

Voices of the 250th Interview with Lavinia Kumar 05-21-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Lavinia Kumar and Kim Dorman conducted on May 21, 2026. The interview took place at the Princeton Public Library as part of the Voices of Princeton Project.

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Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Kim Dorman [00:00:01] Okay. Good afternoon. Can I have your name, please?

Lavinia Kumar [00:00:04] Lavinia Kumar.

Kim Dorman [00:00:05] Okay, thanks so much. And just seeing the questions here, how did you come to Princeton? And how long have you been here? Or how long have you been sort of working in Princeton?

Lavinia Kumar [00:00:15] In or around Princeton, about twenty years. I used to work in Trenton at the Department of Education, so starting there.

Kim Dorman [00:00:21] Okay, thanks so much. And then, which of the number three questions would you like to respond to? If you could read the question, and then...

Lavinia Kumar [00:00:30] Let's see now, what is okay? What does this 25th 250th anniversary of the United States mean to you personally? Does it feel like a significant milestone, why or why not? What would make it more meaningful to you? I think it is meaningful because the country is in a mighty different, difficult time, and it should - everybody should be thinking back to what it really meant.

Kim Dorman [00:00:57] Okay. Thanks so much. And can you respond to one of the number four questions, please.

Lavinia Kumar [00:01:02] Okay, so thinking about 1776 and 1976 and today, how do you see the political trajectory of the United States? What feels like progress to you, and what feels unfinished? Well, what feels like progress are things like medical advances and things like that. What feels unfinished is actually democracy, which is the key of the whole thing. So, would be nice to get that finished.

Kim Dorman [00:01:32] You were saying something earlier about your studies, and how you feel like is 1776 the date we should be thinking about? What's that? Do you want to respond to that, you don't have to.

Lavinia Kumar [00:01:41] Well, 1776 was an important time, because a lot of women were helping the patriot side against the British, which is always a nice idea. And I've just found out there were probably about eighty women that have never been talked about at all before, and so it would be nice to get involved and have a graduate student to do all the research with that.

Kim Dorman [00:02:08] Okay, great. Is there anything else you'd like to add, Lavinia?

Lavinia Kumar [00:02:13] I just think the Princeton Library is awesome, and so is Princeton, but I think the Princeton Library seems to be jumping ahead and doing much, many more interesting things, which is very nice to see. So, thanks.

Kim Dorman [00:02:26] Thank you so much, Lavinia.