



University of
Massachusetts
Amherst

Cummington 1

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This is a transcription of the audio files of Cummington 1.

Spontaneous Speech

This audio file contains responses to a series of questions, which are labelled as Questions 1-8 and Prompt 1-5 within the audio file folder.

Question 1: How would you define a 'community'? What community (or communities) are you a part of?

A community is a group of people that you either are born into or choose to be a part of. Um, they're usually there to support you and you're there to support other members of it. Um, the communities I would say I'm a part of are the queer community, uh the Jewish community. I used to be part of a small town American community for the town I lived in, but I no longer live there. However, I dream of returning to that town or one like it, um yeah.

Question 2: Do you believe that you're a member of your hometown's community, and to what degree?

I believe I'm an ex-member of my hometown's community. However, if I ever chose to return to that town, I would be welcomed back with open arms. Um, it's kind of hard to be a member of a community when you're no longer there in person. I have moved many miles away, many years ago. My mom still lives in that town though, and she's very active, so kind of like through her, I still feel connected to that community. Um, but I myself no longer feel actively part of it. So I guess in some ways you could say I'm like a a reserve member or an inactive member, um cause if I ever went back, it would be like I never left.

Question 3: Do you see yourself living in your hometown for the foreseeable future, or returning if you've left? Why or why not?

I have left my hometown. I left it um many years ago, but I do dream of returning. Um, when I left, I I needed to. It's a really small town and it was basically all I ever knew, um, and I thought I wanted something more, something bigger. I've lived in cities for a couple years now, a couple different cities. I'm currently in a city and I don't like it. Um, I miss I miss being in the middle of

nowhere. I miss being surrounded by people who take care of each other. Um, it's just small-town America's where it's at, you know? Um, so yeah, I did leave, but someday, someday I want to return. Um, if not to that town, then one like it, but that town in particular does hold a very special place in my heart.

Question 4: Are you proud to be from your hometown? What about to be from Massachusetts?

I am incredibly proud to be from both my hometown and from Massachusetts. I have a tattoo, uh, proclaiming my pride from being from Massachusetts. Um, yeah, I I haven't lived in Massachusetts for a couple years now, and I've lived in the current state that I'm at for, I think, like, six months. I'm terrible at keeping track of time, but I still tell people that I'm from Massachusetts. I'm not entirely sure when the rollover point is, where I have to start saying I'm from the current place I'm at, but I don't want to. I like being from Massachusetts. I am a very proud New Englander. Um, also very proud to be specifically from western Massachusetts. I will make fun of Boston. I will mention whenever I have the opportunity that Eastern Mass takes all of my taxpayer dollars when I was a Western Mass taxpayer. Um, but yeah, you know, it's those silly little things. Like, whatever. I love Massachusetts. I miss Massachusetts.

Question 5: What do you think of Massachusetts speech?

I think Massachusetts speech is pretty close to like baseline American. Obviously we have the outliers like Boston that, you know, people not from the area assume we all sound like but I think we're pretty average. Um, there are some things like I know I I have a lot of soft T's. I taught English, um, overseas last year and the teacher I was working with said butter and I was like butter and my kids never knew, they were like what are you saying what's butter I'm like butter and I'd point to the picture and they'd be like you mean butter and I'm like mmm it's butter. So like I know there are regional dialect things like that but um I think for the most part it's pretty much like your average American accent.

Question 6: Would you take it as a compliment if someone told you that you sounded like you were from Massachusetts?

Oh, absolutely. Well, assuming they meant Massachusetts and not Boston. I would be very confused if someone said they thought I sounded like I was from Boston, but Massachusetts as a whole? Absolutely. Um, I have so much regional pride. I love the way I sound. Um, yeah. Mm hmm. Absolutely.

Question 7: Could you tell if someone came from Massachusetts by the way they spoke? What if they weren't from Boston?

Um, I don't think I could tell if someone was from Massachusetts by the way they spoke. I think it would have to be, like, context clues in something they were talking about that I'd be like, oh, that sounds like life up in Massachusetts. And they'd be like, Oh, actually, I'm from there or close, I'm from Vermont that New England life, you know. Um, but I yeah, unless someone's from Boston specifically, just by the way they sound, I don't think I could pick out, like, a Massachusetts accent.

Question 8: Have you ever tried to change the way you talk? If so, in what way?

I've never tried to change my, like, my accent. I've definitely picked up and dropped slang throughout my life. I adore slang. I adore, um, regional slang and like not just from regions in America, but also like foreign slang, like British slang. Um, I love picking up new vocabulary to add to and spice up the way I speak, but I've never actively tried to change the way I pronounce things or my intonation. Um, yeah.

Any highlighted portions of the following transcripts are to signify where the participant deviated from the written script, italicized are the words they intended to say, and red signifies omissions.

Prompt 1: Wedding Story

It was the morning of Tammy and Ken's wedding day. The event was to take place at the church in Kerry, with live music and some of their favorite psalms from the Bible. Tammy got ready with her bridesmaids, Kim, Maddie, Pat, and Pam, at the spa. Once she was calm and relaxed, she went to put on her pure white dress. She waited as her pomeranian, Perry, brought the ring down to her future husband, hence beginning the ceremony with a cute and memorable

moment. When she was ready, her father, Tim, walked her through the door into the church. She had dreamt of this day since she had- nope, that's not what that says- she had dreamt of this day since before she could even remember, and soon she would be married. As she approached him, she saw the tears in his eyes, and it, and it assured her that he was her soul mate. As they kissed, cheers erupted from both sides of the family. The reception was held at the local farm, with a barn dance and games for the guests. At the dinner, everyone ate amazing food and drank sparkling cider. Ken's best friend Matt told embarrassing stories about the pair. Afterward, Tammy and Ken danced the night away surrounded by their family and friends. It was the (a) day they would never forget.

Prompt 2: Christmas Shopping

During the Christmas season, Mary goes to the commerce center in Boston every week. So far, she has bought several sheer shirts, a new purse, some flared jeans, a lip balm, and a scarf with fringe. She went to the supermarket too, and filled her cart with a nice sherry wine, a lar- lager, a lot of gin, and some pre-mixed mimosas. She plans on getting a goose-feather coat and mittens for her cousin Sharon, and a Dr. Seuss book for her niece Ruth, who is just a tike. She has to buy for many people, but her ten-year-old brother Darren is the hardest of them all. He often hints that he wants a pricey camera, but that costs too much for Mary and no store has it in stock. He is a narcissist, and he wore a varsity jacket to school, with a black hem and collar. He dyes his unkept (unkempt) hair a dark charcoal black, and his attitude apparently varies between moody and sarcastic. When Mary- oh my god, what just happened? [PAUSE] when Mary sought out a gift for him, everything felt wrong. The mountain boots were too tight for his right foot, or the soles were too flat. The linen bucket hat was too loose, the taffy was caustic, the strawberries were too tangy, the fountain pen was too thin, and the cuff links were too hard. "The length of time I put in should count for something," she whispered to herself as she ate salt and vinegar chips in the mall cafeteria, "Darren knows I care about him." Finally, she found a cherry red jacket spangled with black gems that made sense with Darren's arrogant personality. It would be a merry Christmas after all, with a large ham, dairy-free rice pudding, so Massachusetts, and a tasty apple tart. And Darren thought the jacket was rad, which was a win for Mary.

Prompt 3: Colton's Vacation

Colton has been on a tour of the world. First, he went to the Southern half of California. The public transportation (*transport*) was bad, so he ran instead. [LAUGHS] What? There were beautiful palm trees, sorry, there were beautiful palm trees along the roads, as well as lemon, lavender, and alfalfa farms. Then, he endured a long drive to Northern Canada, where they called their one dollar cents "loonies". [LAUGHS, whispers] There, he saw many moose and rowed down a river in a canoe. At one point, he almost lost his oar, but he kept paddling! His planner was messed up, because next, he went to Alabama. He cleaned manure from the horse stables and watered their freshly mown grass. He built them a new fence to protect the animals from venomous mushroom spores, from venomous mushroom spores. After that, he rested in a dimly lit hotel on the Thimble Islands, where he got a free tin of mints. His fourth stop on the tour was the Azores (*mispronounced*), where he was awed by their beautiful lagoons and their native canary birds. Next, he went to the mangrove forests in India to the tiger dens. That was a weird sentence. They had long fangs and would savagely tear deer limb from limb. He also got to see the red pandas and big rams at their zoo. Australia allured Colton. He slept in a cot in the middle of the outback, and got to hang out with kangaroos at dawn. He also, oh where'd it go? He also tanned his pale skin on the sandy beach. With the rising tide, the sharks came closer to shore, and just the sight of their fins scared people off. His last stop was Ireland. They taught him some of their slang, like how a sot was a drunk person and how lad meant pal. He got to pet some lambs, and he drank beer at a tavern in Derry. On the narrow path to the airport, the bus tire popped with a bang. It sounded like a bomb had gone off, letting the air out fast. It needed to be towed. He moaned as he used all his strength to carry his belongings to the nearby ferry. Overall, he would do it all over again.

Prompt 4: Sarah's Bad Day

It was a bothersome day in California. Sarah was having a terrible day. Her sheets were pulled so taut that it took several minutes to get out of bed. When she made her lunch, she cored the apple wrong, revealing the maggots near the pit so she had to put it in the farrow's bin for them to eat. Then, she had to dissect a toad with a knife in science class (she was terrified of

knives!). At lunch, she accidentally put salt on her dessert instead of sugar and her peers laughed. She mashed it up in frustration. On her way home, the clear sky disappeared and a large storm replaced it, soaking her down to her socks. To top it off, when she got home, her cat Harold had caught a rat and was rudely biting it in the living room. The poor mammal had lost his life without a fair fight! After she got her bearings, she confided in her **kindergarten** (*kindergartener*) sister Jen. Her caring sister shared in her mourning of the dead rat, but told her to stay positive. After all, at least it wasn't the mice like last time. **This gave Sarah comfort, and they read folklore together- they-** This gave Sarah comfort, and they read folklore stories together until the sun set and the moon came out.

Prompt 5: Ominous Caller

When the war began, Jim was a young man in Milton, Massachusetts. He couldn't be drafted, since his leg had been cut off by a snare. Instead, he worked at the Boston Herald, where he took hints from callers. He would always demonstrate caution; he couldn't roll the dice and see if the tip was true. He would bide his time by lurking in the background, collecting evidence. As a reporter, Jim was basically a stalker and he played the part well. He donned a black coat to blend in. Jim was sitting in his chair by the cord telephone when it rang. It was an odd hoarse voice.

The voice sang tersely: "The vice president is an enemy of the country."

Jim paused. Hal Samson was an important man **who had had-** who had a hand in many affairs, but he wouldn't dare risk getting sacked from his job, however temporary it was. At the most recent rally, his banner read, 'Usher in a new era! From this day forth, no more robots!'. Jim had met him and wasn't a fan, but Hal was nimble and certainly never seemed to be heartless. His advisor, Sal, wouldn't allow him to make such an error. The voice sensed Jim's hesitation.

"He has a pact with China to lend them his charity proceeds. There's no time to tarry."

Jim explained that the caller would get a small prize if the tip was on the nose.

She laughed- **she, oh I thought it was he?** "I'm a miser, I don't need your money."

And then she hung up. Jim knew he had to talk to his boss, but, first, he had to go to the nurse.
His head was spinning.