Sa’ed Atshan: Now that you're a few years out of college, do you have a different sense of what your skills or talents are?

Kim St. Julian-Varnon: I think I do. When I was at Swarthmore, I always had this chip on my shoulder about being the admissions mistake, and Jim Bock will always tell everyone there are no admissions mistakes, but I was sure he was wrong. I'm like no, I somehow broke the system, and so I was really afraid that my vocabulary was underdeveloped, or my writing wasn't that great, or my reading skills weren't what they needed to be, and now that I'm out of college and I have more perspective, my reading's fine, my writing is great, I mean, Swarthmore will shape you, you will be able to think critically, and I think that the skills that I have, interpersonal skills, being able to multitask but also being able to manage different types of projects at the same time, those are skills that I honed at Swarthmore and that are totally necessary every day for a teacher.

Atshan: So, tell us a story from your college experience that helped you discover something about yourself.

St. Julian-Varnon: So many things. My first paper at Swarthmore, I got a grade, I got like a B minus or something, on this paper, and I was a straight A student from elementary school through senior year of high school. So, I got this B minus, and I melted down. I was like oh my god, they're going to kick me out of college, I'm going to fail out, I can't do this, I'm stupid, I am the admissions mistake, I was bawling my eyes out, and I had never been in that situation before, and so I just went to the professor and it was Doctor Weinberg, and I said can you help me because I don't think I know what I'm doing, and he did. He helped me, and he taught me how to write, and we had these little weekly sessions. I'd go to his office, and he would help me, and I think what that taught me is that I do have perseverance, that I can definitely stick it out, but also, it taught me that asking for help is never a weakness, and that was something I hadn't really learned yet.

Atshan: Well bless his heart also.

St. Julian-Varnon: Seriously.

Atshan: Bob Weinberg. That's fabulous.

St. Julian-Varnon: I told him if I have kids, I'm naming all of them after him, even a girl.