

Interview with Cece Alter (They, Them) - Late January, 2020



*Disclaimer: Elissa Asch, the Archives of Dissent worker who conducted this interview, took over the SRR directorship after Cece and is referenced to at times throughout this interview.*

**Would you mind saying your name, your year, and your pronouns?**

I'm Cece Alter. I use they/them pronouns, and I'm class of 2019.5, and I graduate in four days.

\*Laughs.\*

**Um, and would you consider yourself an activist?**

I would consider myself as trying to be an activist. I don't think it's necessarily a stable thing, like, not an identity, but I do my best to be involved in activism as it arises.

**And what types of activism have you been involved with on Middlebury's campus?**

One side of it has been the activism around speakers coming to campus, so the whole Charles Murray situation [On March 2, 2017, Charles Murray, a controversial sociologist whose work is widely considered racist, came to Middlebury to give a talk. Students at Middlebury protested and shut down the lecture. Administration issued punishments of varying severity to 74 students].

I hadn't been here for that long. It was my third semester, and I had been involved in various groups but definitely wasn't central to it. Um, just kind of ended up there at the protest, protesting, getting probation for protesting, all of that, and that brought me into that world a little bit. And so, I got to see a little bit behind the scenes of what happened next. So, I wasn't in the center of it, because I wasn't in the group that went to trial. Um – other activism kind of came from that. So, that next fall there had been the racial profiling situation, where Public Safety [*Uniformed campus security officers*] claimed that Addis [*student*] had been at the Charles Murray protest when she hadn't been. Um, and there was a whole Town Hall around it, and we had all of these demands, basically, of the school, around that whole situation, because it had been handled so poorly, and really revealed a lot of the racism of this institution. So, I was involved in some of the, you know, printing and organizing and planning around that and distributing those. And I remember, like, standing at the entrance to this Town Hall and seeing Laurie Patton [*Middlebury College President 2014-Present*] who I already had sort of a personal relationship with, and being like, oh, hi. And you know, handing her this list of demands and handing them out to everyone, just to kind of have a – a student voice in what was happening with this Town Hall, because it had been kind of co-opted from students. And then last spring with Legutko [*On April 17, 2019, Ryszard Legutko, a Polish politician and philosopher whose viewpoints are widely considered homophobic, was scheduled to give a talk at Middlebury. Following student organizing, the College decided to cancel the talk, and Legutko ended up giving a version of the talk to a class in the Political Science department*], being involved in some of the planning around that. Trying to bring that, especially to Hillel, because that's where – I was President of Hillel at the time, and Legutko, among many other things, is very anti-semitic, so I felt like it was a place that I could bring in some of the Hillel people who are not necessarily involved in activism most of the time, but I could bring people into awareness with what was happening a little bit with that. So, I wrote some letters on behalf of Hillel that I got approved by the Board in support of the Pride alternative to the Legutko speech. And then following the Legutko event, which had been canceled, that kind of led into the 13 Demands, and I was involved in a lot of that work, too. So we were just kind of a hodgepodge of people who cared about this, um, because the SGA [*Student Government Association*] had released the demands – the Senate had – but then all of these activists kind of came together, led by RAISINS – Radical Asians – were kind of the spearheads of this, and then just – I was friends with some of the people involved that brought other people in – working on really, like pushing those 13 Demands and trying to keep SGA involved and holding strong with what they'd asked for. So, at one point I like went and presented to SGA with two other people who were involved in this, trying to say, you put these forward, you got a lot of student input on them – and the student input, we'd also had a role in, because we had a meeting before the town hall – or the kind of open meeting that they had for student input on the demands, where we got all of these different activists together and all of these different stakeholders and crafted our own alternatives to the demands, like other things that should be included in there, so that when we went to the open SGA meeting we could say – at all of their different break-off groups – we want this, we want this, we want this. This

should be changed, this. This should be changed, this, in a very unified voice. So, once that had all happened, we went to SGA and we were like, you gotta stay strong. You got a lot of student input on this. You were the ones who brought this forward. Please continue this. And we planned some things to escalate that, but it ended up that SGA sort of dropped it and things changed and the semester ended, and it didn't get quite where we expected to, but that was another thing that I ended up being involved in.

**And have you been involved in any feminist activism on campus?**

Yes, so then, the other thing that I've done a lot of work around is various feminist...activism. Sometimes. I don't know. You know, activism is kind of a broad word, and I don't know that everything that SRR did falls under that. But a lot of my effort in social change I guess at Middlebury went towards SRR, the Sexual Relationship Respect Committee, which I joined my junior year, which was the first year the committee existed. I was just a member of it, and then last year, my senior year, I was the Director of it. And through that we did a variety of different projects, some of them maybe more activist-y than others, some of them – it was an – it's an interesting group, where it's positioned, because it's a committee of Student Government, so it's part of the Cabinet of Student Government. So, when I was the Director last year, I went to all the Student Government meetings, which you're doing now. And so, sometimes it's very institutional, but sometimes – a lot of the time, we just kind of do our own thing but get a little bit of institutional backing for it, which is why I wouldn't always say that it's activism. But through that, we passed things to get pads, tampons, and condoms in all first-year dorms, and this year, you all did in sophomore dorms, too. Sex education, and trying to like normalize conversations around sex, and – yeah. So SRR does lots of different things, and part of it was also just supporting anything that comes up – any activism, anything related to sexual health, or you know, we collaborated with It Happens Here [*anti-sexual violence campaign that collects anonymous student stories to raise awareness and give survivors a voice*] a lot to promote their work. A lot of trying to educate the school and kind of act as a go-between between more administrative side and the students. Like with all of the Title IX changes that were happening, we held a lot of open meetings and a lot of – oh, I sent out some all-school emails. Let's see, I sent one in response to Brett Kavanaugh to say we do not – you know, we know this is a really hard time for people. We do not support this, and we like support survivors, ultimately. That's the most important thing here is to remember, like – and craft a statement that we support survivors – and then, about Title IX, another email informing people of what the changes would mean at Middlebury – like nationally and at Middlebury, and giving an opportunity for students to submit comments to the national Title IX, and held some spaces to help students do that as well. So, kind of more national political side. But I think the most – the thing I would consider maybe most activism within that was our complicity project. So, the idea for that had come the year before, so when I was just part of the committee. We did this tabling over J-term [*A one month term in January where students take only one class*]. I was actually gone that J-term, but they did some tabling asking people about – I don't remember what all of the questions were, really –

trying to raise awareness about the issue of sexual violence on campus, and one of the questions – or one of the, you know, prompts on the whiteboard was, "I am complicit because..." So that language had already kind of started going around SRR, and we'd started using that, and then –

**Could you define complicity?**

I can try.

**Which I know is difficult, but if you could just give an idea.**

Yeah, so I think we're all – we're all part of systems, right? So, complicity is the way that we benefit and add to those systems. That we're – we're part of it, and so when it comes to sexual violence, the point that we were really trying to make is that sexual violence isn't just a couple people doing these things. It's actually all of us adding to this culture in which that's okay. You know, someone telling their friends about a hookup that they'd had that wasn't consensual, that they – you know, the person hadn't asked for consent, and their friend being like oh, look at you – like, congratulatory about that hookup rather than calling them out, holding them accountable for not having asked for consent. Or someone making a rape joke and laughing along to it. Consuming media that promotes rape culture. There's lots of ways that we're all part of this culture unless we're actively – well, even if we're actively acting against it, we're still part of it. And we wanted to get people to think more about that, because there is a lot of sexual violence on this campus, and we think that there would be less of it if more people were considering the ways that they were part of that culture and so – if people didn't let those moments slide by, um, and did more to kind of actively combat sexual violence.

**And you said you came up with the idea for the complicity project in your, uh, junior year when you had joined the committee, um, and that you had done some tabling. Where did the project go from there?**

Yeah, so they had already started with that a little bit. And then it kind of dropped for the next little while, and then in the fall of my senior year, so when I was the Director of the committee, we were brainstorming lots of ideas of things that we wanted to do. We had all of these different projects that we were working on kind of simultaneously on the committee. And I had just done a library display for Hillel because there had been the – the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, and I had been trying to figure out, as Hillel President, how to respond to that, and um I decided to kind of hold an art healing space, and so all of the art that was created then I turned into a library display that people could continue to add to over the week. And that turned into kind of a nice memorial for the victims and a place for people to express their emotions – both, we could do it together physically in the space that I'd created there, but also, if people didn't wanna be there in person, or you know, maybe aren't Jewish, didn't feel comfortable there but still felt impacted by it and wanted to add to it. So, I had just finished that and came to the SRR meeting and we were kind of brainstorming things, and I was like, what about a library display? Because I think it's kind of a – a nice way for people to, again, be able to interact with a topic that they're not so sure

they would go to a space specifically for, because it can be hard to enter a room where you haven't been there before, or maybe you don't consider yourself an activist. Maybe you don't feel like you can go to a meeting that's for activists, or maybe you don't feel like you're in the know about protests that are happening or whatever, but want to engage in these topics in some way. And that – it's right there, right in front of you in the library. So many people are passing it. It's kind of a good spot for it. And we were brainstorming different ideas, what would be the thing that we want people to really interact with and engage with? And we're like, you know, sex education is really important. We're trying to bring these sex educators. But the thing that we feel like isn't being addressed in other parts of campus that we really want to get people to think more about is this idea of complicity. Like, how are we complicit in this culture of sexual violence? I was like, alright, let's call it the Complicity Project. And that was kind of the start to it last fall. And so, we started working on it, brainstorming, figuring out a plan, and we laid out this couple month-long trajectory of what this project would look like. So, starting in J term, we put out a go-link [*A system of short URLs that can be used while on campus*], go/complicity/, and started poster about that to get people to start responding to it, and it had all these questions about how do you see yourself as complicit, and then more specific questions about what people do, how people act. I think it's probably still there if you want to look at it. And I'll circle back to that because there were some things that we changed over the course of the time. And so, we had that out and then we had each week a different theme of poster, so we had a week that was statistics about sexual violence, um, and we put up all these posters about that. They all kind of matched a theme. Jess [*member of SRR*] made the posters. They were all very beautiful. And a week about quotes from celebrities that were very, you know, dismissive of rape accusations or not believing survivors, that kind of thing. Getting people to stop and think. See that, see the go-link, go/complicity/, maybe start to think a little bit about this idea and about the pervasiveness of rape culture. And so we had those, and then after a couple weeks of that, start of spring semester we had tabling, so we would go out in front of Proctor [*dining hall*] with this big sign, all of these flyers, the – a lot of the same posters with quotes and different things on them, and we would ask people to write, again, kind of this white board model that we would then take photos of, of how are you complicit in a culture of sexual violence. So, it'd say, "I'm complicit because..." and people would write down various ways that they were complicit. And then we had another one that was, "I vow to challenge my complicity by..." So, there was a little bit more of a positive there, or at least an action. I think it's important to give people that option. I have a lot more to say about this. \*Laughs.\* Do you mind if I just keep going? \*Laughs.\*

### **Keep going.**

It's coming back to me. Um, so – so that – that was an interesting question of the – having the positive side, and that came up a lot when our next move was to put up this library display. And we put up all of the photos that we'd taken of students holding white boards. So the back of the display was just covered in these photos, and the front of the display had these posters that – we'd interviewed professors about complicity, so we had quotes from them and we had statistics

and we had all of these quotes from students from the go/complicity/ link. So, all – all of this up on the poster. But before we put up the posters, we had been getting some negative feedback from the administrators, and their view was that it was too blame-y. So, we'd gotten that feedback early on in the project, and that's part of where we came up with this you know second white board of how to challenge your complicity, which I think was a helpful addition, but their take was that you know people see this, they see complicity, and they're just going to feel, like, guilty and walk away. And that's a little bit of a difficult – a little sticky, you know. It's – I don't want people to get defensive. I think that's something that I want to avoid. But I think bringing people to face their complicity doesn't have to lead to defensiveness, and kind of the answer I've come to with that is that you bring people to face their complicity and you give them a path forward. So, there isn't a way out of it necessarily, but there's a way forward, so here are the ways that I'm complicit, but here are the things that I can vow to do, here are the actions I can take because I know that I'm part of this system, and I know that I can also do something to make it a little bit better. But I – I think you have to bring them to awareness first, because I don't think people are going to just start to act without having any sense of that, so I still think it's important. And, the other–

### **People were asking you to make changes, though?**

Yeah, and the big way that that came up actually was kind of this whole difficult situation of pushback that we were getting on it that – basically, I got a call the night before the display was supposed to go up that we had all these quotes from the complicity go-link and some of them called out specific people, and I got this phone call like 11pm the night before this was supposed to go up from a member of SGA saying, hold up, I know that if someone is called out publicly and there's an ongoing trial, it could be seen as public retribution and be held against someone in a Title IX case. So that was very jarring for me, because I was like, I want to ideally stop sexual violence at Middlebury. Diminish, really. And if my actions are adding to or making it worse for survivors that's like the opposite of what I want to be doing. So, I was like, okay, pause everything, and make sure that there's no way that any of the information we're putting up on this display could have any features that an individual could be identified from and that could get in the way of a Title IX investigation. So, I was like okay, I'm just going to send it to everyone. I'm going to send all the information, like, had everything that we put on the posters typed up in a Google Doc and sent it off to Barbara McCall, the Director of Health and Wellness, Miguel Fernandez, who was the interim Title IX Coordinator at that time, Renee Wells, who's the head of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [*all three college administrators*], I think, sent it to them with this request. Like, I'm really worried about this possibly getting in the way of a Title IX investigation. Can you check through this and make sure it's not going to? And the response that I got back the next morning was, basically, that they didn't like the project \*laughs\* um, and didn't think we should put it up at all because it would make people feel guilty. Which wasn't helpful, I don't think, and I ended up calling an emergency meeting, as you know \*laughs\* um, with the members of SRR and being like should we go ahead with this? We only have the space in the library for a week. It's really hard to get – we had to like, register this months in advance.

It's hard to get that space. And we're getting all this negative feedback. But it doesn't sound like the thing that I'm really worried is going to be an issue – the stuff about possible retribution and getting in the way of Title IX cases – so do we just go forward? And everyone unanimously agreed like we're just going to do it. We don't think that the possible guilt people will feel by coming to terms with the fact that they're complicit in this system is worth not ever bringing it up for. And, this is kind of a side note, but I've been thinking about the role of guilt. I listened to a Brené Brown – it wasn't a TedTalk, but you know, a talk – and she gets a little bit into the difference between guilt and shame, and that shame is a feeling of there's something inherently wrong with me and that I am completely unlovable, and that feeling is correlated with like high levels of depression, high levels of suicide, high levels of anxiety, all of these things. If you feel like there is something internally wrong with me. Guilt, which is, I did something bad, is correlated with a lot of positive things, actually, because it's just people realizing that they should act in good ways. So, I don't actually think there's something wrong with guilt if you're kind of distinguishing between the two, and I think that's what we were aiming for. We weren't trying to get people to be like, you're terrible. Um, what we wanted to do was get people to come face to face with, you are part of this, and you can make it look different. You can change how our campus works, and you can change the culture of sexual violence that exists here. And I think that's still really valuable, and I hope that that work continues in some way. And it led to some interesting conversations, for sure. We had some interesting conversations within our group. You know, as the project was going, it was morphing all the time, and this question of canceling people was coming up a lot. Because in our original go/complicity/ link, one of the questions had been, have you ever stayed friends with someone who's been accused of sexual violence, and that came directly out of The List, which had been a big occurrence, this List of Men to Avoid [*A list posted on Facebook in December of 2017 that named several male Middlebury students as perpetrators of various forms of sexual misconduct*], who – their names were listed and in parentheses whatever they had done – sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, that kind of thing. So, we were all on the side of like, yeah, call them out. Don't stay friends with these people. But then as we were going through this project, I think for a lot of us our opinion kind of changed on that. And you know like, it's probably not reasonable to just shun these people. Like first of all, it's not happening. All of these people have pretty much turned out fine. Most of their friends have not believed the allegations and just stayed friends with them and pretend nothing happened. And also, we believe in restorative justice, and that's not a very restorative justice approach, to just be like bye, you don't deserve being part of this community, basically. So, we ended up changing the question to have you stayed friends with someone who's been accused of sexual violence? If so, have you ever brought this up to them? And that was more the direction we ended up going in in the conversations that we had around it is that more than ostracization, we believe in accountability. So, the people who are most likely to hold people accountable are the ones who are close to them. So how can we get people to hold their friends to higher standards, and not necessarily just like, dumping their friends, which sometimes people have to do for their safety. So that's totally valid also. People are like I don't want to be around a rapist.

Absolutely. No need to. But if you are staying friends, which seems to be what happened, how are you also believing survivors and holding your friends to account? And I think that change was important for the project as a whole and for our framing around it, but also for the people who were engaging with it. Especially – one person came up to me after the library display was up and said I've been accused of sexual violence and I'm trying to grapple with it, and I'm trying to grow from that. Do you have any resources? And unfortunately, there's not a lot resources for that, but I helped them get in touch with different people at the school and tried to like find those resources and be a support in some ways for this person, which is not a position I had expected myself to be in, because I'm like, I'm all here for the survivors. But then it turns out there's also people on the other side who want to change and grow, and I think having – being open to that as a possibility is going to ultimately be better for all of us.

**I know that you said you think that the Complicity Project was the probably most activist-like thing that SRR did in terms of sexual assault while you were on the committee -- were directing the committee. Just briefly, were there other things that had to do with sexual assault, even just small things that you guys did that you consider activist work on campus?**

Yeah. I – we – I mean we helped advertise for It Happens Here, which is about sexual assault on campus, and so for some of that we would you know write “It Happen Here” on pillows and put them around campus, which is in some ways a version of sexual assault activism, I suppose. You know, trying to draw people through these visual representations – draw people's awareness to sexual assault happening on campus. And we had this big mattress pad that people could write their reflections about It Happens Here on afterwards, and we put it out a couple years in a row for people to reflect on how it felt to be in that space and to hear these stories about sexual violence. So, little things like that. There's – we did a lot of things, too \*laughs\* so I'm not sure if I'm forgetting any.

**In that case, I would like to talk a little bit more just about how SRR started. It's now in what year? How many years has it been going on now?**

This is the third year of the committee.

**And I know you were on the committee in its first year ever of existing, and directing the second year. Could you talk a little bit about your perspective on why the committee came to be, and how it kind of looked in those first few years?**

Yeah, so the year before I was on the committee, there was for the first time a Director of sexual relationship and respect on the SGA cabinet. So there's all sorts of Director of this, Director of that, and that was the first year they thought this would be a good one to include. And she had a couple projects. The tampons and pads came from her originally – getting them in – I think that was her big project, was getting those free in public bathrooms, so McCollough, Axinn, [*college buildings*] places like that – getting free pads and tampons. And then, the next year, Vee [*Vee*

*Duong '19]* – she was the Director. There were two Directors, but I mostly worked with Vee, because I – I was already sort of friends with Vee, and she approached me when applications were out for the committee and said, I know that you've been doing some work to bring sex educators to campus. Because that past summer, I had been working for OSchool, which is an online sex education – shame free, pleasure-based sex ed – this company in San Francisco, and I had been working for them all summer. So, I came back to school in the fall and was trying to bring sex educators from there to campus, because there are very few sex educators here. Like it doesn't happen that much. So I was already working on that, so she was like, come join this committee. You can do the work you're already doing, and also be involved in this and be involved in other projects if you want. So that worked well. I continued to try and bring these – brought a couple speakers over that year, and also got involved in other projects, and that's when – yeah, they started some of the – the tabling, getting pads, tampons and condoms in first year dorms. Those were some of the big goals for that year. And then that – you know, bringing sex educators –

**And were there a lot of people on the committee your first year?**

Um, yeah, there was a decent number. I think there was – it's – I don't know if you've experienced this this year, but that first year and also last year, it's hard to get people to really do the things that they've committed to sometimes. You know, Middlebury students are very busy, and also over-achieving, and sometimes that combination means that people sign up for way more things than they're actually able to do. And a lot of SGA committees don't do that much, so I think sometimes people will apply for it to be like a – a filler, like, oh I was on this thing. Or you know have good intentions going in, care about this work – everyone definitely cares, but the follow through isn't always there. So, there were a decent number, but like a lot of meetings, there wouldn't be that many people, um, and I think that was true last year as well, that it was hard to get people – there were a couple, like, committed core people. Vee hadn't planned on being on the committee again, and she's like, oh. I asked her to, because she was really informative for my thinking around this, and I – I think a really fantastic leader. And I've worked with her in a lot of the other activist spaces that I talked about before, and she's like yeah, sure, I'll show up, and then – she's a very all-in kind of person, so she ended up very involved, and I asked her in the spring to co-direct with me again. And that was very helpful, I think, to have a Co-Director and be able to bounce ideas off of someone. But I think the committee both years probably had around ten people, but that wasn't actually representative of who was doing the work.

**And what was your experience like directing the committee?**

I think I would have liked to have been more organized and clear with it. Again, everyone had so much passion, but it was going in lots of different directions, so sometimes it was working more efficiently than other times. But I was trying to delegate things and sometimes they would get done and sometimes they wouldn't. I think that was a little bit tricky, and I – I wish I had had

more methods of accountability within it. Because I just kind of assumed like, someone has this task. They will do it. And that would not happen. So, over the year, I think I got a little bit better about that, but I also fell into the trap of being a busy Middlebury student. I don't think I was, like, staying on top of making sure other people were doing their jobs as much as I would have liked. I also think it was really helpful in the spring to have a Co-Director because these things are hard to know how to respond to sometimes. There isn't always – there's not a template for how to do this kind of work, so it was just our best – doing the best we could, I think, and sometimes things would fizzle out. So, at first, people were really passionate about changing Green Dot [*National program that helps schools incorporate bystander intervention training*], because Green Dot is a very like happy-go-lucky approach to sexual violence. Because it's not really an approach to sexual violence at all. But before we never had anything in orientation that was about consent, which you have changed. Thank you very much \*laughs.\* Um – has come far too late, but you know, glad it's happening now. And the only thing that first years would get would be at orientation, Green Dot training, which is like bystander intervention and this very happy movie that's like, oh, ha-ha. If you see someone approaching someone at a party, you could spill water on them – or, approaching them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable – spill water on them, or something like that, to distract them from the situation. And a lot of people were left feeling not safe and not informed and not prepared for what party culture would look like on campus, as related to sexual violence, and so people were really upset about this and had a lot of passion there. So we wrote these letters to Health and Wellness, um, to the people doing Green Dot and went and had a meeting and then kind of realized it wasn't going anywhere. Like, it wasn't going to be a place that we were able to make change, and we kind of had to let that one go and move on to places that we saw more holes on campus, rather than changing what already existed that people had a lot of feelings about already. We were like, okay, they're doing that, and we're not able to make change in that right now. What are the things that are missing? Because there's a whole lot that's missing relating to sexual relationship respect. So, changing the focus a little bit. So that was kind of an interesting process and being Director of like, when to move past things. That happened all the time in meetings, too. People would like very focused into like in-depth conversations about something, and I'd have to be like, this is really interesting, but we have all of these things we have to get done, and so that was kind of a learning process for me of just like, how do you direct a meeting? \*Laughs.\* How do you like – get things to happen, while taking into account the voices of all of these different people on the committee who care about these things a lot? And also – and responding to the more national stuff was kind of tricky, too. Like, how do you write an all-school email in response to Kavanaugh that will, like, be passed by everyone on SGA, that they will all feel okay with this, but that is representative of my beliefs on this issue, too, and kind of speaks for a lot of people, while keeping this support survivors at the center of it, and that sort of thing.

**Yeah, that makes sense. I – I do know that a lot of people on the committee worked to try to get some type of consent training or workshop, um, or something changed about Green**

**Dot, and I think you guys kind of started that idea on campus. Was there anything else you wanted to say about that?**

Yeah, there were a lot of um – I had meetings with people in Health and Wellness about that, and brought a lot of ideas, and I kept getting the response of like, yeah, we're going to try and do this, and I was like great and I think – this is also kind of related to what I was saying about the committee. I would just kind of trust maybe a little bit too much that things would happen, and then, they weren't going to happen unless I made them happen, which is sometimes how it goes at Middlebury, so I was like getting this positive response, but then nothing was changing. So, we would try and bring something again and then nothing was changing. So, I think there were probably a lot of factors to that, but I would say that the – that part of the school was receptive to those ideas but weren't willing to actually put in the effort to make it happen, until we made them, so \*laughs\* I'm glad about that.

**The last thing I wanted to talk to you about was, you mentioned working with IHH [It Happens Here: an anti-sexual violence campaign that collects anonymous student stories to raise awareness and give survivors a voice] or other activist groups on campus, and I was wondering just generally, um, in terms of archiving student activism on sexual assault, what have you observed about the other groups or the state of student activism on sexual assault on campus at Middlebury?**

I think that the challenge at any school, but especially at a small school is that it's very dependent on the people in charge at any given time, and so there's been moments of really strong activism around this, so IHH has been so much better attended over the last like half of my time here than it was at the beginning. I remember going my freshman year and it was like a mostly empty auditorium, and then I think maybe with the #Metoo Movement, sexual violence is more on people's minds, and the hard work put in by the organizers of it, all of the last few that I've been to have been very well attended and very powerful. Um, they've always been powerful, but you know, it's I think really important to bring that to more people. There was also the Panther Day protest [On October 20, 2018 students protested the college's treatment of survivors and cases of sexual violence] around sexual assault and the Map Project, which was mapping different locations that sexual violence had occurred on campus. Those are some of the things I can think of, and I think people are doing really great work and also get burnt out and are full time students and are trying to deal with racist speakers who are showing up and trying to make Divest [Middlebury student group working to divest the college endowment from the fossil fuel industry] happen and trying to – you know, because I think a lot of the people who are involved in this work are involved in a lot of this work, you know, a lot – toes in all of the different activist things that are occurring, while also doing all of their student stuff. So, that's the hard thing about this kind of work is like keeping that energy going, and once someone goes abroad, someone graduates, making sure there's someone who can fill in that role without being too overwhelmed and exhausted themselves, because it is hard work. It's hard work but also, I – I guess something I'll say with that is that it can be really – SRR is some of the stuff that I'm, looking back on my

four years of college, like, proudest to have been part of. And I think part of what felt great about it was the relationships within it, and the collaborative nature of it, because these topics are really heavy, but doing it together felt really important, and you know coming together with this group of people and having these conversations about like, okay, but what about this and how do we approach it like this, and bringing in different theories and different ideas and the thoughts we'd had from professors, you know, related to the Complicity Project, and then, that night in the library where we'd finally decided we've made the changes that we needed to, based on what administrators had said, but we decided we were just going to go for it anyway and put up this display so people could see it, and we were in the library until – until we were kicked out at one in the morning, putting up all of these pictures and posters and getting it all up there and working together, printing these things out, felt really good to be doing that together. And I think that's something that I've seen a lot in the activism here is people really coming together and supporting each other. I definitely felt that with everything happening with Legutko in the spring. It was really stressful, especially for the people right at the center of it, but there was all of this support as well from all these people who do want to see Middlebury become a better place and a safer place for the students here.

**Is there anything else you want to add for the interview?**

I hope people will keep doing this work, and I really believe that they will. I think one of my favorite things about Middlebury, um, is not the place itself or the institution itself, because \*laughs\* there's a lot of problems with it, but that every moment that I've been here, I've seen people fighting to make it better. And it's often exhausting, and I don't want to like glorify it too much, but also I know that people really want to make it a better place for themselves and each other, and that's something I really value.

**Thank you so much.**