**Immigrant Harrisonburg interview.mp3**

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:00:08] So, we are here. I'm Todd Dubyk and this is Cabot Martin. We are here with Hannah Smith, talking about her story of immigrated to the United States. So let's just start at the beginning. Hannah where are you from.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:00:21] I'm from London England. That's where I grew up and lived with the exception of a few years. That's where I lived all of my life before coming here to the States.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:00:38] You said six and a half years ago? So thats going to be the beginning of 2012.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:00:44] Correct. Yeah. June 2012.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:00:49] What can you tell us about, in our sociology terms, the pull factors. What were the things that made you decide to come to the states. Also, we will ask questions but if you would rather Give us a big introduction or if you would rather go off on tangents at any time, say whatever it takes.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:01:06] I'm sure that you have really well-designed open ended question. \*laugh\* I may Be slightly different from some of the other examples of immigrants in the I'm a dual citizen so I am a U.S. citizen anyway. My mom is American and has been in England for close to 50 years and is still there. So my dad is English. My mom is American so I have lots of family here including family in Harrisonburg not just In the country generally. So the pull for coming to Harrisonburg for me at that time was overall. An interest in being somewhere new a bit more of an outdoorsy lifestyle. I'm a city girl and I love that and I love nature and wanted to be somewhere where that would be closely accessible. And I also have a Cousin and his family who live here, He's actually a professor of JMU which is where I first found out about JMU and professionally I was interested in. Some of the things that were going on at JMU in 2012 the president had just started some of his approaches wereResonant for me because I work with children and young people and yet I also have this academic work that I do. I'm very interested in how policy of how we work with young people is informed by research. So I work in this academic field in order to work better with children and training people who are children so the engaged idea with JMU and some of the ways in which those that approach is being applied was appealing to me.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:03:00] When you say the approach of young people do you mean like children or like the students that you're working with?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:03:05] So prior to coming to Harrisonburg. I hadn't taught in university. I had completed a PHD I had been working in my professional life with children and teenagers. So when I'm talking about Applying research and understanding of how to have best practices for the interests of working with children young people that I'm talking about largely underserved populations of children and teens stay.

[00:03:37] Interesting, so it was like JMU was doing such interesting work with what you were doing!

[00:03:45] It wasn't like I researched the whole country and thought JMU that's the place for me. It was a confluence of having family day being interested in in an outdoorsy life thinking that coming to Harrisburg was actually a step. I didn't Imagine particularly I would Stay in Harrisonburg. I didn't think of Harrisburg as being my final destination. The stepping stone. It really it was a confluence of of opportunities and timing for myself. I was a couple years after finishing my PHD and had been working as a social market researcher in London. And wanted to do somewhat more applied. So when I came here I started working with local teenagers in their schools.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:04:44] What does that mean that you're working as a social market research. What kind of stuff is that.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:04:48] So that is an example of what social market researcher would you say market research would be OK. I want to sell this thing. How do I sell it. Social Market Research is about OK. We want to implement behavior change we want to understand How to Influence. OK I'll give you some examples. So gun crime knife crime among youth. you interview a bunch of youth to work out what's happening in those Environments and how do you produce government sponsored messaging or programming that will be effective with those young people. I was very interested when the Olympics was going to happen in London. And the transport system. Well what are we going to do. We're going to have a million more people travelling on these trains that we got. So there was a very long And detailed set of studies into how do we effectively message people to change their behavior so Londoners needed to take different routes so that all the visitors could take the routes on the trains and the buses and be in that be effective means Transport. Which would require me as a regular Londoner to take a different route. So we sampled a whole load of messaging around what's gonna make me actually change my behaviour or what's just going to piss me off. And so social market research is around behaviour change and understanding how do people perceive the messaging that they get. What's effective and what's not effective.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:06:35] For the government or also for private companies?

[00:06:38] For a private company would seek to repeatedly win bids to work for the government for these particular jobs. So we have an outside agency you have. That puts a bid in. So this is what we can do. This is how we're going to do it.

[00:06:56] This is how many hundreds of interviews we're going to do. This is how we're going to test the messaging. So it's whatever whatever they you would be working on possibly multiple projects at the same time. Government initiative to get people cooking more healthy food. You traveled around the country interviewing people about around what are barriers to them you could be healthy. What kinds of messages are effective them. What kinds of recipes are when the government puts out a series of advertisments, local recipe books in supermarkets etc etc that have been tested to know that they're going to be effective in supporting people to do what the government is trying to get them to do right.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:07:46] That sounds very applied. You said you be here because you wanted to do something more applied, but that seems like a big world.

[00:07:51] It's also applied in the sense that if you're trying to help make a better world that's one way you can do it. You. Know my particular interest is is in working with children and young people around broad education and wellbeing. So I did someone that was connected with that stuff on gun crime and we we did a lot of projects around them and you use ideas about masculinity and femininity in that. So we started digging into some of those attitudes and experiences and looking at them. From young people to have more healthy attitudes around sex and sexuality. So those are two very interesting.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:08:41] Kind of like different sides of this issue. You said you came here because you liked the outdoorsy element. Did you ever end up doing that stuff?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:08:52] Cycling and hiking. And yeah you can see the mountains.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:08:57] Yeah I live in Charlottesville which is just on the other side of the mountain. Yeah. So it's kind of comforting to know that home is just on the other side of that.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:09:05] Yeah that's cool yeah.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:09:08] getting into of you deciding to come over here. Obviously Your mother you said wasn't American and immigrated. Was there a history of other people in your family people that you knew coming to the US or was that something you even thought would happen.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:09:27] To answer your last question first. No I hadn't conceived of moving here. Actually no really. I had come here in The summers with my grandparents as a kid. But really it's my my grandfather Lived in New Hampshire and obviously that was very outdoorsy. Yeah I've had an imagined moving here. Its Interesting. So I remember as a teenager coming here And There are lots of stereotypes about Americans who you come here and. Americans on the surface in comparison to English people are much more friendly. Hi how are you. Have a nice day. They're also much more overweight. And drive great big huge cars. Walk anyway. These are stereotypes right. But when you come for a brief period of time from a very different culture and you see those things you go it must be true. This is this is strange and this. I'm 43 now. This was Five years ago talking about So in terms of world politics in America's position And in that time I remember thinking you know this is a weird place. Mom I don't know that I want to keep coming back to this. I don't know anywhere that's not always in place right. That's true. I'm a teenager I'm kind of getting socially minded and I remember thinking This is a very strange place. In other are people starving in other parts of the world people seriously underserved in other parts of the world. And yet you are. You have this huge is obesity problem here. I just do those sort of connections that you make without much grounding. Then I met more of my family and my cousins and. Realized you know actually good people who do good work just get bored wherever they get bored. America America's not so bad it's just it. Was a bit weird in its own way. Yeah. So I remember thinking as a teenager. This is a strange place. I'm not you know. I'm not sure. So my evolution into being interested in moving here. Kind of rational and kind of got. So that was the last question that you had asked.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:13:01] Yeah. There's more family people from growing up but were there people migrated and moving that had maybe influence too? Was getting up and going someplace new something that was a real possibility?

[00:13:18] Yeah. Great question. So definitely a possibility. And so I lived I lived in the Caribbean I lived in other parts of England as a teenager. And while I was studying and so and as did friends of mine and I have family. With the Caribbean and with the states and have always been interested in traveling and grew up in a household. Both my parents had traveled a lot and my mom was on international affairs and so we had people around the world coming through the house and we taught music from around the world and food from around the world and. I was just. I was somewhere the other day and I was with family and I was sitting right there with him and I was just doing something and was whoever I was with said you know that's even not most Westerners. Can sit in that position. And I saw my mom sit like this as a as a normal position as a kid. Yeah. And people from other parts of the world sit like this. And so I just saw him do that just. Right. So the notion that the world is a place out there that's interesting and that you can be. More. Than just where you are right now is that you have always been. And I've. Worked with many teenagers who are Ah you know 15 16 17. And not only have they not been out of their city they've not been out of the area. And they all kinds of reasons for that but I definitely grew up in an environment in which the world was there to be explored. And that was in. I was 18 when I told my mom was going to Trinidad. She said Well that's a great idea.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:15:03] That's huge. That's really interesting with the idea of being in a household that's like a global household.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:15:08] It's in those things. Yes knowing that's out there for you. Definitely informative.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:15:17] Not to talk about myself but I've definitely just even going from Charlottesville to here. Thinking about my hometown not as just a place to be from but just a place like everywhere else as a place. It's possible to go to places other places are different.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:15:36] And you know you don't know what's normal to you until you step out and you don't know. I think in many ways you. You learn so much of what's possible in the world and what's different in the world. And you also learn so much about yourself and your own upbringing and some perspective on. Immediate family culture but also your environment and your social culture that I think is pricey. Often wanted to do in working with children, You know you think you're hard done by because you have to go to school. Let's take you to a place where kids are breaking into the school because they're so desperate to get an education in that sense of fleeting generalized statement. But you know that sort of thing. Up in some film for me growing up in an environment where there was all kinds of contrasts. All kinds of awareness about the world. Yes very.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:16:41] There's so many different kinds of being aware to, what you what you think about your education. What do you think by your food compared to what \*unintelligible\*.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:16:55] If you if you ever meet people from your 50 meters.That's Very different from meeting people. Five ten thousand miles away. But also I bet London was a place where there were people from. Oh yeah. Yeah. It's one of the things that I find challenging actually about being in Harrison but. As much as Harrisonburg is a diverse community it's not a mixing community experience. I walked down to the International Festival and. That looks like normal life to me. But you never see that any of the rest of the time you've been to the International Festival. It's it's it's in September. Do you know about it. I think it's it's well worth it because that if you. Buy. Immigration. That's a context that is being. Generated in order to give some support to acknowledging the value of different cultures from different places. But it means that you will that. You walk around and there are multiple languages. Multiple ways of addressing multiple ways. Using your your body communicating physical ideas about physical touch and space etc etcetc. Yes. London is like that.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:18:19] I went to my dad teaches at the University of Virginia. He was teaching class in London. He took my mom and I Last spring, I was just shocked by like the like it it feels so much different than New York. She feels diverse in its own way. But just like a few of the cities is like so many things are happening and there's so many different perspectives.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:19:44] Which has been your favorite (vacation)?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:19:50] London this is great because that's the opportunity for him to meet everybody like the family. You asked Do I know many people who have moved to other countries. I guess a few. It's not been a massive Massive exodus. Right. Do I know a lot of people who have done a lot of traveling. I know a lot of people in England who are from other countries. Yes. There was People were moving not necessarily in huge waves but it was certainly something out there. Yeah and it can happen. I could go again. So yes to to and fro. So in London. You know a lot of people from Europe a lot of people from Central and South America.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:20:44] So you were you're saying that you were thinking Harrisonburg might be your stepping stone, and then you're thinking you're going to go to a different group of people and do something like that.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:21:03] I think that's a good likelihood and good possibility yes. Yeah. My husband. I. Met him. He's from Pittsburgh. Because Of some of those points that we're talking about in an urban environment. The urban environment that we would choose it would be much more usual to be in a much more mixed environmentally. That's something that. We both want for ourselves and our kids.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:22:15] If you're looking for urban places to live Charlottesville is right there. It's the best it gets!

**Hannah Smith:** [00:22:21] So two comments about that one. It's interesting. You would call Charlottesville a big place, to me a big place has 12 million people here. I'm not saying that that's the size that I would want. Charlottesville weirdly feels more like a city than harrisonburg because the population is the same sense. And they both have a universe yet that does Not just have different cultural trajectories for how they've gotten to where they are right now. And you can feel it. Very much so. And it's also interesting that you think that where you're from is the best place I've ever. Because this is also part of the benefit of all. Around the world and seeing that people feel attached, theres Benefit to seeing the benefit of different places.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:23:24] Funny that I say Charlottesville is like a city it's like not even that much bigger than Harrisonburg.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:23:38] I Wanted to dig in a little bit on being a dual citizen. And I think the first question I have is: Did you first realize that was something unique that you had coming up like Oh not everybody is a dual citizen. When was that.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:24:14] it's a big deal. Yeah. I think that. The magnitude of that position Didn't really hit me until then. I was here and started to see how much people go through when they dont have that. London because I wanted. Because I needed to not because I was running away from anything not because I was in any of the number of Challenging situations that most. Many people who immigrate are, whether that's just a purely economic one or otherwise. Right. What a big deal. That is. No one's gonna hassle me about being here in this life. It is Really a benefit because I'm a middle class white and educated so now and if I didn't have a passport. A lot easier for me. A lot easier for me. Regardless of whether people know my my citizenship. I would say. So how difficult it is to not have that but nothing like the lived experience. A huge amount of the population they have.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:25:52] How little we can take for granted. In this country people give their lives every single day to be able to be here.

[00:26:04] And not just because they feel lucky but it's a lack of option. There's no severe threat. I was so scared saying goodbye to the. Little one the other night and I said to him you are safe and you are loved. Could started crying because you see all these people. Leads me to exalt you at the moment is the caravan thats coming. They've got kids this age and they're not safe. They call stay where they are do that. They say they're moving now safe if they come into this months. But imagine what that's like as a pair. Don't. Have control. And to be treated like a criminal. That's a whole nother debate but yeah. Yeah but you're asking me about when did I realize what a big deal it is to have citizenship. Not really until I was here. Before that it was a unique factoid to come in and out of the country because I'm also going an American possible run you know so. So I can go for a holiday anytime I like or you know. Yeah. Make it easier. Yeah. Easy.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:27:38] How often do you go home. Nowadays.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:27:40] At least once a year so far since I've been here.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:27:43] Is that do you still really enjoy that.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:27:46] Yeah. I love it and I miss my people when I say my people. I mean my English before I mean my girlfriend right. Family And friends and I'm forever grateful to technology 18 19 20 and living in the Caribbean. We didn't have WhatsApp who got. A. Video from. And so this is. Something that is has more contact with other immigrants is that because we have technology. People Whose lives are still connected in a way that you couldn't. Twenty years ago.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:28:51] When you go back like do you do you feel like being in America makes you look at your family and your friends differently?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:29:07] I would say yes. I think it does influence you being in a different cultural environment to how you. Experience people when you former. Cheer up. You mean it. Yeah. When I go to England and it gets going you know the weather's is really shitty.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:29:37] I'm glad they're back because we're cheerful. That's what makes me feel good about Harrisonburg.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:29:42] Well it's interesting. What is our personal disposition and then we'll watch to see. Or is that a cultural disposition. Right. In the environment. I mean I've before I long before I lived in America I would say hello to my neighbors and some of them that you know will get up and down the street in England and for some that would be a surprise for others. Often people who are from other parts of the world that's not yet another human thing. Say hello. And then you could also say that that's something that's appealing about being here because people are more likely to say hello to someone they don't know without thinking that they were mad or hitting on you. Yeah. So I do think it it lends some perspective. And interpersonally not being in London all of the time. Like the pace of life. The. Is more about this city living the pressure of of how hard you have to work in order to survive in a city.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:30:46] Did you feel that was there a lot of competitiveness. I'm sure also that university that's a different. There's not as much of that because people are in their jobs and they're not fighting and paying all the money they have for rent .

**Hannah Smith:** [00:31:31] I think it depends only on the institution as well. And is a very good experience to teach at UVA Ave and to teach at JMU. Right. They're very different institution. Yeah. So the experience of being that. The cost of living of being in the two places and types of students the expectations you know. Shoo position.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:32:05] What are some of the ways that you've tried to retain your Britishness. Or have you found there are things that you do now or even more overt to demonstrate. I'm British. Like when we first came in you immediately basically offered us tea. But essential British. Are there other things you find yourself doing to really play that up?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:32:23] So I deliberately hand out tea because you're coming to interview me. It's quite normal that I would offer someone a cup of tea coffee on entry. Or maybe conversely American things that you've picked up right. You didn't do before were you kind of adopted. That's why I like this American style of doing. I know that my friends tease me on occasion for sounding a bit American or wearing a baseball cap. Well I. I would say probably there is some influence. From just being out of London could be partly being in America. Probably how I dress is probably a bit everyday just by what I see around me. My English accent is something that is pointed out here. And it is never obviously pointed out in England. And so I am made aware of my. You know I can find. And be insurable and speak to Rebecca and know that you know who I am because to remember my voice right for example or meet people a couple of times and they all yell at me and I say aliens is the accent that gives me away you know. The middle schools and the high schools in Harrisonburg in hard rocking County and Paige county other northern. One of the things that I noticed was that students would often say to me that they really love my accent. Implicitly what they were citing. Your accent is better than mine. Because people think that you're small. You've got an English accent Yeah. Theres a huge assumption right which is correct in this make up especially your high school sentence yeah get Susie and I was I was teaching personal responsibility education sex ed right. So say hi boys. We can have sex today. So I have your attention.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:35:30] If those kids are saying your accent's better than my. What they're saying is that mines not good. Often that's either country. Accent. Or Hispanic accents. There's a whole hierarchy that. Around assumptions about intelligence assumptions about worthiness. Nina none of these kids ever said that explicitly but. That's part of what was going on. I always made a point of. Saying thank you. I like your accent too. And I'd say I've got an accent. I say Yeah of course you've got an accent. You don't notice it because everyone around you has the same exit right. No one in England ever comments about my accent ever. Isn't it true that that's right. And so. I made aware of my accent. Different kinds of ways I think. Different implicit meanings from different people in different environments. When I'm in New York no one ever comments about my Client. There's so many. Yes. And there's also. A wariness about highlighting difference because we're all here. Making a go of it. Let's not. Right. You know there are different though different implicit things happening in New York than they all here. I do I do things that are more in ritual but hold on to my Englishness.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:37:07] Specific holidays that you make sure you celebrate.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:37:16] There may be some traditions. So for example my dad is coming from London for Christmas. So there are particular foods that we will make. And I will love that because that's a food that is a is it is. Reminds me. Of being in London. Incidentally funding this is totally to the side but my mother in law late one evening when we'd all been socializing for a while. Talking about Thanksgiving and she asked. How did we celebrate Thanksgiving in England. I said that I made some jokes about the Pilgrims when you. Let me let me refresh myself. I mean a lot Thanksgiving so much I know what Thanksgiving is right then. That's not something that was a tradition that my mom celebrated for example. So I did grow up even though she's American and she would have grown up celebrating Thanksgiving that's not something that she transposed to our life in England. Right. One thing that I am aware of is. So when I am in London I speak differently depending upon who I'm talking to. you adjust to different friendship groups or different types of peers or you know. So I do notice that when I am talking to different people in London I will use vocabulary and speak in ways that I've done speak to people here. And my husband and I have an ongoing joke that we don't know what each other's talking about half the time because what does that mean. And connected with other use that right. And can you tell when when you're like. It's just another part of communication is that the point of communication is that you're understood. And so you know different ways of using language in different environments just like you want to talk to your.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:40:31] You said how people in New York don't notice that as much maybe that's like indicative of people in New York being more blind to color and being more hip to where people are from

**Hannah Smith:** [00:40:40] I don't know. Neither is a blindness or just a the kind of attitude and a. Yeah. And you have to Ask a new Yorker you know about that. I just noticed that when I'm in her makeup and context like that no one ever mentions it. And it's frequent here.

**Todd Dubyk:** [00:41:03] Yeah yeah. Here he is it's still a novelty right for people to get in there. Whenever you're the third guy. Yeah.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:41:10] Yes it is. Every day like how late if you talk to 10 new people like how many people will say something about your accent.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:41:19] A good percentage 80 percent said so

**Cabot Martin:** [00:41:29] This is. This is great. I feel like I am just totally learning what your story is great your perspective. What is something surprising about the immigration process that was surprising?

**Hannah Smith:** [00:42:14] Living straddling two places in terms of possessions. So I. I came here with a suitcase. Evolved it's gotten a little vague about that too. . Number of years when I was first here. Have the things of my life that were meaningful to me. And so I have stuff at my mom's and I Packed up and shipped a bunch of boxes. There's something psychologically. When You know you're making a job application in my life I want my certificate for my undergrad. Well that's in London. Which file. Well I would ask my mom to try and find it. I was fortunate in that I had somewhere that I could still not stop. She wasn't best pleased about it all the time. I did have some but I didn't have my stock when it divested myself. So much at home. See all your stuff always was a strange experience because I don't know. I don't know. I don't live in England the game. I didn't come here thinking that I would be Very open to that. My husband's my husband as it happens is also a dual citizen American. I drove out. Okay so he's never lived there but he has an Irish passport. And. Is this kind of strange. I hear enough to make it worse. You've been with this stuff Necessarily forever. Being away from my friends forever. Doesn't make any sense to leave stuff there. You said that. That's an interesting kind of struggling which I'm sure. Many people experience in different ways not just in terms of possessions but relationships. My feeling is that. If. You're. A person as I am. Things are Meaningful to me because. The story that is attached to. Oh it's really important that I have those records because each of those records I know where it came from. Yes or no. Who gave it to me. And what it. Because I've written it inside it. Oh. Oh that vase up there is really valuable because that's given to me by a block that picture that was painted by my grandfather. You know like so so those that association with your history I suppose is what's interesting about that question it's not do you think. It's not just do I have my winter jacket. It's not just I really like that picture. It's having having a history through things. Yeah. Meaningful and is around that gives you a continuity even though the environment is completely different. Think about people. My mom's husband second. Husband was Sri Lankan. It was completely washed away in the tsunami. All of his photos his possessions everything that had that. His books everything that had. In theU.S. for his history he's got. People who are losing their houses in the fires in California now will people who have who have who are in that caravan and had to flee they got everything in one backpack. Photos no gifts from somebody that was important because of the thing you know so I think that actually that's incredibly. Meaningful to me and I'm sure. Difficult. Many to be not just separated geographically from what's familia. From your life in.

**Hannah Smith:** [00:47:28] That little stool thing now oh my goodness in Brighton on the south coast of England that some Yard sale. Specific set of examples would be the. Right Thing. Oh yeah I remember that Saturday it was raining you know. Yeah yeah.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:47:50] I mean I haven't even been alive for many years.!

**Hannah Smith:** [00:47:53] Is that right. I don't know if you like it's not just a testament to the fact that the things can last that long.

**Cabot Martin:** [00:48:09] Well this is so fantastic. I don't have any great conclusions but thank you! Thank you.