

**Summary of Oral History Transcript**  
**Student, Citizen, Soldier: Oral History and Student Veterans**

**Rust, Takia**

National Guard, Transporter, Platoon #2, Section E4

*Interviewer:*

Interview conducted by Mr. Jeremie Gurksy, Salem State University on 04/15/2016

*Transcriber:*

Transcription conducted by Tiffani Lindsay, Salem State University on 04/22/2016

Summary of Transcript:

Takia Rust, was born in Agana Heights, Guam where her mother was serving in the Navy and her father was a military contractor. Rust was brought to Framingham, MA at age one where she was raised by a discipline oriented military mother. Rust describes some of the racism and sexism her mother faced in the military, as well as the reservations her mother had about her own entry into the service. Despite these forewarnings, Rust was inspired to join the military after the 9/11 attacks and subsequently signed up for the National Guard. She served from 2002 to 2011, including a tour in Taji, Iraq 2006-07, and a second tour in Kuwait in 2010. Rust discusses camaraderie, PTSD, and how a career in the military led her to nursing.

Takia Rust

Narrator

Jeremie Gursky

Salem State University

Interviewer

April 15, 2016

at Salem State University

Salem, Massachusetts

Jeremie Gursky: Hello my name is Jeremie Gursky today is April 15th, 2016. I'm here with Takia Rust a former member of the U.S. National Guard. I'd like to thank you for joining me today and also thank you for your service.

Takia Rust: Thank you.

JG: First of all, I want to start off by finding out a little about yourself. So I'm gonna ask you about your background. I saw on your bio form you grew up in Framingham. What was that like?

TR: Umm... it was... I guess same as anybody's childhood. I mean I had my particular friends that I grew up with. I've been in Framingham I guess since I was about eight. I was born in Guam. Because mom's in the military so I came over from there and been in Framingham ever since. Umm... I have my little friends I grew up with that I still talk to. It was a normal childhood.

JG: Now you mentioned that you were born in Guam. That seems like an interesting story?

TR: Yeah...[laughs]. I don't really know too much about it but I was one when I left so I don't really remember anything about it. My mom was in the military, she was in the Navy and that's where she was contracted...that's where she was stationed in at the time. She met my father. He was a contractor in Guam for the military and she told me she loved his chocolate skin and then one thing led to another and here I am!

JG: Well there you go! Sometimes you never know what's going to catch your eye. Sometimes it could be just that one thing. Did they tell you like, did they both met at a military base or...?

TR: Yes, he was contracted there.

JG: So they just feel in love and...

TR: Pretty much.

JG: So you ended up being a United States citizen too just because they were both, even though you were born there.

TR: Yes.

JG: That's good! Umm...SO what was it like growing in Framingham? What type of school did you go too?

TR: I went to the... I went to public schools so it wasn't anything special. I was pretty good kid. For the most part You know every kid has their moments.

JG: Exactly! I know. Partying and stuff I got that.

TR: Ha-ha yeah! I wish! My mom was very strict being in the military. So I have a very strict upbringing. I wasn't really allowed to go out or have sleepovers. I wasn't allowed to date. So I wouldn't say necessarily that I was sheltered but I didn't have the fullest childhood. I guess all my other friends were having.

JG: So did that help influence your idea of joining the military or was it the influence of your family? Was there a lot of people in the background that like? Or did you come to a conclusion on your own?

TR: Umm...It was a mixture of a little bit of everything. I was very proud that my grandfather was a Green Beret. Umm with my mom being in the military, my dad. It just kind of felt like that's what I needed to do. My mom was very much against it. She did not want me to go into the military. Her reasoning behind it was she didn't want me to go through what she had to go through being an African-American woman in the Seventies and Eighties you know. She went through a whole lot of struggles so she didn't want me to go through what she had to go through basically. But I tried to explain to her it's a new day and age and will probably still have to face an adversity but I won't be as severe in this society. So I wanted to join when I was 17, but she wouldn't allow it because she had to sign for me and butted heads. So I said fine. As soon as I was 18 graduated high school I signed for myself and that was the end of that story.

JG: Was there a reason why you chose the National Guard?

TR: Because I wasn't really sure I knew I wanted to do some form of military I just wasn't sure how extensive I wanted it to be. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go "Full Metal Jacket" Or if I just wanted to you know. So I picked the National Guard because it was part time so I could get a feel for it see if it was something that was going to work out for me and I never ended up leaving [laughs]

JB: It seems to happen to a lot of people. You get stuck in a routine.

TR: I got stuck in the routine.

JG: Did that influence your decision to go to school afterwards?

TR: I initially... it was a helping factor that the National Guard paid for school. So my plan had been to go to school after basic training. I ended up having my son so that kind of delayed the plans. Then I ended up getting deployed so that pushed it back even further [laughs]. When I came back from my first deployment I put in to become a police officer. Then that fell through because I ended up getting deployed again. So everything got bumped back and back. This was the first chance I was able to take the advantage of schooling so I said why not.

JG: O.k I'm just going to take it back a little bit we kind of got off on a tangent to the question. So you said you were 18 when you enlisted but you wanted to enlist early? Your mom was against it? And the only reason was because you said she was afraid of the different adversities you could face there? Was there any other reason for it? Apart from herself being in the military.

TR: That's the reason she gave me. So I can't I mean I don't know if she's... I mean I understand but I don't know if that's the only reason.

JG: How did your father feel about it?

TR: My father.

JG: Completely against it?

TR: Well my father wasn't really in my life. He left when I was 4.

JG: I'm sorry.

TR: But I still. I actually called him to let him know of my plans. I called him to let him know he has a grandson. I called him to let him know that I am in the military because at that point I was already in and he pretty much blew up on me. Like "What the F would you do that! That's the stupidest thing I ever heard!" So that was the last conversation I had with him for another 8 or 9 years. So he was against it as well.

JG: It seemed like everything worked out well for you because you seem like a pretty well put together woman going to school to become a nurse and stuff like that. How was the training? Did you have a different training from the National Guard than in the military?

TR: I think that's where everybody gets confused because we went through the whole you guys are weekend warriors. You aren't cut like the Army and Marines that's not the case at all. We went to basic training and learned the same thing. We trained with the Marines and Army. We go through the same basic training as active duty military. The only time we get separated is when we branch off to our separate job qualifications. But that whole weekend warrior thing I found it, at some points it would really start to piss me off. Because I bleed the same way a Marine does, the way a Naval Officer does. You know what I mean it's just petty to me.

JG: And it's the reason why I brought it up your experience in training.

TR: Its really petty. It turned out my National Guard unit was deployed more often times than the regular army unit. So I'm just like if we're weekend warriors why are we going over there doing your job? You know what I mean?

JG: What was your specific job in the military?

TR: I was in transportation. I was an [inaudible] truck driver.

JG: Did you just do that job?

TR: Yeah, I just did transportation. I wanted to kind of branch out and go off and do different schooling. I was going to do supply but I just. I guess you can say the road was calling me. I couldn't stand just staying on the base and sitting around.

JG: Do you have a truck driver's license because of that?

TR: I was told that I could but with my son it wasn't really optimal for me to be on the road for a long time.

JG: This was something I was curious about. Is there anything in the training that you could transpose into real life?

TR: Based on? What do you mean like? In general?

JG: Life in general. Skills for jobs, school, communications. Anything that you think helped you in your regular life.

TR: It definitely helped me to know when to shut up. The discipline is a big thing for me. I was very hot headed when I was younger. Attitude problem. It was a little out of control. The military helped me to reel it in, to know what battles to fight and which ones to not fight. So I can say I got the discipline aspect from it, the respect...umm. It just threw me way off. For the most part I can say they gave me a lot. Besides my mom, however strict and ridiculous I think she was, me mom and the military have shaped the woman I am today.

JG: That's good to know.

TR: So.

JG: So if you had the chance to go back, would do the same?

TR: Absolutely. If I didn't have my son I wouldn't be here right now. I would jump on as many deployments as I could.

JG: So you really enjoyed it when you were in it? Its kind of a mixed bag?

TR: It's a love hate relationship. I not that I enjoyed the deployments. I enjoyed the...

JG: The camaraderie.

TR: The camaraderie and the feeling of being needed, like I was important, that I was doing something beneficial not just for myself but for everybody. So I still struggle with this to this

day. I suffer from depression. I have a lot of things going on. I feel like because I've, I've lost. I feel like I've lost something getting out. I don't feel like I'm ..... a part of anything anymore. Its the best way I can put it. So I feel like I'm just going through the motions now.

JG: Is this the hardest transition going through school right now?

TR: Yeah. Because I don't, I'm not the first one to open up. I won't approach you, I don't easily just talk to people, I'm very closed off. The most comfortable I've felt so far in my, umm, path at Salem State has been in my veterans classes.

JG: In what?

TR: In my veterans clases

JG: With people.

TR: Yes with people who I can relate to on some level, as they're all around my age, as I am thirty-two as most of my classes most students are around the age of seventeen years.

JG: I have the same problem. I'm twenty-nine, and in some of my classes people mention they are nineteen years' old. [laughs]. I'm not telling you. [laughs]. The other day I was talking about how I got in a car accident and someone's like 'that sounds like an adult problem' and I'm like you're seventeen. Do you think the training you got prepared you for deployment?

TR: Yes, absolutely. I feel like I got a lot of training for stuff that had nothing to do with me. I, the majority of my training, I was trained in hand to hand combat, kicking in doors, which is infantry grunt work. I was a truck driver. Our SOP was to never get out of our vehicle. Our vehicle was our shelter, so if we came under attack, our vehicles were unarmored so our vehicles were the safest place to be in. So me training to kick-in doors and bayonet people and [laughs] is for me, I'm kind of like why is then, but then when I was deployed and we did come in contact I felt that it was a good thing they trained me as I had to throw rocks, you know what I mean.

JG: Exactly. Yeah. I mean when you were saying you were always protected in the car. Did you ever see any active conflicts or anything like that?

TR: Yeah.

JG: So you were in conflict zones and things like that.

TR: Yeah.

JG: So the only job you had was the truck driving?

TR: Mmmhmmm.

JG: Did you meet any of the people when you were there? Did you have any communications with them or was it just basically drive places and drop people off.

TR: I didn't. Mainly I wasn't a transporter of people. It was transporter of supplies. So I would run missions from our base to different parts of the country delivering supplies to whatever,

wherever the soldiers needed it. It could have been anything. It was from as simple as toilet paper to Doritos to ammo. You know what I mean? So I didn't matter. I just opened up the truck.

JG: So, you're probably everyone's favorite

TR: It depends. It depends on what we are carrying.

JG: You get all the heavy stuff its like [inaudible].

TR: We did barrier missions, like, and it wasn't just trucks there. I was a driver, so getting and driving. But I learned how to drive, you will learn today, that's kind of what went down.

JG: I don't know how to drive stick myself.

TR: I don't know how to drive stick still. I don't

JG: Really?

TR: Because luckily by the time I got in they were phasing out and bringing in automatic transmissions so I was like yes. They had a few old school like five tons and stuff from back in like 'Nam and I'm like 'what is that?' But other than that.

JG: Part of a museum...

TR: Yeah. Just for show.

JG: Umm. What do you think was the Iraqi people's perspective of the war? You say you didn't have much contact with them.

TR: We weren't really allowed to have contact with them. The only ones I really had contact with were the one that lived on base. And that's because they were on living on post, working there, doing whatever they were doing. They were not allowed to leave the wire. So, that was their home. We were allowed to. I won't said allowed to, but we could pass and say 'hi, how are you doing.' We weren't allowed to have any actual relationships with them, take it too far. But once we were outside the wire we weren't allowed to communicate with the nationals at all. But for the most part the ones who lived on base were friendly enough. They tended to keep to themselves. Umm. At least for my second deployment. My first deployment it was a free for all [laughs]. They would come up to you and try to sell you alcohol and it, it. One person. Of them, a little eight year old, I'll never forget it. We were on our mission in the green zone [laughs]. We were all. It was. We can't drive during the day. It was always nighttime missions. So we were waiting for the sun to set so we could leave out and we were in front of Saddam in the stadium in the green zone. And this little, little, he couldn't have been more than eight. Him and his little brother rolled up and were all, all of us were kind of standing around the trucks, shooting the shit, smoking butts or whatever and he comes up and he looks at my battle buddy and he's like pointing to me. And I'm looking at him like 'what the hell? what's going on?' And he's like 'yeah what's going on, yeah she's pretty, I trade?' And I'm like 'trade? Trade? What? What are you talking about little boy.' So he give him a bottle of Jack Daniels and starts pulling on my arm. And I'm like, no, no stop. And he keeps going and it escalated to the point

where if this little boy doesn't get away from me something bad is going to happen. It took the unit, my platoon to come over and be like, you know, enough, so somebody had to lock and load for him to get the point like this is not a game anymore, calm down. And his father ended up coming and beat the living crap out of him with a stick. So I guess he had snuck away from home. I don't even think his father, and guess his father thought he stole the alcohol. Because the father came out, beat the crap out of him with a stick, dragged him home and I was just like "Oh my gosh." So my first tour, every day it was just something interesting

JG: That's kind of a weird culture shock. I mean, especially like what are they trying to get from you?

TR: Exactly. He had pills on him. I have no ideas where he got the pills. He's trying to sell us roofies. And I'm like ok, all right. At this point...[laughs]

JG: Shake your head and walk away. I asked you about the impressions of them and its just a different mixed bag of things.

TR: I got a lot, some, for the most part they were very fun and outgoing. I had pictures with some of them. On mission they were proud to be with us. And then you had their few who were very stand offish. They would never make eye contact with you. I kind of got a mix. And then it was a lot of culture shock for me, cause I'm not used to seeing two men in the truck as I'm walking by, you know, having relations. So, and it would be open. It was like a normal thing. It was a big culture shock for me. But for the most part I don't have. I don't really have anything bad to say about them.

JG: The perspective of the war before you went it, did it change? What did you think before you went it there?

TR: To be honest I didn't really have that big of an opinion. I kind of. I was more, when I was younger, more focused on myself. It was all about sports for me, so I didn't really have

JG: What did you play?

TR: Basketball. I wasn't really worried about what's going on outside the world because if it didn't directly affect me I really didn't care.

JG: That's every teenage kid.

TR: It wasn't until 9/11 I started paying attention and that was actually..

JG: Do you want to talk about where you were, what happened during 9/11? Do you remember?

TR: I was in high school and that was actually a, one of the deciding factors on joining the military because I felt like it wasn't fair, all those people that died, and, you know, for what? I didn't necessarily agree with war, but my thought process back then was, was just totally funny because I don't agree with myself now, but my thought process back then was a necessary evil. I was in high school. I was actually in history class when the first plane hit and I remember it kind of just went from a normal school day to chaos. Everything just shut down. TVs were being rolled into the rooms. News was being put on.

JG: My freshman year too. Same thing.

TR: It was just kind of like wow. I remembered thinking I'm so selfish.

JG: How can you know. I was in ninth grade. I didn't even know what the World Trade Center was. I had someone run into my class and be like 'The World Trade Center just got hit' and I was like 'what's the World Trade Center?'

TR: Yup. I felt so selfish because I had a couple of teachers who ended up leaving because they had family members.

JG: My favorite teacher lost his son.

TR: Yup. And there was people running through the hallways because they had families in there. It was just a very humbling experience I guess. It, it made me realize that it's bigger than me. You know what I mean

JG: That's the reason you went in, to like?

TR: Yes, that's the core reason. That's the core reason.

JG: That's what I keep telling people, that's what soldiers are doing. They're not out there to like - most people get in their head that they're killers, or like this thing - but they are people out there to protect their country and save us and like. I very much value the military because I think so many people don't. I think it's one of the worst things people do. They don't realize it's the politicians who create the problems, not the soldiers. Umm. What do you miss most about being over there?

TR: Umm. Definitely the camaraderie. I.

JG: You still have some good friends?

TR: Oh yeah. Absolutely. They will be my friends for life. They'll be my family for life. They're not friend to me. They're family. When you've lived in a hot zone with somebody for fifteen months and, you know, every day you have to say a prayer hoping that today is not the day or, you know, knowing that the person next to you will lay their life down for you the same way, and even though you guys just met. So, for me it's a family. It's not. To this day I would just die for them.

JG: Does any of them live local? Do you get to see them often?

TR: I don't get to see them as often because as I said the majority of my platoon is out. They got tired of it and you know. It was a lot of, for me why I got is because the politics. It just became too political. It stopped being about, you know, the mission and it started being about whose lips are on whose ass. And I just. I'm not going to jeopardize myself like that. I'm not gonna. I was an E-4 for ten years in the military for ten years and never got promoted and that was fine with me because I knew I wasn't. I wasn't. I never was not myself. I wasn't going to jeopardize who I am to please someone else so I was fine. But people say 'ten years and you never got?' Because it was my choice. You know what I mean?

JG: If you love the job, why...

TR: And we were called the E4 mafia, so we had just enough responsibly but not enough to where we had to report to, you know, kiss butt and all that, so I was happy with where I was at.

JG: That's good. What do you miss most when you're over there? Of course your son. But/

TR: Yeah. That's a given. Now that I'm home, honestly, I miss the feeling of freedom. And I guess that's kind a funny because the in military you're told what to do and when to do it but I guess the lack of responsibility. All I had to worry about is myself and you know if I was on a mission all I had to worry about is getting from point A to B. Now that I'm home it's still the world feels like its crashing down on me. Now I have homework. Now I have school. Now I have my son, a dog, taking care of my house, what am I going to do for this? These bills? It just seems like it's never ending when, where I was deployed, you know, wake up and you guys have chow from this time to this time? Good, ok, I'll be there. You go out on mission, this time to this time. Everything was just set. I knew what was going to happen. You know, well, obviously not attacks or anything, but I knew for the most part what was going on and what needed to be done.

JG: So, the...its kind a funny how the hardest transition with you was actually having your freedom taken away by having freedom.

TR: Yep. And everybody finds that hilarious but that to me, that's how I feel. You know what I mean?

JG: I mean if you even look at it with like even prisoners when they are stuck into a routine and they don't want to get out of it. I mean uhm. Your son. Probably your son is the thing that helps you the most, getting to see him everyday though, right?

TR: Aww, now that's debatable too. He's at an age where he's not helping now.

JG: How old is he now?

TR: He's eleven

JG: Eleven? So he's starting to turn into a terror?

TR: Yes. They said terrible twos because he was an angel.

JG: I was a high school teacher and everyone told me it's a good thing I'm not doing middle school.

TR: I don't know what people talk about terrible twos but he was the sweetest, everybody loved him. He was so polite and he never cried. He an excellent child and as hit adolescence I was like. Why are you alive? I can't deal with you

JG: Did you find it easier being a military mom or being a student mom?

TR: I'm going to have to say military mom because I had support when I was back in the military as my mom lived with me and then when she didn't then my sister would come to help

with my son. I have no real support system now. Everybody's moving. My mom lives in Florida. My sister is kind of doing her own thing. So everything is falling on me, which is why it is affecting school. I was doing fine in the first semester. The second semester not so much. Its mainly my absences with my medical issues that I'm dealing with, then on top of it I have to deal with my son and his outbursts, tearing up at school and it gets overwhelming, especially when you're by yourself doing it.

JG: It sounds. You seem like a very strong woman and you'll definitely make it through it. You never know but probably your son appreciates you more than he realizes it. This is what most parents go through. I think about it now and I appreciate everything my dad did for me.

TR: Oh yea

JG: It's difficult. How did you feel about being a woman in combat? Did you ever see combat? Did you get treated any different?

TR: No, my platoon was amazing. I had. I had.

JG: No worries about your mom being worried about you being a woman?

TR: That's the thing. My platoon wasn't originally my platoon. I went through the exact diversity that my mom had talked about. There was a female E6 Caucasian who had it out for me. I couldn't even breathe without her jumping through my skin and this went on. It started on my first deployment back in 06. It went from MOB [Main Operating Base] site, carried all the way into deployment. Towards the end of our MOB, which is like our ground zero before we reached boots on ground wherever we are going it came to a point where I actually locked and loaded and I was going to cause bodily harm to her because she wouldn't let up. Every day she was being consistent and it was non-stop, every day I was being berated.

JG: Was she higher?

TR: She was E6 so it's not like I could say screw you... you know what I mean...I had to follow my chain of command and even that wasn't working. So when I finally came to a head they decided it would be best to switch my platoon. So I went from 1<sup>st</sup> platoon to 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon and that was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The platoon was ninety percent males. I think I was one out of three females in that platoon but they were so welcoming. The moment I got switched over. Because I knew them all in passing because we were all in the same company but none of us never really had a close knit relationship. But the day [unintelligible] It was just open arms from there. They made sure I had everything and we've been a family ever since. They made the rest of the deployment easy.

JG: Was it difficult to transfer between platoons?

TR: Nope. To change platoon? They actually made the choice to do it because I had asked prior and they said I was making a big deal out of it, that it wasn't as bad as I was saying it was until I finally locked and loaded and everything came to a head and they realized maybe they had to regulate the situation.

JG: I've heard about a lot of persons who have gotten into a lot of trouble for that so I'm glad they took care of you. And that it wasn't your fault.

TR: And that's the thing I knew I wasn't... at the time I had literally blacked out. I wasn't really thinking about anything I was doing but I didn't end up getting in trouble because all they had to do was to look back at all the evidence. I had got my chain of command. I've got witnesses because it got to a point where any time she asked to speak to me I'd have a battle buddy. I will not speak to you without a battle buddy...cause it's always a he said/she said. Because she was an E-6 and I was an E-4 they always took her word for it. So I smartened up and said ok. Now, I want to talk to you in private. No absolutely not. If you need to speak with me, you're going to need a battle buddy. So that saved my butt.

JG: That's good. So you were saying that changed everything for you?

TR: It changed everything for me. I'll never forget them; I'll never forget what they did for me. I'll never forget their acceptance. I never had an issue race wise since then.

JG: Is there like specific any happy memories that you would like to share with me that happened in your platoon? Like something funny or anything like that.

TR: Well, I'm just an out of control person. So I really wouldn't be able to name all of them. Every day was a circus. That's just my platoon, we made everything funny because all you really can do is laugh. We go out on missions and a couple guys on my platoon built surround sounds on our trucks rolling down the road blaring "LET THE BODIES HIT THE FLOOR!" so we were just out of control. It was always a good day. It was always a laugh for us. So, I can't really pin point just one thing because as I said they really they made my existence.

JG: That's good because most people I've heard were super bored in Iraq.

TR: Oh no. Every day was a new adventure.

JG: Most people I talked to said they had so much down time that they had to figure out something to do to keep their mind going.

JG: I had guys tell me "I have too much downtime I gotta figure out something to do to keep my mind going".

TR: I wish! I don't even know what down time is. We'd be out on missions 14 to 16 hours come back. Be down for 4 or 5 come right back up to do it again..

JG: Now you said you did most of your missions at night. Does that a really hard transition coming back getting adjusted to the day and everything?

TR: Yeah I didn't sleep. I still haven't slept.

JG: I'm a very night owl person myself.

TR: I used to be too. Now its extreme. I don't sleep. Its funny because its a trigger for the migraines. I didn't go to sleep last night and I looked at my watch like oh my God I have to get up for school. I didn't realize I started dozing off and I didn't know at what point I did. Next

thing I know it's 7 o'clock and I'm like oh crap I missed my class so that's great and my 2<sup>nd</sup> class was cancelled and this is just an ongoing thing for me and my last deployment was 2010. So it's just like.

JG: Have you tried any Yoga or meditation or anything?

TR: I tried it all...meditation yoga, stress relief, they wanted me to do acupuncture. I've tried placebo pills. I've tried sleep aid pills. What happens with the sleep aid pills—I've been four or five of them-- is they make me too drowsy to function during the day. Or if I take them earlier, it was to the point where I would have to take them at 3:00 in the afternoon so that by the time they kicked in, because my body naturally fights it. I don't know why but I'll take it and I'm like this is a good show, and literally 10 minutes later I'm not tired anymore. So I had to take it early enough and what would happen is that it helped me to fall asleep. It never helped me to stay asleep. Four hours of sleep was like eight hours to me. I just don't sleep and I've gone three days to the point where I've started hallucinating that is just...and then I crashed and was down for about two days...that's not healthy for me because my son would look at me like 'what the hell is wrong with you.' You know what I mean?

JG: Have you ever tried sleep studies or something or like that?

TR: Yep. I've through sleep study and they said my brain activity is off the charts. Like that's why. They want me to try some calming techniques because my issue is, I've, I've. Because of everything I've got going on I've developed slight OCD so my psychiatrists said it's the loss of control and because I was so used to being overseas and everything was, you know. And now being back home because I feel my world is just in chaos. In my house if you move something we're going to fight especially if I'm going to look for it and it not where I put it I literally get so angry and it's insane how angry I get. Even at the grocery store everything is lined up on the checkup belt if someone puts something, like why would you do that? I'm very anal, and she says it's because of those control issues.

JG: Actually I have the same issue when I was a kid. I grew up in a very rough household. My dad was an alcoholic and my mom was a heroin addict and so like I developed OCD when I was a kid because I had no control and so the thing that ended up happened to do was to break that as I would constantly wash my hands and I would turn the light on a certain amount of times cause I I felt like if I didn't I'd die. And so what you need to do is to break the cycle...it's hard.

TR: That's hard, trying to figure out how to break the cycle especially when your half asleep.

JG: You have to figure out what the cue is especially when you don't have as much sleep, you don't have as much control over your brain.

TR: Exactly and I go lay down and then a million thoughts are saying it got to...I got to...

JG: Do you read?

TR: I love to read but that's the thing...my mom is like "Read. Read a book and it'll put you to sleep." No.

JG: Find something boring.

TR: That's the thing...when I read it's...

JG: I'm the same way. If I find something interesting I'll read it forever but if I find something like...one of the teachers here sent me like a big book of theories on teaching that I hated and I thought it was the worse book ever and I read it for an hour and then passed out.

TR: I've tried...my mom was like...

Andrew Darien: Maybe I should record one of my lectures for you.

TR: Actually that wouldn't help because I was never into history, but now I guess because I'm older ...and I have...you know what I mean... a lot of things....

JG: Military forms just kicked in.

TR: A lot of things, like biology. I hated science and now I'm so into it, I guess because I'm older and I've been through so much everything is like I want more...so my mom was like...try reading the bible Takia. Read the bible...nobody stays away from the bible. She's the most spiritual person ever and I'm telling you after I read like eight chapters and I'm still going and I'm like...ok...this is not helping so it gets to the point where I have to lay down in my room in the dark everything shut off...I can't have any lights on even downstairs because it's a distraction.

JG: Did you notice that -cause I noticed you said you were deployed a couple of times – did the problem of sleeping when you were here? Or did you sleep better over there?

TR: Oh no, definitely not while I'm over there. It's the same because being in transportation. IEven when we do have down time it's not really down time because we're always on call so we learned how to...I forgot what my buddies used to call it but it's pretty much power nap. We learned to just [snaps] wherever we could because my first deployment everything was chaotic it was always mortars. So, even when you did find a chance to sleep you never really got the good sleep because your always waiting for the next shoe to drop.

JG: It seemed like that just conditioned you to have these problems.

TR: And that's exactly what happened because I never had a problem with falling asleep ever.

JG: I'm a rock myself.

TR: My mom would say "you could sleep through a tornado." I used to sleep so hard and now...u sneeze in the next room and I'm up.

JG: I used to have problems sleeping when I was a kid so I developed different ways to help myself sleep. Every once in a while I'll be like three days and this problem...

TR: Yes, and it's literally killing me and its literally breaking me down because the migraines and then I stopped eating because of the migraines and so this is why I gained so much weight because I binge. I'll go three, four days without eating and I'll just tear everything I sight and

the doctor would say “are you crazy? That’s extremely unhealthy for you. That’s going to let you gain weight and you’re not going to be able to lose it. So I’m kind a just damned if I do, damned if I don’t.

JG: I wish my old teacher still lived in this area because he was the only reason I started sleeping because he taught me how to control my breath before I go to sleep and how to control my mind and produce lucid dreaming so it was actually easier for me to sleep because I practiced lucid dreaming techniques so I’m always preparing myself to have fun while I’m dreaming so I tried to have an experience where I really enjoyed it. It’s something you can look into, there’s a lot of lucid dreaming techniques that will teach you to fall asleep and gain control of dreams and also let you block everything outside and it might get you to have sweet dreams.

TR: Well I’m on medications to not dream, I get nightmares and it gets to the point where I wake up out of my sleep distraught and I just can’t. I can’t live like that anymore. I actually have inhibitors that allows me to

JG: Stop dreaming

TR: Yea, so I don’t think I’m ready to go off those yet.

JG: Yeah. Yeah. Just something to look into. Just something that helped me with my dreaming problems. The problem with my dreaming was that I used to go these weird insane dreams that made no sense. It’s like I’m inside another world like demons were chasing me. How’s your experience been so far at Salem State?

TR: I can’t complain really. I’ve had excellent professors. Like I said the vet classes were obviously preferred for me because I felt like I said that’s where I can be myself. My other classes like I said I’m not quick to jump into groups. My other classes would be like...” ok get into groups” and I’m like umm...and everybody already got their clicks and everything like that and I’m kind of just...

JG: To tell you the truth do you think that’s because more of an age difference or...?

TR: I think it’s both. I think it’s age difference and That I don’t connect

JG: Because I have the same problem. I’m 29 and I’m just you know and I see all these little kids.

TR: The stuff they talk about just grates on my brain. So it for me I know I’m not making a real effort but I figure they are are not going to advance my career any way so to me it doesn’t really matter.

JG: That’s kind of understandable. That’s kind of how I felt lately in my class, to tell you the truth the age difference. Like I had to just do a report with three other people and I did the entire report because they just didn’t know what they were doing

TR: Yeah, I have a presentation coming up for my sociology class and I’ve already been doing research on my own with 4 or 5 other people in the group. Oh well.

JG: What made you decide to go to Salem State?

TR: I was just talking about that yesterday, I initially had applied to 10 different schools but because I had no college background the majority of the letters I received back were you need at least 12 credits in liberal arts or this and that and then reapply and then we'll be able to accept you. Salem State accepted me outright. So out of 10 schools Salem State was only one to say yeah we could take you right away I kind of jumped on it. People say "What you live in Framingham why the heck...?" Well when your options are one that's the one you take.

JG: How do you get here every day? Do you take the train every day do you drive?

TR: No I drive.

JG: My brother actually works in Framingham and he's always talking about how bad the commute is so I feel sorry for you. He works at Staples. He lives in Cambridge now but when he lived here I think it was like 2 hours in the morning because of the traffic.

TR: Oh wow! No not for me. I get here in like 30 to 45 minutes.

JG: He had to get into work at 7 am. If he left to work at 6 am he'd get there at 8 am because of traffic. Therefore, he leaves at 5 am to get there at 7 am.

TR: Oh wow! No I get up at 5 am and be out of the house by 6:30 am, the latest to avoid traffic but even if I do hit traffic it's not that bad.

JG: That's good. It's probably good for you because you are going out of Boston. That's probably what it is.

TR: Yeah.

JG: Was there any schools in that area that you were hoping to get into that you didn't get into?

TR: Yeah I applied to Boston University. I applied to 2 schools in Worcester. I applied to Regis College. I applied to U-Mass, Boston and Amherst.

JG: I thought you would want to come here because of the Nursing programs?

TR: I did! Then I found out Salem has a top rated Nursing program and they accepted me out right so I said there I go.

JG: Is there anything specifically that made you want to come out a labor or delivery nurse?

TR: To be honest with you, like I said, I always wanted to be a cop. I went out to take the test. I passed. I made it to the interview. Made it to a second interview. But then I realized with everything I have going on within me I don't think it's detrimental to any type of healing process for me to continue in a career path that's going to involve death and, you know, all that. So I had to think what would be the bipolar opposite of that? Bringing life into the world. So I said why not do that? I love babies, I love the science and the amazingness of watching a woman birth a human being. It just doesn't get any more real than that. So I figured why not.

JG: I mean, it seems like it would be great for you. Seems like a different path then the one you're living. How are the classes going so far? Is this your first year? Are you technically still a freshman?

TR: This is my second semester. So far so good. If I can just get my outside life together. Because it's affecting my school life.

JG: I mean that's what some of the teachers seem to not understand is when people have lives other than school. I had to drop a class this semester because this teacher was giving me not only 3 books to read a week but 600 pages worth of stuff to read and I'm like I got work and things I got to do and I like I have bills to pay. So does it feel weird being back at school or are you really excited about it? Is it hard because it's been so long since you had to learn all the...

TR: It's a little bit of all of that because like I said I had to take math course and what is this? I don't understand this. This was like twelve years ago. Who does this? So I struggled through a little bit but it's I want to say it's any harder. I think it's actually easier now than when I was in school. Because I didn't really give a shit. I was only into sports and that was my focus so I wasn't really... you know. I'm more disciplined now I want to get good grades and I want to do better, you know what I mean? I think what is hardest for me is the not knowing because I came here for nursing and I still haven't heard anything back from them and you know it's the process trying to get into the program so I kind of feel like it's deflating me a little bit because I feel like working so hard for what? Because I'm not in the field that I want to be in yet. But I'm busting my ass you know to the point I'm scraping bone for what? You know, so I'm kind of battling with that right now but I have a lot people saying it'll work out like yeah and just think about when you do get the job. So I'm kind of just holding out.

JG: You're still a freshman year so you still have time to think. You don't have to declare your major yet. It's good that you are in the program and stuff like that, but I mean it seems like its going well. I mean it's like you said when I said how's it going and you said "You know just living." Sometimes it's all you can do, but I wish I could make the day just a little bit better every day. Try to think of one that made today better than the last.

TR: Yeah. I still haven't found that yet

JG: Do you drink coffee? Does caffeine help at all?

TR: No I can't drink coffee. But it is funny though because I can drink tea. So I don't know if tea has less caffeine than coffee. But it's only herbal tea I can't drink regular tea.

JG: Some of the different ones have different blends.

TR: So I've been going. I don't know if you heard of the name Teavana? I get all my tea through them.

JG: My girlfriend works at Starbucks and Starbucks just bought Teavana so she brings home all kinds of tea all the time.

TR: Yeah! So I love Teavana.

JG: They got some really good stuff there. I actually bought a really fancy teapot from there that I got for her made out of cast-iron.

TR: Oh yeah?! I was thinking about getting one of those. I bought the filter system to brew your own and then I got this really...actually that's what that is [pointing to her backpack] it's the coconut ginger...something. Some crazy, some cochamamie name but it tastes like heaven.

JG: [Laughs] It should be called heaven tea. [Pauses] So what would you think if your son wanted to enlist in the military?

TR: I'm more open minded than my parents were. I mean in this day and age you kind of have to be. If that's what he wanted to do, I would support him. Because I know that's what I would have wanted just to have support. At the end of the day your children are going to make mistakes and that's how they are going to learn from them. You know what I mean. It's the same thing I went through. You can't baby your children forever so if I just told you not to run out in the street and you decided to do it anyway and you get hit by a car, then... That sounds very you know very out of control but I can only help guide you, and then, to where you need to be and where you should be in life. What you choose to do, those are your choices. So from there on out after you made the choice that's on you. I'll be here to help anyway I can but you are going to have to deal with the brunt of it. That's just my mentality.

JG: Well he's a lucky little man. Is there anything you would want to talk about as this is the end? Anything that you wanted to say specifically, that you wanted to get out for people to hear? Anything about the military or anything about your past?

TR: I guess the big this is to not judge. Because you don't know what somebody has been through. You don't. You haven't walked the shoes, you know what I mean? There's a lot of judgment passed on the military from people who have no idea what they are talking about. You know only 1% of the population ends up joining the military. So how can you make a judgment on something you don't know or understand. So I guess what I would have to say is if you...if there is something you would like to know just ask, before you throw out your ignorance.

JG: Very true. Well I just wanted to thank you very much for coming out today.

TR: Thank you. I appreciate it.

JG: It was very excellent interviewing you. It was very nice meeting you.

TR: It was very nice meeting you as well thank you.