Mary Jane Fisher

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Interviewer Jordan Thompson, Camera Don Bouzek

MF: Hi, I'm Mary Jane Fisher.

Q: Tell me about your background and early life.

MF: I was born in 1971 in Toronto, Ontario. Both my parents were originally from St. Johns, Newfoundland. There was no work there at the time, so them and my older sister moved to Toronto. My mom was pregnant with me, so I was born in Toronto. Shortly after that, my parents were divorced and my mom remarried and we moved to Calgary.

Q: How old were you when you moved to Calgary?

MF: Four and a half.

Q: How did your folks make a living?

MF: My stepfather was in construction originally. He started a construction business with his brother, which is why we moved to Calgary. My mom really didn't work when I was younger, other than maybe helping out with the books somewhat. After that, my stepdad gave up construction after a couple of years and ended up owning his own cleaning company, and then my mom would do cleaning jobs with him. But when I look back, my mom pretty much was a stay-home mom most of my life.

Q: What was it like growing up in your home in Calgary?

MF: It was very strict, very religious. It was a happy place. We always had lots of kids over. We had me and my older sister, and when I was eight I had another half sister born. So always lots of friends, lots of religious activities, so we were very busy, and a very strict environment.

Q: I understand that you grew up in a Jehovah's Witness household.

MF: I grew up as a Jehovah's Witness. That was one of the reasons that my parent divorced, was my mom being in Toronto accepted a door knock of a couple and started studying the bible with them, and shortly after became a Jehovah's Witness. My father didn't like that idea, so he decided to pick up and leave. My mom got extremely involved in the religion and then ended up marrying an elder in the congregation, who took on her and her two kids. When we moved to Calgary he just progressed and progressed in the church, so by the time I was five or so even in Calgary my dad was high up in the congregation of the Jehovah's Witness, my stepdad was. Because of that, we were always really pressured to be the perfect kids and to always set an example for other kids, even though behind my parents' back most of the time we weren't doing what we were supposed to be doing. But it's that difficulty of trying to be everything for everyone.

Q: Could you say a bit more about that experience?

MF: Growing up, we were never allowed to date. We were never allowed to hang out with worldly kids, we were only allowed to hang out with other Jehovah's Witnesses. They didn't want us to be susceptible to bad association. In high school and even younger than that, we were never taught that secular education was an option for us; we were always taught that we would graduate and become a regular pioneer. What they meant by regular pioneering was preaching the bible and God's word to other neighbours, as you see on your doorstep on a regular basis when Jehovah's Witnesses knock on your doors. As a young teenage girl, that was what was expected of me and my sisters and all of my siblings, because of the fact that that was what we were supposed to do in order to have salvation. Growing up, I always wanted to be a nurse, but bottom line my parents always said, well you can do that but you won't be living in our house while you do it. When you're told that your whole life, you're kind of like, okay well I guess I'm not going to be a nurse – I'm going to be this regular pioneer that everyone wanted me to be. So it was very repressing. You were never allowed to kind of do what you want, be

who you wanted to be, and be an individual. You always just had to be what you were told to be and do what you were told to do, otherwise there were repercussions.

Q: When did you realize you wanted to be a nurse?

MF: I ended up getting married right at 20, so the regular pioneering thing didn't really work for me very well. I ended up getting married, and the first thing I wanted to do was have some kids. I ended up having a child, my marriage didn't work out, got divorced, married again, had three more kids, and we were at the point in our life where we were just not making ends meet. My husband had gone into the cleaning business because as a Jehovah's Witness the cleaning business was the way to go – flexible hours enabled you to do the preaching work. It was a great way to make money without an education, because as Witnesses most of them weren't educated. I was working as a healthcare aide in Okotoks at the Health and Wellness Centre, and I was just so wanting to do more. I was just always, I can do more, I can do more, I'm just bored, I want to do more. My kids were a little older and I said to my husband, I really want to go and get my LPN. There was a healthcare aide bridging program; would it be something that I'd be able to do? At that time in the religion it was still very much, you don't go to school. Even my own kids, we weren't encouraging them to go to school. At that point my oldest daughter was a teenager, but she had no intention of going to school. She, in fact, was going to go live with her dad in Mexico and pioneer. It was kind of hypocritical to be wanting to go to school, and I felt really bad, because it just wasn't done, especially a person my age. The Jehovah's Witness's reasoning to having somebody go to school, it would be a man, because they would be the ones that would have to support the family. That was the only reason why any Witness would ever go to school. So for me, as a 38-year-old woman with a young family, to want to go back to school and become a nurse, everyone was like, oh well you're just going to do a few months of a course or whatever. Then as time kept going and going, everyone was like, well when are you finishing? Aren't you done yet? You should be out pioneering more, preaching God's word. Why are you doing this? But it was my goal. When I got accepted in Bow Valley College in Calgary, I cried. I'm like, wow I took this step, this is huge. Going through all those classes and tears and marks and my husband supporting me, which was awesome the whole time, and finishing that class, I just couldn't believe that I had actually done it. During that time, I had taken a psychology class. We

had to do this Venn diagram and they said, put everything that you love on the inside of the diagram, put everything that's distant or things that aren't important in your life or cause you conflict in this little area. At that time, I was really conflicted with my religious beliefs. I was not happy, my husband was not happy, my kids weren't happy – we were not getting what we needed in the church. In fact, every time I even walked into the church I felt very uncomfortable, I felt ostracized. The Jehovah's Witnesses religion is very much that you have to work really hard, and unless you do absolutely everything and are perfect, you don't get accepted and you won't be rewarded by God. That is what they believe. You're going to live in this paradise on earth, but you have to be way up here in order to achieve that. Unless you're giving your all and a hundred percent, you're never going to achieve that. I never felt like I was ever good enough and that I would ever achieve that. Getting back to the psychology class, in this diagram I put religion in a conflicted area. The girl next to me is like, Mary Jane, you're doing it wrong, religion should be in your inner circle. I said, no mine's over here. She looked at me and said, well why would you belong to a religion that makes you unhappy? It was just like this lightbulb aha moment and I was like, oh my god, you're so right. Why am I belonging to this religion that makes me so unhappy? I reasoned it out in my mind that I'm not perfect – I swear, I have bad thoughts, I'm not this person that everyone expects me to be as a Jehovah's Witness. So with that reasoning in mind, I thought, I'm going to die at Armageddon anyway, so why not enjoy the life that I'm living now, and stop feeling guilty and bad about it? After that day, I never went back to church. That was it. I just finally realized that I had to live my life the way I wanted to live it. I took a while, but my husband was still in the church. We had met in the church and we did it together and raised our kids that way. Sunday mornings the kids would come into my room and say, mom, get out of bed, we gotta go to church. I'm like, no I'm not going, to my five-year-old. They're like, but mom, you're going to die at Armageddon. We had taught them ourselves and that this is the way this religion works – you guilt people into doing what Jehovah wants them to do. It just kind of backfired on me there. But after six months or so, my husband actually came to the realization that he no longer wanted to be a Jehovah's Witness as well, so it worked out quite well that we left together. My family was not happy by any means. My mom and stepfather and three half siblings all lived in the same town of Okotoks as me, and they all pretty much disowned me. Three years later, after getting caught celebrating Halloween, we were officially kicked out of the church, or disfellowshipped. At that point, my parents and

everyone refused to even talk to us. If I run into my mom and stepdad at Costco, they just turn their backs and walk the other way now. It's been a hard challenge, but legitimately I've never been happier. It's just such an amazing way of life, to be able to live your life the way you want to live it, and not be pushed down and told that you can't do things even though you know that you're more than capable of doing them.

Q: It's so interesting that you came to that realization in that psychology course while studying to be an LPN.

MF: The funny thing was, getting back to that, my whole life my mom was always like, don't study psychology, they'll make you leave the church. There you go, it worked.

Q: I can understand how your children would feel the way they did.

MF: Absolutely, because that's what you've taught them from the day they were born, because that's what I was taught to teach them, and my mom taught me the same thing.

Q: What was it like doing work around your house when you were growing up, and then getting your first paid job?

MF: Work when I was a kid was going to work with my parents. I always wanted to be that cool kid that worked at MacDonald's, because back in the '70s and '80s MacDonald's was really cool. But I was never allowed to. They're like, no, bad association spoils useful habits, you can't do that. So I went to work cleaning, and cleaning dirty ashtrays for $20 a month when I was a teenager, and that was my allowance money. My first real job I actually got through work experience through high school, because my parents were all about, get a good part time job because that will enable you to pioneer, but don't get an education. I ended up getting a job at the Gimbel Eye Centre in Calgary, Market Mall Professional Building. It was a great job for someone who's 18 years old. I worked upstairs in the administration with my work experience, making $2 an hour as part of work experience in high school. When I was done that, they actually offered me an opportunity to become an ophthalmologist assistant, full time hours and

they would pay for everything. Here's this girl that secretly in her heart wanted to be a nurse her whole life. So what does a good Jehovah's Witness girl do? Go to her parents and say, hey I just had this amazing opportunity. They're like, you can't do that; you have to work part time because you have to pioneer. I knew that I couldn't do the course and work part time. So I went back and said, hey, I'd still really like to work with you guys, this just isn't the perfect opportunity for me; so would you have anything else available? A couple of months later they called me back and offered me a part time position in their surgical centre, which was really cool because, again, I always wanted to be a nurse. I ended up doing instrument sterilization right outside the OR, just a private surgical suite. Working conditions were standing on my feet for my six-hour shift that usually ended up being 10 to 12 hours, and we would get a half-hour break. I asked once why we didn't get a coffee break and they said, well they're Seventh Day Adventists, they don't believe in drinking coffee, so nobody gets a coffee break. Now looking back it really doesn't make sense, but that was it, half an hour break and no overtime paid. If I was working 1 o'clock, my shift was supposed to end at 6 o'clock. If we were there until 10 o'clock, we did not get a break.

Q: You're saying that the religious beliefs of the owner informed the staff policy of not having a break?

MF: Ya, supposedly; that's what I was told. It was kind of interesting, being my own religious person as well at that time. I thought that was kind of ridiculous, but I thought, whatever. I could imagine that if I was working for a Jehovah's Witness and everybody wanted a smoke break they'd be like, no you can't have a smoke break, because we don't believe in smoking. But you'd think they would still allow you to have some sort of break.

Q: How did you go from instrument sterilization to being a healthcare aide?

MF: I ended up getting married while I was working at Gimbel Eye Centre, and got pregnant, went on mat leave, and lost that baby; he was stillborn at 38 weeks. They offered me my job back, but I did not go back. At the time, it just did not make sense to me, because I wanted to have another baby right away. I ended up getting pregnant with my oldest daughter, Rachael,

and everything was great, had her. When she was about a year old, I started looking for another job. This ad in the newspaper came up with Care West, and they were looking for nursing attendants. They would do a full six-week course and hire you to be a nursing attendant for Care West. So I applied, I got in, did the training course, and became an NA. Then had another baby, left that job, and started working with my husband doing cleaning. I cleaned houses, offices, did that for quite a few years. Ended up having a set of twins, and we moved to Okotoks. We needed a job that had benefits. AHS had an ad in the paper wanting healthcare aides for community in Okotoks. I said, sure, so I applied for that, got a job, and that's how I became a healthcare aide again.

Q: What was the job at Care West like?

MF: It was a good job. It was really hard work. I was there for approximately two years. I worked at the Fanning Centre on the young physically disabled unit, because I always felt that I really related to young people better than I related to the elderly. I didn't have any grandparents when I was growing up, and I was really almost scared of them, so I thought working with young disabled would be a better way to go. Little did I know that it was double the work to work with physically disabled people compared to working with the elderly, but it was a really good way to learn. That was my first exposure to a union, as well.

Q: Which union?

MF: It was CUPE, if I'm remembering back. I remember there being strike talk and whatnot, but at that time I was a devout Jehovah's Witness and I was like, oh my god, if there's strikes, what am I going to do? As a Jehovah's Witness, you would never ever go on strike, because you have to maintain neutral. You would never go against what the government said unless it would interfere with your religious beliefs. We never talked about politics growing up, ever; it was just a non topic. It was never something that applied to our daily lives. I wasn't even allowed to participate in mock government in school, so it was just something I knew nothing about.

Q: How did your learning about the union at that time affect you in the future?

MF: I don't know if it really did. It was just kind of like a non issue. I really didn't get involved. I really didn't understand what a union was. It was the first time that I realized that my job at the Gimbel Eye Centre was totally breaking labour laws. I was like, what, I get a coffee break times two and a half-hour lunch, and I get to leave when I'm supposed to leave? What's up with that? That was amazing. At that point I did realize that unions were good, because of the different working conditions. I learned about seniority with jobs and whatnot, but that was pretty much all I learned.

Q: Approximately what year did you start at Gimbel?

MF: That would've been 1989.

Q: And the year you started at Care West?

MF: That would've been 1995.

Q: Then you left Care West to clean?

MF: Ya, I ended up getting laid off after I had my daughter in '97, so 1995 to 1997 I worked at Care West.

Q: Then you took the job as healthcare aide because you wanted the benefits.

MF: Yes.

Q: Tell me more about that healthcare aide job at AHS.

MF: I was a healthcare aide in Okotoks Community Care right out of the Okotoks Health and Wellness Centre that had just been built. I started that job in 2007. It was fantastic. It gave me the flexibility I needed. I had two kids in kindergarten and one in elementary school and one in

junior high. I was working mostly with seniors in the community in their homes bathing, giving medications, helping them dress – just basically the activities of daily living in their homes. It was great, it was a really good job. The wages were great, the hours weren't bad, and benefits, which was huge for our family.

Q: Describe those benefits and how they contrasted to those of previous jobs.

MF: Getting stat days off with pay, that was great. We had prescription coverage, dental coverage. I can't remember what my coverage was at Gimbel's; I know we did have some sort of benefit plan. Same with Care West, we had good benefits then.

Q: You wanted that job because the benefits were important. Did they fulfill your needs?

MF: Absolutely they did. The biggest thing was my husband was self employed, and in order to get Blue Cross and whatnot it was really expensive. It just made sense for me to go get a job that I could get regular benefits from for our family, because without those benefits our kids weren't going to the dentist, I wasn't getting my medications that I needed. It was just something that was a hundred percent necessary for our life at that point.

Q: Do you remember workplace problems at that time?

MF: I'm trying to think. I'm sorry, I can't remember anything like that.

Q: Did you learn any new skills at that job?

MF: Absolutely. Working on my own for so many years, it was a whole different ballgame working with people again, working with a schedule again. Skill wise, what I had learned through Care West, my skills were so good that even though it had been about ten years since I had left that job, those skills were fantastic in the community. A lot of the women that I worked with (I didn't work with any men) weren't even healthcare aide certified; at that time, we didn't

have to be. The skills that I had with tube feeding, working with lifts and whatnot, were actually a great benefit to our team. I think it was a really neat experience to bring those in.

Q: Was it at the Okotoks Healthcare Centre that you decided to go for your LPN?

MF: Yes. Because I didn't have my actual healthcare aide certificate, AHS was going through a program at that time to certify all their healthcare aides. So at that time, AHS actually paid for my healthcare aide certificate, which enabled me to bridge into my LPN program rather than having to start from scratch, which was a really good benefit.

Q: Then you'd have to commute to go to school, right?

MF: Ya.

Q: Was that your first time having to commute away from Okotoks?

MF: Yes.

Q: Tell me about the impact that had.

MF: That was a lot, traveling from Okotoks into Calgary every day to go to Bow Valley downtown. Luckily, I grew up in Calgary, so I was kind of used to the city and whatnot. But the distance and whatnot, it was difficult. I would leave an extra hour early so I would beat traffic, then I would go to school and do homework and study at school so I wouldn't have to do that. I tried taking the train a few times and hated every second of it – it was too crowded and smelly, just too crazy. It was hard being away from the kids so much; I was so used to being around. Every job that I'd had prior to going to Alberta Health Services was always extremely flexible. I was delivering pizza, I was housecleaning, so I was really at home with the kids a lot. Then when I started going back to school, it's the first time that I was in a fulltime, not a position, but I was fulltime away from my kids. That was difficult. But luckily, I have a great husband who was able to pick up my slack. He started doing the laundry and cleaning and cooking, and if the kids had a

dentist appointment he was always there to take them. It worked out well that way because I had really good home support, which has always really been helpful.

Q: Does anyone stand out to you as a mentor in that time of your life?

MF: I think a mentor was actually one of my friends, Michelle, who was a fellow healthcare aide. She wasn't a nurse, but she was always there to support me and help me through a lot of different things. She was actually the first person that got me involved with AUPE.

Q: How did that happen?

MF: When I first met Michelle, she was new to our office. She was from B.C. and a super union girl. We didn't have any posters up in our office, we didn't really know what was going on. The chapter that we were in under Local 45 was basically run out of High River, so Okotoks was kind of an offshoot and never really got much attention. Michelle took it upon herself to really get involved with AUPE, and made Okotoks Community Care its own chapter. When that happened, she was always like, Mary Jane, you need to come to these meetings, you need to get involved. At that time, I was still a Jehovah's Witness and I was like, ya thanks but no thanks, I'm just not getting involved. Then after I became an LPN and left the religion, she convinced me to come to a meeting and basically told me that I was going to be Treasurer Secretary. I'm like, okay, I don't know what to do, but sure. I'm always up for something exciting and new, so I gave that a shot. That was my first exposure to doing anything with AUPE.

Q: Around what year was that?

MF: That was 2011. In 2011 I left being a Jehovah's Witness, and that was when I attended my first union meeting.

Q: How were those related?

MF: Completely related, actually. Even showing up at an AUPE meeting, I never would've done that a year before because it went against every single religious belief that I'd had growing up and even into adulthood. We were to remain neutral. We pretty much did what people told us to do, unless it interfered with our religious beliefs. The government and what they said was law, so you followed the law. You maintained neutrality, you didn't go to war, you didn't fight for anything. Fighting for workers' rights just would not have ever happened if I had still been a Jehovah's Witness.

Q: What was it like becoming involved as Secretary Treasurer?

MF: I went to the meeting. We had a good turnout of about ten people, so for a small chapter that was a really good turnout for us. But of course everyone's like, oh I'm here, I'll have some food, but I don't ever want to do anything. So for her to tell me that I was like, okay so what do I do now? I didn't have a clue and I didn't have an overt desire to have a clue. I was like, ya I'll do this for you, but I'm not really interested. I had a lot going on. I didn't really know what it was about or really want to take a stand at that point.

Q: It was about a decade between your first involvement and when you started taking AUPE education.

MF: When I first became an LPN, I was busy – ya sure I'll help out and whatnot, go to the chapter meetings, but it wasn't a passion. I was still so new at being an LPN and I had a lot going on in my life. My dad was dying in Newfoundland and there was just so much going on, it was kind of not a priority. My kids were still a priority, and I just wasn't overly interested. Then I ended up leaving AHS and I went to Eden Valley, which is a First Nations reserve outside Okotoks, and worked out there. Going back into a non-unionized environment, I was in shock. I ended up getting fired from that job for a trumped-up charge which was not true, and didn't have any recourse. Everyone I talked to were like, well why don't you call the union and fight it? I'm like, we don't have a union. So this time I lucked out and got right back into AHS. At that moment I was pretty much like, you know what, I'm not going to take this for granted. It was a really big learning curve for me on about how amazing unions are and how they really do

protect our rights. So I was working in Calgary; I went back into homecare but in Seniors South in Calgary with AHS. I was really lucky to get a job again after leaving. I attended a chapter meeting and it was elections and they were looking for vice chair. I went, sure I'll do vice chair, why not? Don't know what I'm doing, but that's okay, I'm sure I'll learn. Did my introduction to the union online and then just started taking courses. The more I learned, the more excited I became about union things, the more outspoken I became and the more involved I wanted to be.

Q: Do you remember any union actions that were taken?

MF: I'm trying to think. We were always looking for contract renewals, and working on our contracts and stuff. I don't really remember a lot. I do remember AUPE being very involved in a strike that was going on in Calgary when I first came back into Calgary. That would've been 2015, or was that before? I know the Cold Lake was going on, so maybe I'm thinking of the Cold Lake one. Just to watch the struggles and the passion that everybody had when that was going on was really was inspiring to me. It scared me to think that that could happen to us, that that could even happen to us or anybody. Just to see workers go through that, that was shocking and devastating. I can't even imagine being that worker. So I think that was a pretty significant thing for me to watch and to not be involved with but to be a union member and actually understand the union at that point and to see what everybody was fighting for and how hard they were fighting. It was a really interesting thing to learn about.

Q: What do you remember about the way AUPE was run?

MF: I don't really remember a lot about the local being run, because I never really went to local council meetings or anything at that point. I found the chapter that was in High River really bothered me because I didn't feel that they were reaching out to their members, to be perfectly honest. That's why Michelle took it upon herself to make another chapter so us community members wouldn't be ignored as we had been.

Q: So the union didn't have the kind of local leadership that was needed.

MF: Ya, at a chapter level. We were all part of Chapter 4 in High River, and we didn't know anything that was going on. High River Hospital was run great from their chapter, but all the other sites they had, we felt really ignored and never notified of any events or anything like that.

Q: When did you start to think of yourself as an activist?

MF: When I became vice chair of Chapter 8 in Calgary, Local 45 Chapter 8, I got elected to be a local council member. With that, I was also elected to be an OH&S rep for Chapter 8. I was like, okay I don't know what I'm doing, but I'll do it. As I said, I'm always up for something new, let's give it a try. So about six months went by and I said to our OH&S liaison, am I supposed to be doing something? I'm this OH&S liaison for Chapter 8, but what am I supposed to do? She's like, oh you're supposed to go to the OH&S meetings for the community. I'm like, where are they? So I reached out to our WHS advisor with AHS and found the meetings and started attending those meetings. I think at that moment I'm like, hey I can do something and I can make a change; I'm not just sitting at a table at an AUPE office talking, but I'm actually here learning stuff. At that point as well I'd made it my goal that year to become a steward, and I also became a steward that year. That was just in 2018, so all pretty fresh for me really feeling like I'm an activist.

Q: Have you experienced injury at work?

MF: Yes, I did experience an injury at work. When I was working as a healthcare aide in Okotoks, they weren't de-icing the parking lot, and I completely popped my knee out and was off work for three months with a knee injury. That was my first experience with an injury at work. I didn't really feel that I was being protected as a worker in that situation. It seems like such a simple thing – clear the ice off, put some snow melt down and whatnot. I also didn't really feel that anyone had my back after my injury. You really felt like, okay you're injured, come back to work.

Q: Were you counselled to file a claim?

MF: Ya, I did a WCB claim and whatnot.

Q: Who told you to do that?

MF: My manager at work.

Q: What was the union's involvement?

MF: Nothing. At that time, I didn't understand the resources.

Q: What's the role of an AUPE OH&S liaison?

MF: For me, I was the chapter liaison for OH&S. That would mean that I would represent my chapter in an OH&S role. At that time, we had one committee that was for 45 different sites, because we were community. We would meet once a month and discuss OH&S issues within our sites, then I would report back to our local OH&S liaison and the chapter lead and also Dianna Griffith, who is our OH&S officer with AUPE, if there was any concerns that I had at those meetings. But again, brand new, didn't know what I was doing. I had taken my OH&S course basic level and was learning as I went along. It was very interesting to know what was going on behind the scenes with OH&S, but still not a huge passion at that point.

Q: Which course did you take?

MF: Intro to OH&S with AUPE.

Q: Did you receive any OH&S training from your employer?

MF: Just our ace modules, which is your code reds, your harassment and bullying at the workplace that they've all started – just the basic stuff, nothing above and beyond these modules with AHS.

Q: Is there any story you'd like to share about OH&S?

MF: Absolutely. I actually have come a long way since last July 2018, when I attended my first OH&S meeting in the community. It's been a really eventful year for me when it comes to occupational health and safety. Last year when Bill 30 took place, there was a mandate that sites with 20 or more employees had their own joint workplace health and safety committees. With me being new and not really understanding the laws and whatnot, I was attending the community OH&S committee when I got an email from the committee saying, there's been a report to Alberta Labour that Sheldon Chumir is not following the new Bill 30 legislation that we have our own workplace health and safety committee. I'm like, ya we don't, I guess we should. I just kind of thought that it would happen, but I didn't really realize how it would happen. So we went to this meeting; me and one other person were from Sheldon Chumir. I listened to the WH&S advisor, and everyone around the table say how Sheldon Chumir did not need its own workplace health and safety committee – we're just like every other site, we had no unique issues, and it would just be a waste of time and money for the employer to put one in. I sat there and I was like, this doesn't make sense to me. I'm like, I don't think I agree with this. But I didn't know how to stand up for myself and say, hey this isn't accurate. So I kind of just went along with the flow. Went home, called Dianna Griffith and said, this happened, we need our own committee. We are a very unique site. We have the supervised consumption site, we have opioid dependency programs in the building, two of them now. I work in indigenous family medical clinic; 80 percent of our population of clients are homeless and low-income people. We have a lot of violence and a lot of intoxicated patients coming through our doors. I think we're a pretty unique site, and we need to have this done in our building. So Alberta Labour Board came back and said, yes you guys need to have your own committee, so get it together.

Q: When did you start working at Sheldon Chumir?

MF: I started working at Sheldon Chumir in July of 2017. I'd been back in Calgary homecare with AHS for about a year when a temporary position came up for an LPN at the Elbow River Healing Lodge, which is located at the Sheldon Chumir. It is an indigenous family medicine clinic. I work

with a group of eight to nine doctors, depending on the year, and they have a general practise. We also have specialists that come in – we do traditional wellness, there's a ceremony room. It's a pretty cool clinic, a really neat idea for a clinic. So that's when I started working at Sheldon Chumir.

Q: Did your prior experience help with your work at the Elbow River Healing Lodge?

MF: Yes, one hundred percent it did. Without the experience that I'd had at Eden Valley, I never would've gotten the job at Sheldon Chumir with the Elbow River Healing Lodge.

Q: What aspects of your previous work transferred forward?

MF: A lot of it was trauma and ? care. When you're working with a marginalized population who's had a lot of trauma, it takes a very unique set of skills to be able to work with them. You can be a nurse, you can be an admin person, you have those same skills of taking blood pressure, doing computer work, and whatnot. But it's the emotional skills that you really need to have a special set of skills to be working with the indigenous population. I was very fortunate to have learned a lot of those skills when I worked at Eden Valley.

Q: What was apparent to you when you first started working there about this being a hazardous worksite?

MF: The biggest hazards that I found at the workplace is patient aggression and patient intoxication, whether it's meth, alcohol, marijuana – it can be anything. We have a lot of volatile patients that are coming in with a lot of anger issues, a lot of desperation just not knowing where to turn, frustration. That in turn can turn into a violent situation. At our worksite I would say probably 90 percent of My Safety Net reporting is all to do with patients.

Q: What is My Safety Net?

MF: My Safety Net is the reporting system that Alberta Health Services has in order to track occupational health and safety concerns within their sites.

Q: What has AHS been doing to protect worker safety?

MF: Very good question. Alberta Health Services is actually trying. You have to protect your workers in order to have a place where people want to come to work. Without having some protections in place, no one will come to work at the Chumir. We have onsite security, we have four security teams that work seven days a week 24 hours a day. Most of our backup house is all card access. We have work alone policy in place for those areas that people do work alone. Cameras are everywhere. I think they do legitimately try to make it safe. Unfortunately, with all these new programs that Sheldon Chumir is bringing on, such as a supervised consumption site, it spreads into the rest of the building. The rest of the building was not prepared for the actions or the harm that it would cause the workers in the building.

Q: There were news stories earlier this year talking about how that safe injection site is causing some instability in the community close to the building.

MF: Absolutely, and then that flows into the building. If you have somebody who is under the influence, they don't just go home when they're done. They go to the park, but the security is going around there. But if it's freezing cold out, they find their way through the building. No matter what security does, there's always someone that's going to find their way through the building. We've had a lot of issues with fighting in the building, people sleeping in the hallways, people sleeping in chairs of units they don't belong to, people sleeping and doing drugs in the bathrooms. We had an issue in a staff bathroom on my floor where we had a man who was actually trying to get into a stall where a woman was in, and looking over the stall at a woman. This happened more than once that day. We've had a patient who was just minding her own business and going in to the bathroom, where two girls that were intoxicated completely attacked her and beat her up. We don't really see a lot of that on staff members as much, we're very fortunate that way. But we definitely see it on the general public and we definitely do try to protect the staff members as much as we can. That's the nice thing about the new committee

that started in November at the Sheldon Chumir. We now have our own joint workplace health and safety committee, and we've done a lot of good work. In less than a year, we've made a lot of positive changes.

Q: And someone at the meeting had actually said that it wasn't necessary for Sheldon Chumir to have their own health and safety committee?

MF: Yes, UNA.

Q: Another union said that?

MF: Yes. I was there with three UNA members. I was the only AUPE rep there. I think it was we have a committee and it's working great, so why do anything different. But as an outsider looking in, because I was new to that committee, they weren't talking about the issues at Sheldon Chumir, they would talk about the issues in the supervised consumption site. Sheldon Chumir is not the supervised consumption site. We are an eight-storey building and the supervised consumption site is a quarter of a floor. We had a lot of other things going on in that building that were not getting addressed, and that was the frustrating part for me. That was the great thing about this new committee starting, was we could start addressing all the other issues. At Sheldon Chumir, one of the biggest issues we have is not the supervised consumption site, it's urgent care. A lot of patient violence going on in there – verbal attacks on the nurses, physical attacks on the nurses.

Q: How have you and the committee been addressing those hazards?

MF: When our workplace health and safety committee started, we brought every issue that we had heard to the table. We brought all the My Safety Net reports to the table, and we had to figure out where our priorities were. It was really interesting, because our priorities were of course making employees safe, and that was our focus. There's always so much with AHS that we're making patient-safe, but how can we keep our employees safe? I ended up being elected co-chair of this committee, and I co-chair it with the site manager. Talk about learning

experience, eye-opening experience – everything that's involved with that is way more than I ever expected, but so rewarding. It's a really cool experience to be an LPN; you're on the mid-range of a nurse. You're not a healthcare aide, you're not an RN, you're smack dab in the middle. As an LPN, you don't get a lot of respect. To be a co-chair on this committee and to be in charge of something and have that opportunity is really, really neat. I'm getting to know all the managers at Sheldon Chumir, having working relationships with all of them, having a great relationship with our workplace health and safety advisor with AHS, getting to know Dianna Griffith from AUPE. She's my mentor and support for Occupational Health and Safety. It's just been such an amazing experience. To see differences happening in our building is amazing. When we had those incidents with the gentleman going into the bathroom and looking over the stall and whatnot, I think about ten My Safety Net reports came in. The site manager was like, well there's nothing we can do. It's an open bathroom, I know it's a staff bathroom, but it's still an open bathroom and it's just a risk we have to take. We're kind of like, no it's not a risk that we should have to take, there has to be a way of protecting employees in these bathrooms. Nobody wants to go to the bathroom when you're the most vulnerable and have someone come in and peeping at you. It's just not appropriate. So we discussed card readers for our staff bathrooms. Site manager said, it'll never happen, there's not a budget for it, never going to happen. So we put out some emails to David Silverstone, who's in charge of the workplace health and safety of AHS in our zone, and within 30 days we heard back, yes we're getting card readers. It was just such an amazing achievement to have that happen. If we hadn't asked and we hadn't have sent out those emails and had those incidents recorded and reported, we never would've had that happen. Now they're currently still in the stage of installing them. They're there, the doors are all getting electronics put through the doors. Every time I walk by those doors I smile, because it's just proof that the joint workplace health and safety committee has made a difference in our building. It's so huge.

Q: What barriers do you see to improving health and safety in the workplace?

MF: I think one of the barriers we have is the attitude that we work in a building that has a lot of addictions and a lot of mental health issues, so we should be expecting the risks that we have to take every day. I find that is an old healthcare way of thinking. It used to be I remember

having a manager back in Okotoks that said to us, oh well, if you're getting hit by a patient, that's life; you're working with dementia patients, of course you're going to get hit. That's just part of your job. In this day and age and with our legislation, it's not part of our job. We have the right to say no. We are nurses, we are not here to get hit, we are not here to be screamed at. We are to be respected. I really feel that things are changing, that eventually maybe we'll get to that point that that happens. It's always a work in process, because those attitudes in healthcare have existed forever. People have a right to healthcare, but we also have a right to not be abused.

Q: Have the different types of unions involved been a barrier in working together toward workplace safety?

MF: Absolutely. I've actually had a lot of hurdles working with other unions on this committee. When we first started this committee we were told, ya put a couple of people on, there's really no limit to how many you can have. Let's just get it going and have some AUPE members, have some UNA members, have some HSAA members, some PARA members, some managers, and we'll all get this running. Then after a few months we were told, no, we have to follow the multi-union agreements which UNA, HSAA and AUPE had signed, saying that any sites of less than 1,500 members would have two members of each union, or what's the word I'm looking for, union agreements. So AUPE actually has four members sitting at the table, because we have Local 95 as well as Local 45. UNA has two members, HSAA should have two members. It was a real struggle. Again, it goes back to that RN, LPN and others group. I love the RNs I work with, but I don't know if they're taught that they're superior or whether it's just something that a lot of RNs feel, but sitting in the joint workplace health and safety committees with four UNA members sitting there because they felt they were still entitled to four UNA members, and telling us that it doesn't matter what we think, they know better, and that their way is going to happen no matter what we say. That was a lot of the attitude that was happening on our committee in the early months. I was able to bring that forward to Dianna Griffith, which turned to a higher level, which was Trevor Hansen, and then in turn he talked to the UNA representation. It took about four months before they finally agreed to follow the agreement,

and now we are back down, well for the first time now we had a meeting with only two UNA members. So that's also been a big achievement, to put them in their place.

Q: Has your experience on the committee changed you in any way?

MF: Absolutely. This experience with the joint workplace health and safety committee, when we first had our meeting in November I was like a lost little sheep. It's like, okay we're having this meeting, we've got our two AUPE Local 45 members here and I'm one of them. I'd encourage someone I'd met during mobilization the previous year in urgent care to come up and say, hey can you be part of this committee, because she's very outspoken as well, so I thought she'd be a great person in this. But being able to be a leader and truly an activist, I think since that happened I truly feel like a union activist. Before then, I just kind of floated along and did my thing, did my courses and whatnot. But for the first time I actually stand up and say, hey this is not right and we have to do something about it. It's taken me a long time to have that courage, because I didn't grow up with having courage to do that. You just kind of sat in the corner quietly and didn't make ripples in the waves, because it isn't the thing to do. Now to be able to do that and to stand up and just become an activist… My daughter said to me the other day, she said, mom, somebody asked me what you do with the union, and I told her you're an activist. Is that right? I'm like, yes absolutely, I am a union activist. I finally feel like I am. I recently also reached out and became our local treasurer. This is again a whole new experience for me, reaching out and becoming into a senior role of leadership in our local. It's really cool, really cool. I really feel that AUPE is a huge part of my life, it's a huge part of my career goals. It's helped me reached a lot of career goals by being able to be a leader, being an activist and standing up for the little person, standing up for what's right and just becoming a better person.

Q: What would you say to other workers about participating in health and safety?

MF: Do it. It's an important part of our job. If nobody does it, nobody will do it. Everybody has to participate and stand up for each other, because without it it's too easy for employers to say and do things that are not safe, because it's cheaper and easier. As employees, we all need to stand together – report, report, report – stand up for ourselves and each other and refuse

unsafe work, which we're now allowed to do, thanks to Bill 30. Just keep pushing for what is right and our rights as a worker.

Q: What role, if any, do unions play in keeping workers safe?

MF: I can't speak for other unions; I can only speak for AUPE and what I've seen. AUPE keeps us safe every single day. Without unions, or AUPE in my case, we wouldn't have safety features at work. We would go right back to the 1970s, 1980s, where things were unsafe at work. Through unions pushing our employers and pushing our workers rights, we are able to come into a safe place to work. Employers aren't going to do it on their own; they don't want to spend the money. It's all about profits, and it's not going to happen without somebody there to fight for us and stand up for us to say, no you can't do this to our employees. For our workers, you need to protect them and make sure there is a safe place for them to go to work. As a single solitary worker without a union, you can't do it. You can't fight the big man or the big corporations. But with a union we're all in solidarity together, we all work together, and by doing that we stand strong and we're a force to be reckoned with.

Q: What would you say about health and safety to people who aren't unionized?

MF: I would say try to get involved. If Bill 30 still exists in the future (let's all hope it does), get on your worksite health and safety committee. If you don't have one, call the labour board and get one started. Even if you're alone, you have to stand up for your rights, and you can always get something going. Stand up for yourself, stand up for your fellow workers. Join a union, get involved with a union.

Q: Do you have anything else to share?

MF: I'm really proud of Sheldon Chumir. It's not very often you get a union activist that says they're proud of their employer, but I think that they are really trying. I think that they have come a long way even in the last year in protecting employees and their workers. I think they're

really trying and I think they're doing a good job. Nothing's perfect and there's always room for improvement, but kudos to the staff of Sheldon Chumir. They're working hard.

Q: What happens if the employer starts saying no to the committee's suggestions?

MF: Don't burst my bubble. I don't know, I haven't come across that yet. I shouldn't say that, they have. We put a motion forward that we do more My Safety Net teaching. We want a module for all employees to take on a yearly basis, and so far they have said no, it's too expensive, we can't afford to do it. I'm sure it's the culture of all AHS and most corporations, that people don't report, whether it's fear of backlash or just not knowing that they should report and that even a small incident should be reported. I think a lot of things get missed, so that is one thing on our committee that we're trying to push for people to know more – to report, report, report. We had made this recommendation, and it was squashed. They said, well we'll see when we're doing our new modules and whatnot; oh this module over here mentions it; it's really management decision. It can be discouraging but it's something you can't just give up on. When they're doing their new modules, we'll be pushing again, and we'll just keep it on the back burner and just keep coming forward with it. Sometimes you can't sweat the little things, and you always have to be focusing and pushing for the big things. But there's always a time to bring forward those other things, and you just can't stop pushing. Luckily, we haven't had any huge issues where we've been stomped on yet. But I also have really good mentors and really good supports that I can go to for advice if that ever happens, and hopefully we'll just keep pushing forward.

Q: Have you been involved in any discussions with your coworkers about Bill 9?

MF: Yes, a hundred percent. I work on a really small team. There's four of us AUPE members on our team, but it is something we discuss every day. With our Local 95 and 45 we have had some emergency meetings. We had one last night, we had one last Saturday. At this time, they are planning an information picket at Foothills Medical Centre, so we're highly involved in getting our people there. We discuss it constantly on our Facebook group, on our chapter Facebook group, our local groups. It's a big thing, it's all over the news, and people aren't understanding

what exactly it's going to do. Definitely lots of discussion, lots of education, and that's the information picket that AUPE is currently encouraging members to be part of, which is a total legal way to fight back. At this point it's the best way to go, because we just need to get the word out there for everyday people to actually understand what Bill 9 is and how important it is to the working employees of this province. It affects all of us. All of us blue collar workers are going to be affected by this.

Q: What are some of your activities outside the workplace and union?

MF: At this point, nothing. I'm a little overwhelmed between the joint workplace health and safety committee and being chapter chair and local treasurer. I have in the past been involved with choir – I love singing. I love spending time with my kids, spending time with my husband. I'm a bit of a social media junkie, a little bit of a candy crush junkie. But family is everything to me, and work as well right now.

Q: Since you've left JW, have they disfellowshipped you?

MF: Yes. The way it goes is you can kind of slide under the radar for a while and kind of think, oh ya, we've just fallen away. Then there comes a point where we said, hey, I'm done, I don't want to be hiding the fact that I'm celebrating Christmas and celebrating holidays. So we put some pumpkins out on our doorstep. Three days later we had two elders come to our door and disfellowship us, saying, oh you're obviously celebrating Halloween; do you really feel that you're Jehovah's Witnesses anymore? We're like, no, get off our steps, see you later, bye. So we were officially disfellowshipped. It took a couple of years for that to happen, but no regrets.

Q: Do you still maintain a Christian faith of some kind?

MF: No. I had so much anger towards religion for so long after that, because after I left I was very resentful of my parents, very resentful of religion. I felt like I'd lost so much. I'm going to try not to cry now. I just felt like I'd lost so much of my whole life, and I could never get that back. Here I was 40 years old and starting my life fresh. I had to come to terms with that, and I still

haven't really figured out what my belief system is, and it's been eight years. I kind of believe what gives me comfort and what gives me happiness. One day it's reincarnation, one day it's angels flying around. That's the great thing of having freedom, is I can believe what I want when I want to believe it. I haven't really figured it out yet. It's a work in progress.

Q: Tell me more about choir.

MF: Choir has been kind of on and off. If I'm not super busy, I join choir. We had one in Okotoks that's called The Big Rock Choir. I did that for a few years. I always loved to sing. One thing about Jehovah's Witnesses, we don't have a religious choir. We would sing at our meetings and we'd sing three songs: one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end. So I did have some opportunity to sing and whatnot. Right before I started school I thought, heck I'm going to be a rebel and join choir. At that time it was totally rebellious, because it was bad association. So I joined choir and loved it, then started back to school and just didn't have the time to do it. About nine months ago I joined choir again. Then I got the new position as chapter chair and local treasurer, so choir has kind of gone out the window again. But one day when I'm retired I'll sing constantly.

Q: Any favourite songs?

MF: Absolutely. When I just left choir last time we were doing The Greatest Showman.

Q: What part do you sing?

MF: Alto, high alto.

Q: How do you feel about singing a couple of bars for us?

MF: Oh my gosh, put me on the spot. I close my eyes and I can see a world that's waiting up for me that I call my own. . .

Q: Tell me about your husband and relationship.

MF: My husband and I have been married for 22 years. We met at a religious convention. First time I saw him, he was holding this tiny little baby, which was his nephew. It was just so adorable. We got married and have been together 22 years. He has a cleaning company, specializing in window cleaning. He's great.

Q: What's his name?

MF: Darcy. Extremely supportive, always there for me. Nothing's perfect by any means, never is. He took on my oldest daughter as his own. We got married when she was three. He's in a band, he's a singer as well. He's great. I don't even know what to say about him. Extremely supportive, patient, puts up with me and all my crazy ideas. Mind you, he has his own crazy ideas I have to support.

Q: What's his band's name?

MF: Haggis. They are currently the most popular band in Okotoks.

Q: Is he Scottish background?

MF: We are both Gaelic. He has more Irish, Scottish, a little bit of French in him. I'm purely Scottish and Welsh.

Q: Is he also from The Rock?

MF: He's from Nova Scotia.

Q: Does he consider himself an activist?

MF: He doesn't. Again, looking at how we grew up, it's the shutting down of dreams. You know what, he should've been a psychologist, he should've been a philosopher. He has all these great ideas but has never had the opportunity to go to school and do something for himself. For me having that opportunity, he's been able to give that to me. I hope that one day he'll be able to get that dream as well. Every education piece I do, I come home and think, oh my god, Darcy would've loved this. He loves those opportunities to better himself and to be a better person, so hopefully one day.

Q: He's a remarkable person, to make the same choices. You both are very brave.

MF: It's very lucky. Well I told him if he didn't, I was going to leave him. He still came along, it's all good. I had to laugh, back then it was always like, oh Darcy is such a bad influence on Mary Jane. It's like, no Mary Jane is a bad influence on Darcy.

Q: What's different between your experience with the committee and the experience of the woman you brought in?

MF: When I got involved with the union and got involved with occupational health and safety, I felt I was really on my own. I had done the course, I had some resources outside of Calgary and Okotoks. So asking how to do this, how to go about it, and actually having to fight to get on that committee, because I kind of got shut down by the co-chairs, who is UNA, and the manager, saying, oh no, we already have AUPE representation. I'm like, no but you're not getting it; that's Local 95. We're Local 45, we have a right to sit at this table as well. So getting on that committee was a job. But I think that mobilization in unions is so important, because we need to let people know that we're there and that they have resources and that we're there to work alongside them. I mobilized my own site last year as part of nurses' week in 2018. I met this amazing, outspoken girl in urgent care who said that she'd had horrible experiences with the union, AUPE, and would never ever do anything with AUPE again – never attend a meeting, nothing – because she hated every second of it. When this joint workplace health and safety committee came up, I knew I needed another person. I don't know a lot of people in Sheldon Chumir, other than just through mobilizing. But the first person that popped into my mind was Christa. I'm

like, hmm, what's she going to say when I ask her to be part of this? Well it's not really union, so I'm going to ask. She was like, oh my gosh, I would love to be part of that committee. She said, there's so many issues down here; we need to stand up for each other. Yes, let me on that committee. Little did she know that being part of that committee, also she had to commit to come to our chapter AGM. She shyly comes up to our meeting, gets elected to be the joint workplace health and safety committee member, and also gets elected to local council. And guess what, now I have a new activist on my hands. Everybody that's part of the union, you might think you're just this little peon, you can't make a change, you can't do anything, you don't want to be part of a union or part of being an activist for the union. It's easy. You just have to say, hey ya, let's try it, let's do it, let's get involved. Just one person can make such a big difference. She has made such a big difference to our committee. She's our eyes and ears in urgent care, where so many of our issues happen at Sheldon Chumir. So get out, mobilize, talk to your coworkers, talk to other members, whether you're involved or not with the union. Get involved, talk to someone, come to a meeting, get educated. You spend money every month to give to our union. Figure out where those dollars go.

Q: Not many people would think to reach out to someone who's been critical of the union. But it worked.

MF: Thanks. You have to remember as well, I was a Jehovah's Witness for 40 years – I used to go to people's doors and tell them about the bible for hours on end. I know how to have a conversation with people.

Q: And often, with people who are resisting.

MF: Absolutely. Many doors slammed in my face over the years.

Q: Being a union activist is kind of the same gig.

MF: Absolutely it is. I have to say, even my kids, my one son, he was ten when we left the organization. But already he was up on stage reading bible verses. He's such a good speaker. If

nothing else, and he said to me about a month ago (my twins just graduated from school), he said, you know what, being a Jehovah's Witness really sucked but I sure am a good speaker, I did learn something from that experience. I'm like, absolutely, we all learned something. It makes us who we are.

Q: How does the union culture support your efforts to better things for other people, as opposed to the restrictions you experienced as a Jehovah's Witness?

MF: When I was a Jehovah's Witness, my culture was very much you do what you told. You never speak your mind, because speaking your mind is against what you're told to do. It's against the collective, let's say. I always spoke my mind at home but never in front of others, because I knew that I would get in trouble. I have strong opinions and can be very outspoken, but I always tried to hide that growing up. I tried to hide it pretty much for 40 years of my life. When I left that religion, it was the first time that I could say what I felt in my heart and I could say what I thought in my brain without feeling scared, without feeling guilt. It didn't matter what my opinion was, it was just my opinion and that was okay. We lost a lot when we left being Jehovah's Witnesses, because our whole family and our whole life was part of that culture. We walked away from there with no friends, no family; it was the six of us. It was me, Darcy, Rachael, Olivia, Joey and Zak – we were the Fisher family, and that's who we were. I remember a workmate saying to me, hey Mary Jane, do you want to go out for lunch? I was always like, no no, no no, I've got other things to do. I'd always make an excuse to not do it. All of a sudden I would always find myself, no no, and then I'd start saying, hey yes, I want to go for lunch with you, and go for lunch and meet this amazing person. All those opportunities, creating opportunities – opportunities came on a daily basis to meet new people and discover new things. The first time we had Christmas was just so overwhelming and crazy. If you'd told me even three years before that I'd have a Christmas tree in my house, I would've laughed at you and said, that's never going to happen. We have a Christmas tree every year. We have family, we have amazing friends. If something happens with one of my friends and we turn out to not be friends, that's okay; I don't have to see them at church every single week. That's okay to choose who I want as friends, it's okay to choose my path in life. The culture that I now belong with is so accepting and loves us for who we are. Our new family is, I don't even know how to say it, it's

supportive and kind. If we're having a bad day, that's okay. They love us if we're having a bad day; they just love us for who we are. Being able to think for myself and being able to have a voice in this world is still so new but so important and so inspiring. I really hope that my kids are watching and they see the changes that you can make in this world, and I hope that all of them will take steps to make those changes as well, if it's in a little way or any way possible, but just to always do their best and to make this world a better place by standing up for yourself, standing up for your rights, and being a voice and having a voice and being able to say what you want to say.

Q: Were your experiences with JW distinct for you as a woman?

MF: Growing up, as a woman you're definitely a second-class citizen. They would never admit it, but it is true. You definitely cannot do the same things that a man can do in that organization. You can never be a leader, you can never be outspoken, you can never say your piece. The way it works is God, Jesus, congregation, men, women. If you're a woman and you want to pray and there's a man in the room, you have to put a head covering on because you are a lower human being than the man is. That's how I grew up. Every once in a while, I laugh at my husband because he's like, well you know, I am the head of this household. I'm like, ya really? Don't try to pull that with me. Definitely as a woman I've always been outspoken with my husband and with my family at home. I've never, how can I say it, it was definitely a barrier I had back then. Now it's definitely not a barrier for me as a woman. I feel that I can do anything, I can do anything I want. I think that women are such a large part of the union and we're a strong part of the union. We have a large sisterhood in the union and we're all in solidarity and we work together, with the men of course. It's nice to have that support and to encourage others. I find in a lot of cultures, when I actually gave my speech to become the local treasurer, I wish I had brought it with me because it really focused on as a woman that I was shut down my whole life. I really felt that would be something that our multicultural local could actually relate with, and that I can run for a position because I can. I figure, you're all probably thinking I'm crazy, but this is why I'm telling you this. It's because I grew up in a society where being a woman you were told not to speak, your viewpoints didn't matter. But now that I'm out of that society, I can be an activist, I can be who I am. That is why I'm running, is because I can. It was just a huge thing for me – I

can do anything I want to do. Yes finances will hold me back, education is going to hold me back. But whatever I can do, I will be doing.

Q: Anything else you'd like to talk about?

MF: No.

[END]