They're always saying, oh my God, what are you worried about? These are the best days of your life.

Washington: It's a hard transition.

Guenzler-Stevens: Oh it's really hard. And I think you're coming into your own identity when you're in college, right? You're trying to figure out the answer to those questions, who am I?

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: What is my purpose? And I remember being at Illinois Wesleyan, on any number of occasions, walking across the quad, trying to figure out, who am I? And maybe I invested myself in certain classes or certain activities outside of class in an effort to try to say, my God, who am I? And I was really blessed, and I think it comes from Wesleyan and maybe the size of the place, and just the investment of faculty and staff who know you by name and who hold you accountable and all the rest of it, but who lovingly care for you. And they want to help you answer the question, who am I? What is my purpose? But I wish someone had told me when I was in school that you were going to ask that question the rest of your life. And that it was okay to know what you knew when you exited, but you were going to live your way into the answer to that. Because you just couldn't have all the answers to those questions right now. You knew where you were going next. But the journey was going to take a lot of crazy turns, and that, if you had really good comrades around you for that journey, or a posse of people who cared about you, who sort of knew your story, and would lovingly accept you even if you really messed up, and

who cheered your every great accomplishment. Life was going to be okay, even if you took some funky turns, and if the person you thought you were in love with wasn't in love with you, or whatever those things were that threw you off your way. And for me that's kind of what Illinois Wesleyan has been about. I think, it's my parents, it's my siblings who'd gone to school here, it's my niece, but it's also these friends who have your back, who want to watch you evolve, who want to help you evolve, who pose seriously challenging questions about identity, like who are you, but who also lovingly care for you when you can't answer the question. And I know that every day I get up and I think, what's my purpose? And I know right now that the work I'm doing is absolutely about my passion and my purpose. Now, that's a gift, that's a gift. But when I left Wesleyan, I felt very much loved, and challenged, and stimulated. But I felt like I needed to know the answer to those questions for the rest of my life, and we all really don't. So yeah, that's my sage, crazy-ass piece of advice.

[Washington laughs]

Washington: Okay, well, I guess that's it. Thank you for interviewing with me.

Guenzler-Stevens: Absolutely! Absolutely. Can I ask you a question?

Washington: Sure.

Guenzler-Stevens: So you, if you had to think of who you're dreaming yourself into right now, six months from now, when you're leaving this place what do you think you want to do? Who do you want to be?

Washington: I'm not really sure. I was thinking, for a long time I wanted to go into law, but I really like—I really like community service a lot, so—

Guenzler-Stevens: We're twins of a different mother.

[Washington laughs]

Washington: I actually have a twin.

Guenzler-Stevens: [gasps] do you really!

Washington: Yeah I do.

Guenzler-Stevens: That's crazy. Fraternal—

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Identical?

Washington: Fraternal.

Guenzler-Stevens: Fraternal.

Washington: Yeah. So I was thinking, there's this internship that I'm trying to get for the fall. And it's applied in legal services for lower-class people, for underrepresented people—

Guenzler-Stevens: Perfect.

Washington: —and I really—I think I want to get involved in something like that. So I think non-for-profit—

Guenzler-Stevens: Great.

Washington: —and maybe have my legal interests in there.

Guenzler-Stevens: I think it's a great idea. Things like the Innocence Project, I think, which is a really cool project as well, which is helping to overturn cases where someone has been wrongfully convicted—but find the law schools that have amazing community-based clinics, like legal clinics. Because I think, like University of Maryland does—because it's in an urban area and it sort of says it needs to serve its community. But I think there are lots of other ways in which—whether it's women's legal—I mean there's lots of bifurcations of just clinics and legal clinics providing service to the community. And the other thing is, don't forget public policy as another piece of that. And if you have that love of non-profit, sometimes it's not just law school, but that it's also about public policy, how you affect public policy. So for instance, the New School for Social Research, which is a graduate school in New York City, that sort of bloomed in the 1940's and 50's with intellects coming out of Columbia, they have an amazing master's of public policy where you can focus on non-profit management.

Washington: Wow.

Guenzler-Stevens: Mhm. So for instance one of my friends who runs the largest shelters for women who are victims of violence in DC, she went to do her Master's in public policy and non-profit management in the New School. The other is to think about—you should...law school is going to cost you.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Public policy school and law school if you can do it—get a Graduate Assistantship. It doesn't always have to be in your field. It can be in things you did otherwise. And that should pay for your tuition and provide you a stipend. I mean it's the only way I got through my Master's program is I had that and—

Washington: Graduate school—

Guenzler-Stevens: Did a graduate assistantship. So for instance, let's say you decide you're going to go to grad school. I would look and see what kind of fellowships or graduate assistantships do they have. Most law schools, med schools, they're not going to give you anything.

Washington: Right.

Guenzler-Stevens: But that doesn't mean you shouldn't look elsewhere on campus, because what have you been involved in since you've been here?

Washington: I'm involved in a service fraternity called—

Guenzler-Stevens: Alpha Omega.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Alright, so let's say you want to work in the community service learning office on campus, right? So for us, we hire graduate assistants. We give them free tuition, alright, we pay their tuition. We give them \$19,000 a year, you're not going to get wealthy on that, but that's your money to pay for your apartment, and a little bit of spending money, and that's going to get you through. So, when you look for institutions, look for where you could find graduate assistantships, parley you do community service. AmeriCorps, Christina Lagdameo, who ends up being deputy director in the White House, when she—she went to New School as well, because she was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and they paid for her graduate school. But she was an AmeriCorps fellow while in grad school.

Washington: Oh.

Guenzler-Stevens: And they gave her a stipend and she worked with middle school kids in, I think, Bedford–Stuyvesant, somewhere. And in fact one of those students would come along to be a student at the University of Maryland and I used to just laugh like nobody's business because Christina had mentored her in middle school and she was a piece of work. Like she would always be supposed to come see me because she was really messing up.

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: And she'd be like, I can't come over Marsha, I just got my hair done and it's raining—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: —and I'd be like, oh my God! Get your butt over here! And then we had an issue with some police brutality on campus and we were in the same—she was protesting and I was there—

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: —sort of making sure students were safe, and she's like, these police are fucked, Marsha, and then she goes, sorry! And I'm just like, it's fine.

[Guenzler-Stevens and Washington laugh]

Guenzler-Stevens: But yeah, find ways so you don't have to pay for it, because for me that was the only way I could go to grad school.

Washington: I didn't know that. So graduate—

Guenzler-Stevens: Graduate assistantship. So sometimes you're going to have to go through the grad school, right? Or sometimes it may be that it's not graduate—it's not specific to the institution, like it's AmeriCorps, or it's a fellowship that—I was thinking the Career Center here might be your best bet. It's a national scholarship, like Christina was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. Another person I knew is a Pickering Fellow. That paid his graduate school and guaranteed him a place in the Foreign Service. So figure out if there's somebody out there that can help you fuel your dreams.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: Funding. Because I couldn't have done it without.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Yeah. And it's this incredible learning opportunity as well. We have kids who are in public policy program right now who are working for us and they're working with America Reads America Counts, which is a literacy program where we work with kids. We have legal aid, we have a grad student who works—we have undergraduate legal aid and graduate legal aid where we have lawyers who work with students and provide free legal services. We have grad students who work there. So think about ways in which you combine your Alpha Omega and your community service interests and get some experience.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: And get free tuition.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: I think those are great ideas. Who else is doing amazing community work on legal issues? Look at—there's two other places I would look. If you ever decided you wanted to look in Washington, there's a thing called NDI, the National Democratic Institute. There's a concomitant kind of similar group called IRI, the International Republican Institute. They sound partisan. They're both funded in part by the federal government. They're both about building young democracies, and the idea is it's more globally focused, but the idea is to really work to build capacity in fledgling or young governments or recreating themselves as governments. So for instance they are very present in Cairo right now, they're working the Congo, or they're making sure the people can vote in Afghanistan's most recent elections, whatever. But they hire interns right after undergrad for a year, and they pay pretty well.

Washington: Uh huh.

Guenzler-Stevens: And it gives you a chance to try something, right? And get how to learn again and figure out a bit more about the question who am I? Before you go back to school, I think sometimes it's important to gap before you go back to school.

Washington: Yeah I do too, yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Because you just need to be hungry to learn again. So that's a place I would look. And look who's—read the New York Times, see who's doing cool stuff, who's working in your area, whether that's the Clinton Global Foundation, or NDI, or IRI. Look at who's doing stuff you really value. Women to Women International, I love. They're in DC but they're also all over the globe. And they hire people to work domestically but they also hire people to work in war torn areas. You got to decide whether you can do that. And that idea is you work with women who've been victims in the war of violence, helping them to recover, and then working as a community together to create economic opportunity for themselves and their families, so there's an infusion of microcredit. And then you work to help them as a community so you support each other as they going economically. And they do amazing things. So those are things you can do for a year or two after you graduate and then you're like, okay, I'm ready to go now. And or you meet really good people or you figure out that there's ways for you to fund it and all that kind of stuff.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: But if you ever want to go, go. But otherwise, take a year or two off. There's good people doing stuff. There's a really cool guy who's going to win one of the—he doesn't know it yet—

[Washington chuckles]

Guenzler-Stevens: —but he's going to win one of the outstanding alumni awards at Homecoming, and he's doing really cool stuff in Chicago, primarily for the Latino community, but I think for others as well, and it's community based work and I think a portion—some part of it is legal services but another part is acquiring real estate and creating community centers and recovering. He could be a very cool—so when you see—they're going to probably release that in the next—because they're going to vote on it today at the Alumni Association—so I think probably in the next few weeks you'll see it. Or call Ann Harding in alumni in another few weeks and ask her for his name and contact.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: Network is a Wesleyan thing. Absolutely do it. Because I'm trying to think of who else might be doing cool stuff. There were a bunch of folks who came through women's related NGO's in Washington, and I don't know what that conduit was, but there's some I know. So again, Ann Harding is a great contact, because she's worked here so long, she knows a lot of people. I just help—the woman who just graduated, who was President of the Senate—did you know her at all?

Washington: Mm, no.

Guenzler-Stevens: She graduated in December, and she really wanted to work in the film industry. So for me, it was like, alright, here's all the people I know in film, in LA. She went out for three months, she interviewed folks, there were a few Wesleyan folks that we were able to put her in touch with, the rest were just friends. And my friend, his sister, who I know, is a producer in Hollywood and that's—Lisa is how she got her—she's going to—she's got a full-time job in Hollywood. But it's really just doing informational interviews and having someone introduce you so it doesn't feel as creepy.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: So as you think about it, if there's some way I can introduce you to folks, holler.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: I'd be happy to. Or if there's a particular place you want to end up, like if you want to end up in LA or something.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: Or Chicago.

Washington: Probably California.

Guenzler-Stevens: Probably California, because family's there.

Washington: I want to go somewhere new.

Guenzler-Stevens: It is very cool. Culturally, it's very cool. Well you know the—did you see the gathering of alumni in LA maybe a couple months ago? So definitely talk to Ann. See who's out there, who might be doing things you think is interesting.

Washington: Okay.

Guenzler-Stevens: Hm. Yeah. There's been some folks up there who are doing stuff you might find interesting. But she probably knows that. Yeah. Family matters.

Washington: Yeah.

Guenzler-Stevens: That's the thing that's taken me a while to figure that out too, that you got to take time for the people you love. So I try to get back home to Chicago just to see my folks. I'm going to go in my car this afternoon—

[Washington laughs]

Guenzler-Stevens: So, does that help you?

Washington: Yes, it does.

Guenzler-Stevens: Great, great. Thanks so much for the time—

Washington: You're welcome.

Guenzler-Stevens: —for doing this.