

# **AN INTERVIEW KATHIA QUIROS PEREIRA**

An Oral History Conducted by Monserrath Hernández

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Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada  
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the *Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada*.

Claytee D. White  
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## PREFACE



Kathia Quiros Pereira left her hometown of Lima, Peru, as a young adult in 1996. A shopping adventure with an aunt brought her to visit Las Vegas, where she fell in love with an old friend from Peru, and began a new chapter in her life.

She struggled with English language and with applying her dental and journalism degrees happily. Undaunted, Kathia turned her eyes toward law school and despite a deficit in English, managed to successfully apply her talents. At William S. Boyd School of Law (Class of 2003), Kathia uncovered a passion for immigration law. By 2004, she had established her own firm, GWP, and was specializing in immigration.

In this oral history, Kathia explains her devotion to helping the undocumented, and her use of social media to build her business, including a Spanish television show called *Immigrando con Kathia*. She also devoted herself to parenting her four children.

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in Las Vegas, Nevada  
Conducted by Monserrath Hernández.

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**Today is March sixth, 2020. My name is Monserrath Hernández. We are here in the studio of Kathia Pereira.**

Kathia Quiros Pereira.

**Kathia, before we begin can you spell out your name for us?**

K-A-T-H-I-A, Q-U-I-R-O-S, P-E-R-E-I-R-A

**Do you want to do your interview in English or in Spanish?**

I actually talk Spanglish.

**Spanglish, okay, that's perfect because *yo hago lo mismo* [I do the same]. It's fine.**

**Can you tell me a little bit of where you're from; where were you born; where did you grow up?**

I am Peruvian. I was born in Lima and I grew up in Lima. I lived in Peru until I was twenty-three.

**What was that growing up like?**

I was very blessed, very blessed. My parents were a highly educated couple. My dad was a lawyer in private practice and high-end politician. My mom was a super nerd that had many, many degrees. She was a teacher and then had a degree in a business and then had three Master's. She worked in administrative education; that's where she did her career. I grew up in a family that education was the most important thing. I was the oldest of four. I had an awesome childhood.

**What were some traditions or celebrations that your family used to have when you were growing up? What do you remember?**

Well, typical Latino family, lots of parties and lots of family together. My dad was a gifted musician, so he would play every instrument that would come to his hands. Every weekend

would be a party with lots of dancing and singing. I grew up singing and playing instruments and dancing. That's where my love of music starts.

**What kind of music did you play?**

We did a lot of folk. I used to dance *Marinera*, which is one of the Peruvian dances and *Huayno*. I would sing *Huaynos* in Quechua, which is in my Peruvian dialect, special language. But I'm a classical junkie. *Me encanta la música clásica*. [I love classical music.]

**What composer?**

Well, all of them, but Rachmaninoff is my favorite. I love opera. I fell in love with opera when I was five years old, so until today that's my favorite thing. I sing classical. I sing Bach, Beethoven, whatever, and choral music. I love choral music. But it comes from my childhood. My father was really, really into music. Music was the soul of my family.

**Can you tell me what was going on in Peru while you were growing up?**

I grew up in the time of the Shining Path. The Shining Path was a terrorist organization. It was a communist political organization that decided to go into the dark side and they became a terrorist organization and they destroyed my country. I grew up very blessed. My parents were doing really good. But the situation in my country got worse and worse as I was growing up. By the time I graduated high school and I went into dental school, things were bad. But by the time I graduated dental school, the doctors were driving taxis to survive and people had to make long lines to buy a can of milk. The idea of having your own house someday was just impossible. Things were really, really, really bad. The kids like me who came from having aspirations and dreams had no hope. My generation, a lot of the people of my generation flew away from Peru.



I went to an all-girl Catholic school when I was a little girl. We did our 25-year reunion last year in Cancun, and we came from all over the world because the majority of us are not living in Lima. We all run away when we were very young because of the Shining Path.

**You mentioned dental school. Did you always know you wanted to go to dental school?**

Oh, no, no, no, no. *No, mi papa me dijo: "Tú vas a ser doctora. Ya estuvo".* [No, my dad told me, "You are going to do be a doctor. That's final."] And he said that when I was like seven years old. He was set; in his brain I was going to be a doctor. I really wanted to be an actress.

**Why? Where did that come from?**

Because I was into singing and playing instruments and music. Everybody said: "*Estas bonita*". I wanted to be in *las novelas*. Of course, *mi papa me dijo*, "No way, you know?"

**What were some of the novela actresses that you remember watching growing up?**

I don't know. Thalía y Veronica Castro was my favorite. I watched a lot of Brazilian novelas. You guys probably don't know about that, but Brazil makes a lot of novelas, and we watched them in Peru. I wanted to be in actress when I was in high school, so bad. But I was a nerd, too. I was very, very nerdy. My dad had decided I was going to be a lawyer—no, a doctor. He was going to put me in medical school. I figured out a way to get in the university before he could sign me up, so I signed up for a program that was less years than medicine, which was dentistry.

**That makes sense. Did you like it? Did you enjoy it?**

No. The truth is, no, I didn't enjoy it. But I was raised in a very strict environment. One of the things that my mom always told me was that whatever you start you finish. I started dentistry and I finished it.

**You said you left at twenty-three. Where did you go?**

Las Vegas.

**Why Las Vegas out of all the U.S.?**

Oh, because my boyfriend was living in Las Vegas.

**Oh. How did you meet him?**

He's a Peruvian guy that I met when I was fifteen years old. He was my friend. We never dated or anything. Years later I found him in Las Vegas on one of those trips that I was doing with an aunt, just for shopping and sightseeing. Then I married that guy, so that's why I came to Las Vegas.

**What part of Las Vegas did you arrive to, or where were you living at the time?**

My first apartment was around Sunrise Mountain, in that area. I remember my first address was Spyglass Hills. It was an apartment complex in a golf course in Nellis and something. I don't remember the other main street. I remember it was at the bottom of Sunrise Mountain.

**It might be Lake Mead. Lake Mead goes into the mountain.**

Yes.

**What was that area like?**

It was quiet, nothing what it is today. It was very quiet. It was nice. It was a one-bedroom apartment. It was a new life. I was coming from living with my mom and my dad, overprotected Latino girl, to a new country with a new language and a new life. It was scary, but I was fearless back then.

**What did your parents think of you leaving to get married or moving to another country?**

My dad totally disapproved. I came August first to marry August tenth, so my mom came with me and slept with me until August tenth to make sure that I was going to show up dressed in white in the church because I married in the church.

**Did you marry here?**

Yes, Holy Family, Father Romeo.

**Was your family present or just your mom?**

I have a lot of family in Los Angeles, so they all came for the wedding. My mom was there and my family from California.

**And your dad, did he stay?**

No. My dad came years later when I was pregnant or I had already given birth to my first kid.

But at first he was very upset.

**Heartbroken and all of that.**

Yes, well...

**But you were twenty-three already.**

Yes, I was twenty-three, but that doesn't mean anything in our culture. You could be thirty and still living with mom and dad and doing whatever they say.

**That's true. That doesn't mean anything. What were those first years like? How did you adapt to a new culture, language, marriage?**

Those years were beautiful in the sense that I had nothing and yet I had everything. I didn't have money, but I didn't have bills. I had my rent and the electrical bill and the phone bill, which was my biggest problem, the phone bill, because it cost a dollar a minute to call my mom. It was very expensive on those calling cards. That was the reason that I got my first job in the United States was to be able to pay for the phone bill because the first month I stayed in Las Vegas I called my mom every day and the bill was like a thousand dollars. My then husband was working two jobs, the poor thing, and he couldn't afford to pay a thousand dollars in phone bill. He said, "You have to stop calling your mom." I didn't know how to do that. So I said, "No, never. I will work."

**What was your first job?**

Dental assistant.

**What was that like? Was it different from what you had practiced or studied in Peru?**

No. It was very easy because I knew what the doctor was doing, so I could think like the doctor and hand him all the instruments that he would want. That was the only job that I had for somebody else in this country because I started as a dental assistant; however, the supervisor and the workers at that place did not like me. I spoke very little English, not because I didn't know it because I went to an American school, but I was afraid to talk because of my accent. They thought I didn't know English. They had me cleaning the chairs all day long. The first six months I wasn't really allowed to be a dental assistant; I was more like the janitorial person.

After six months and crying every day, of course, I went and I quit with the dentist. The dentist asked me if I knew how to type, and I said, "Sure, I know how to type." He sent me to the filing room and I started working in the filing room. In two months I realized that he had a lot of issues in his dental office. I wrote a proposal on all the things that he needed to change in his dental office, and two months later I was the office manager. By then I had already ten months and I was now talking in English. I became the office manager and then I helped him open other dental offices.

I learned about businesses with him, and so I started creating companies, one company to do all the human resource part for all these dental offices, another company to train people in the dental field, and another company to handle all the dental offices. That's how the first five years of my life went by. I totally believe that this was an angel in my life, this dentist, because I learned so much from him. That allowed me the opportunity to be humble and just learn.

**You said five years. After those five years what did you decide to do?**

I went to law school.

**Why?**

*Porque mi mama me estaba volviendo loca. No eres nada en todo lo que has estudiado por las puras. No sirvió para nada. Todo el esfuerzo* [Because my mom was driving me crazy. You aren't working in any of the fields that you studied. It was all for nothing. After all of our efforts—]— I had two degrees already. I had studied dentistry and journalism in Peru. When I came to the United States, none of my degrees meant anything; they had no value. But I was fine. I was working really good. I was making good money. My initial job was eight dollars an hour as a dental assistant. After five years I already had my big house and car. I was doing really good. But my mom *me estaba volviendo loca* y she wasn't going to give up. Then my boss, the dentist, was like, "Yes, you should go back to school. You should, you should." That's when I went to law school.

**What school did you go to?**

Boyd at UNLV. Well, I already had started a business for my then husband's trade; he was a master baker. We had opened our own baking business. I didn't have the opportunity to go to any other university. I could only go to UNLV. I decided that I was going to go to law school, and law school had just opened at UNLV. I applied and I got in.

**At the time did you need a bachelor's or...?**

Yes.

**Did you figure out how to do that?**

Yes.

**That's awesome. Was the process hard, trying to get those credits adjusted and all of that?**

Seventeen years later I have to say I think it really was easy.

**Going into Boyd, did you study for the LSAT?**

Oh, that's a fun story. By then I was talking in English with a heavy accent, but I really didn't know English, like to go to law school. What I did was I memorized a whole bunch of LSATs. One thing I'm very thankful to my mom is because I inherited her memory, so I have an awesome memory. I memorized all kinds of LSATs, all kinds of essays for LSATs. I went and I took the LSAT and I got a super high score. I don't think they noticed anything and they just let me in because I had a super, super high score. When I started law school, after we turned in our very first paper in lawyering process, this professor came to me and said, "We need to talk." He got me into his office and he said, "You don't know English." I said, "Well, but I'm going to learn." And he said, "Well, this is not the place to learn. You need to change careers. You need to get out of here."

I walked out of that room that day crying, sobbing. I went to the library and I got myself into a cubicle. I couldn't stop crying. There was this angel sitting right next to me. He was a 3L and he was the president of the student union or whatever. He came and he said, "What's going on, Kathia?" He was LDS and he spoke Spanish. In Spanish, I told him: "*No hablo inglés y este profesor se dio cuenta de que no hablo ingles*". *Y estoy llorando*. ["I don't speak English and this professor found out that I don't speak English." And I was crying.]

He leaves and he comes back. One of my classmates became my English teacher, and another one of my classmates became my speech teacher. During the first year of law school I learned English and I learned to fix—well, not fix because I still have a heavy accent, but I made it better.

**What were the courses like? I know law school in itself is very difficult. But then add learning the language in a formal setting, what was that transition like?**

It was what I needed to do. I never looked at it as a problem. I looked at it as a great opportunity. The fact that I found my English tutor and my speech tutor, it was a sign from God that I was doing the right thing. I never saw the problem in it. I always saw the opportunity. I did it. I did it so well that the next year I was in law review.

**Which one?**

I won the law review competition and they accepted me in law review. The teacher that had told me that I didn't know English thought I had copied somebody's work or something. He couldn't believe it.

**Wow. What was law school like? Did you enjoy it? Was it hard?**

The first year was really, really hard. But it's an awesome, humbling experience. I think that anybody who goes to law school thinking that they are smart realizes pretty soon that you don't know how to think. You go to law school to learn how to think. The first year was very humbling, very, very humbling because I always thought that I was a very good nerd, and I realized at law school that I wasn't; that I had to relearn how to study and relearn how to think. It was a beautiful experience.

I started law school with one kid. He was three years old when I started law school. I graduated law school with three kids. I was pregnant almost all the time in law school.

**What was that like?**

Hard because I would you know, *mujeres embarazadas me van a entender* [pregnant women will understand me]. You're pregnant and you are sleepy, and when you're not sleepy, you're achy, and when you're not achy, you're hungry. It was rough. But it was life, so I just kept on going.

**Did you ever have difficulty studying and taking care of your kids?**

Of course. Every day. Every day.

**Did they distract you in any way?**

In every way possible. I graduated in two years and a half. The normal program is three years, but I graduated in two years and a half because I was so pregnant with Alberto, my third one, and I wanted to take the bar pregnant because after he would be born, it was going to be impossible. I had a one-year-old, a four-year-old, and this newborn. I took the bar when I was eight months pregnant.

**What was that like?**

Awful.

**Why? Can you explain a little bit what happened?**

Because when you study for the bar, especially if you are a nerd like me, you study sixteen hours a day for two months. I was with my huge belly with all the stress of having to take the bar, a one-year-old running in my legs. I want to play with these or I'm hungry, I'm thirsty. And the four-year-old telling me that he wanted to do this or let's go here or let's go there. I had to juggle with everything at the same time. But now when I look back it was beautiful. It was really beautiful. I would not change it for anything. It was a magical time in my life.

**What did you do after law school? Did you go straight into private practice? Did you externship or do anything?**

When I was in law school, I clerked for a bankruptcy judge. I went into law school because I wanted to be a business lawyer. I had become very good at businesses, so I wanted to be a business lawyer.

But then one day I'm walking towards the law school and this professor comes and starts walking next to me. He says, "We're opening an immigration clinic and I need Spanish-speaking students and you're the only one in your class, and so basically I need you." I looked at the guy



and I said, “Thank you, but I’m not interested. I’m very busy,” and blah, blah, blah. He convinced me and I said, “Okay, whatever.”

**Was this Michael Kagan?**

No. This was David Thronson. I go into the clinic and my first assignment is to go to immigration court to observe. I’m pregnant. I go to immigration court to observe, and this sixteen-year-old Brazilian boy with green eyes walks in the court in shackles. I started sobbing right there. All I could think was, this could be my baby; this could be one of my kids. What are you doing at sixteen years old in the United States? Then the officer who brought all these detained immigrants told me he had been found in Chicago in a bridge construction. They were building a bridge and they brought him all the way from Brazil and they used him to work on the bridge at night, never paid him a penny. ICE raided this place, grabbed them all, and now he was in Las Vegas. All he wanted, probably, was to be with his momma.

I was crying and I couldn’t stop, so the judge kicked me out of the room. I left, but I couldn’t leave because my classmates were inside the court and they were driving; somebody was giving me a ride. I sat outside the courtroom in the waiting room and I kept sobbing. I kept crying. Then the judge comes out and the judge looks at me and says, “Honey, this is not for you.”

And those were the magical words because I came home so pissed. I told my ex-husband, “This is what I’m going to do. This is so unfair. I can’t believe. You should have seen his eyes.” I have never forgotten his eyes. His eyes are the engine that drives me.

He was deported.

**You were underestimated because you were a woman, you didn’t speak English, and because you were pregnant most of law school? Is that what I’m getting?**

No. It was like, you're a woman and you are too sensitive and this is not for you. You need to have character to do this job. Maybe it's because I've always been a spoiled girl and my daddy and my mom always told me I could do anything I wanted. There was this judge telling me that—first honeying me, then, “This is not for you.” He ended up being a very good friend of mine. I love him to pieces. But he was just an angel from God that guided my decision to become an immigration lawyer.

When I graduated from law school, I had done the whole nine yards. I had done law review. I had clerked for the judge. I had an awesome resume. I got very nice job offers, but they all needed so many hundreds of billable hours, which meant I had to give them my soul, and I couldn't. I had three little babies. I made the decision to go into private practice as an immigration lawyer on my own because in my head that was going to be part-time and I had my other baking business and I had the kids and then I was going to be an immigration lawyer. That's how I started.

**Did you start with a little office and then expand it? Where was that office located?**

Eastern and Flamingo. It was a tiny office in Eastern and Flamingo. It was cute.

**How many people worked for you, or was it just you?**

Just me. Well, I had a receptionist. I open it in that corner because by then Daniel, my oldest, was five and he was going to start kindergarten at St. Viator.

**Right across the street.**

Right across the street. I would drop Daniel in the mornings and then I would pick him up and bring him to the office. Daniel would chitchat with all the consults that I had. He would be my greeter. He would do homework in the reception room.

**That's cute. How long were you at that location?**

Three years.

**Then from there where did you go?**

I went to Eastern and Sunset.

**A little further to the airport, yes. What was your clientele like when you first start?**

The same that I have today.

**And what is that like?**

Undocumented.

**Is it just Latinos or is it from all over the place?**

Well, I market to Latinos. However, I have a lot of clients who are not Latinos, but they look for me. I don't look for them; they look for me.

**What kind of marketing do you do for Latinos?**

Public education.

**What does that consist of? Do you do classes, workshops?**

Since I started practicing I always wanted to work for the very poor. I started working for free for many organizations and I'm still working for free for those organizations. I'm the immigration lawyer for the Immigrant Home Foundation that used to be *La Hermandad Mexicana*. I also work for free for the Citizenship Project. I also work for the Immigration Clinic after I graduated. I worked on a project, Nevada Immigrant Resource Project that is no longer in existence. I'm also the immigration lawyer for free for the Mexican consulate and for the Salvadoran consulate.

I always wanted to be a pro bono lawyer, but I went into private practice because I needed to subsidize all my pro bono efforts. But in private practice I always look for those who are not—not the wealthy. I don't do business immigration. I do the undocumented side of

immigration. I do family immigration. I do VAWA's (Violence Against Women Act), which are victims of domestic violence. Because I think there is a need for that and I think these people need good representation. That's how I went into practice and that's what I'm still doing today. I haven't changed my course.

**How long were you at the Sunset location?**

I don't know. Seven years, probably.

**Were there a lot of Latino or Latina lawyers when you first started?**

No. I'm the first immigration lawyer out of Boyd.

**Wow.**

I was blessed that I got to have amazing professors who inspired me, who guided me. Now there is a whole bunch, but I was the first one out of UNLV. I love my school and I try to give back as much as I can.

But as soon as I got out of law school, I knew that I was really a very good teacher. It's not because I'm naturally talented. It's because I'm a journalist, so I know how to communicate. I was very lucky and I got my first segment in Telemundo, and then Telemundo closed in Las Vegas, so Univision took me. I was always in mass media teaching the law, teaching immigration. Then social media came about, but I didn't try social media for many years, because I was comfortable and I was so busy with my pro bono stuff and all the seminars and all the stuff that I do, until I got divorced and I decided to jump into social media and see what happens, and everything exploded.

**Tell me a little bit about your channel and what topics you talk about. What do you cover?**

I have a show that is an everyday show; it's called Immigrando con Kathia. It's in Spanish although I'm trying to do the thing in English and doing every Monday now in English.

Immigrando con Kathia is an everyday show where I talk to immigrants about improving their lives as immigrants in the United States, I also teach immigration law, and I answer their questions. I have three very distinct segments in my show. In the first one I always talk about basic principles of how to be a good person, how to love yourself and how to grow. I happen to be a religious person, but you don't have to be religious to agree with things that I talk about. It's how to be responsible, how to be positive. Now, I am who am, so you are going to notice how my life is driven by my faith, but people seem to like it. After I talk about that I talk about the news in immigration laws or the laws or how to read them, how to understand them. Then people ask me their questions and I answer and that's how everybody learns.

**How long have you been doing this?**

Two years now.

**How do you like it?**

I love it. I love it.

**Is this where you record?**

In my desk, in my office every morning.

**How many questions do you get a day?**

Hundreds. Thousands.

**From all over?**

From all over the country. I started with nothing and pretty soon it became five thousand fans. Now we are over three hundred thousand and it keeps growing because there is a need. There is a need of information and a need of love. I think that everything started out of love and that's why it keeps growing.

**Do you still have your segment on Univision?**

Now I don't have a segment. Every time they need an immigration expert they call me. People still look at me in Univision and Telemundo all the time.

**Are you syndicated? Do they sometimes play you, or it's new every time that they see you?**

It's new every time.

**Now your law firm is big in space. How many lawyers do you hire?**

We are three lawyers and about fifteen support staff. I'm very blessed. I have a huge office in a fancy place. I still work for my undocumented immigrants and that provides.

**What's the hardest part of working with the undocumented other than the obvious that they don't have papers? What's the most challenging part?**

The lack of information that they desperately need, but they don't have the tools to help me help them. Many times I struggle with that. I struggle with obtaining everything that I need, all the documents that I need. They didn't know how to obtain them. I have to do a lot of holding their hands and do it little by little. It's challenging, but it's doable; it's possible, so it doesn't stop me. I love what I do. I am passionate about what I do. I don't look at the big picture. I look at every single life one at a time. I believe that in this firm God is the attorney in charge and miracles happen every week in this office, every week. The reason I am blessed with amazing lawyers working with me and with an amazing staff, it's because I believe they're all angels and God is in charge and I am nothing but an employee of this firm who every weeks gets to see miracles. When people say, oh, you know you have an awesome reputation? I don't have an awesome reputation because I'm a good lawyer. I have an awesome reputation because everybody fixes their papers, but that's not because of me; it's because God does miracles.

**With everything going on—how long have you practiced?**

I graduated 2003. Oh my god, oh my god, sixteen years.

**How has immigration law changed since you started?**

Completely. Completely.

**Do you see patterns with every administration or how does—**

It's just gotten harder. It's never gotten better. Since 2003 until now, it's progressively getting harder and harder and harder; yet, it's still doable. I could complain about it and think that it's miserable, or I could keep looking and keep finding the loopholes and the avenues to help my people get their papers, and I choose the second one. I'm a very optimistic type of person. While I see some lawyers changing practices, changing fields of law because they are fed up with everything that is going on in immigration, I think what I'm doing is a mission in life. I think that God has given me the opportunity to be an immigration lawyer to help others and that my life has meaning because of what I do. Until the day that I feel that this isn't my mission, I will keep doing it.

**When you get a case, does it matter what country they're from? Do you see a difference in the process, say, someone from Mexico or Cuba, or is it the same process for everyone?**

No, no, no. Definitely there are certain countries that it's much easier, like Cuba. The Cuban adjustment is the panacea; it's wonderful. How many Cubans do you see? Most of our community is Mexican and Central American, and there is very little we can do for them.

The one thing in immigration that most people don't understand is that we cannot generalize. If you are Mexican and you cannot fix and you find another Mexican who can get his green card, it's not because they are coming from—the country of origin has nothing to do with it. It's their specific life situation and the family members they have or the things that happened to them in the past. It doesn't really matter where you come from. To me it only matters that you

answer all the questions that I have to ask to see if there is any way that I can help you get your papers.

**Let's talk a little bit about how this administration has affected immigration with the panic that he has caused or that this administration has caused with travel bans and the whole migrant crisis at the border. Have you seen a rush for more people to get their papers?**

No, the opposite. I've seen a lot of fear and a lot of people hiding out of fear.

**And so how can we address that?**

Education. The key is education. I think everything stems out of education, and so that's why I keep doing what I do every day. Sometimes I get tired and all I have to remember is that if I can convince only one person to get educated, to learn something new about this topic, I will be doing a great service, so I keep doing it. I think the key to all of this is education.

**Obviously you're very successful. You have a beautiful office. You're talented. You have success with social media as an influencer. What's next for you? What's your next goal?**

**What do you want to do? What do you want to reach?**

Personally I'm very happy. I am just waiting for God's next adventure. I don't look at life in the next five years or the next ten years. I look at life today and today only. I think that when I look back in my story, I see how God has put different adventures at different times in my life, and the adventure that I'm living right now is amazing and I'm very blessed and I'm very thankful for it. I don't know what's the plan for tomorrow, but if I like it I'll jump on it, and if I don't like it I will reject it, and that's how I live my life.

**When you're representing your clients, do you go to court?**

Yes.

**What's court like, especially immigration court? I know it's different.**



I love going to the Office of Immigration; that's my favorite place. I don't like going to court. I think—no, I don't think. I know it's because every time I got to immigration court, I remember those sixteen-year-old Brazilian eyes and it breaks my heart. I still feel the nervousness and the anger that I felt sixteen years ago, so I don't like going to court. I go to court when I basically know I'm going to win, which is not good, not good. I'm blessed that I have Jocelyn Cortez and Casey Carballo, and they go to court and fight for my clients.

Immigration courts are not real courts. They are administrative places where an immigrant has to fight against two trial attorneys, two lawyers for the government trying to deport you. It's not the fault of the immigration judges. I have the upmost respect for them. I don't think they want to do what they have to do; they just have to follow the law and the laws are so anti-immigrant that they have no other choice. Because they are not independent courts, they are under the control of the attorney general, they are not real courts, so it's basically like having two lawyers against the immigrant.

It's not my favorite place, as you can see, but I don't avoid it. I have lots of success in court. But it's not my favorite place. It's not where I want to go. I would rather go to the Office of Immigration hundred times before I go to court.

**What's different about the Office of Immigration than the court that you like?**

The Office of Immigration is the office where you ask for benefits; it's where you ask for the green card or you ask for employment authorization; you ask for a benefit. Court is where you defend yourself because they want to deport you; the government wants to deport you. Just the idea of going and asking for something or going to defend yourself changes the perspective. I love going asking for benefits because almost 99 percent of the time I'm going to walk out with my benefit and I'm going to be happy. I love that part. And the immigration officers, in my

experience, are people who listen, who may not agree with me, but at least they give me the chance to explain myself, and so I appreciate that. I have a very good experience with immigration officers in Las Vegas and I do very good there.

**How does someone qualify for a green card, or how does someone know that they qualify to get their papers?**

That depends. I can give you one way and I can give you two hundred different ways. It depends on the specific life circumstances of a person. You have to have a family petition, but on top of that you have to have entered legally or entered illegally, but you have a family petition from another family member who petitioned you before April 30, 2001, or you were the victim of domestic violence and now you get to ask for the green card. Or you were the victim of a crime and you got a U visa and now you get to ask for the green card. There are so many different ways.

**How do you keep track of learning or keeping up to date with new immigration laws?**

I continue being a nerd.

**What kind of resources do you use to keep up to date?**

All kinds. We have all kinds of decisions and publication that we receive daily on changes in the law. We are connected to all the courts, the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Supreme Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Whenever there is a decision in immigration, we receive it. We're constantly studying. Immigration is such a fast-paced moving type of law that if you are not studying constantly you are going to miss out, and we cannot afford that. The three lawyers work together and we are constantly studying.

**Can you talk a little bit about DACA?**

Yes, DACA. DACA, I think it's the window that is going to open the door for immigration reform. I've been praying for the Dream Act since law school. It's been there forever. But I know it will happen. I know it will happen. I know in my heart that at some point it will happen. It's probably not going to be something pretty, but we're going to have a Dream Act. My heart is on DACA; it's always been. I look at Dreamers with a great deal of respect because they have taught the older generations that it's not about demanding things; it's about showing with your character, showing with your life that you can be something good regardless of your legal status. I love Dreamers. I fight for Dreamers all the time.

**Do you represent a lot of Dreamers?**

A lot.

**Can you talk about your own immigration story? I know you said you came here to get married because you already had a boyfriend that lived here. But what was that process like for you as an individual?**

I had a special process. It took years, too. But I was very blessed that I was able to obtain a green card. I got my green card in—I was in law school already when I got my green card—2001 or 2002. I couldn't apply for any grants or scholarships because I didn't have residency. I only had an employment authorization when I applied to law school.

**How did you pay for law school?**

Loans, like everybody else.

**They give to loans to everyone?**

Yes, private loans. Yes, I finished paying law school I want to say five years ago.

**And you graduated in '03, so it took you a while.**

Yes, it took me fifteen years. I had to pay two percent interest, so it was a super deal.

**That sounds like a great deal. You got your green card in law school. How long until you became a citizen?**

Exactly five years. I wasn't going to wait one day. I applied as soon as I could.

**What was that citizenship test like for you? What did you feel?**

It was fun because the officer who did the interview already knew me. He had seen me so many times, he couldn't believe that I was applying for citizenship. He was laughing all the time. It was nice. It was pretty.

**That swearing in ceremony, what was that like for you?**

Oh, that was fun too because they made me talk to the crowd. I ended up telling all the new citizens, "Please file your I-130s, family petitions, for all your family members, and please don't forget to vote," and things like that.

**Now, as an established attorney and successful career, do you go back to Peru often?**

Every year.

**What's that like? When did you start going back?**

After eight years, eight years after I came. I am Peruvian and I love my identity. I think identity is extremely important for all of us. I identify as a Peruvian American. I love being Peruvian and I love living in the United States. My heart is in the United States. My home is in the United States. But going back, it's always a good feeling. My childhood is in Peru. The best memories of my life is in Peru; the very first is in Peru. The greatest loves of my life, my mom and my dad, were in Peru. I'm attached to my identity. I like who I am. I love who I represent. I love being an immigrant. If one day I forget that I'm Peruvian and I start loving the United States more than I love my country, I would have forgotten my essence. My essence is that I am one more immigrant in the United States, and I love being immigrant. I love showing my kids how

important it is to be proud of who you are. I'm a Latina and I am a brown girl in the United States.

**Do your kids speak Spanish?**

Perfect. They speak Peruvian.

**Peruvian. *Peruano*. Do they go back with you? Have they visited?**

They used to. Now that they're teenagers they don't want to anymore. But they were forced to go back every year with me until they were fifteen, sixteen. But now they have more important things to do than travel with mom.

**When you go back what are some things that you do?**

I eat like there is no tomorrow.

**Talk about the cuisine in Peru. What is it like? What is your favorite dish?**

Everything. *Como ceviche peruano*.

**How is it different?**

Oh, it's completely different. If you haven't tried it, you must try it because the ceviche Peruvian is the real ceviche. *Pollo a la brasa, lomo saltado, tacu-tacu, papa a la huancaína, arroz con pollo, tallarin saltado*—I can spend my whole day just thinking about food.

**Are there good Peruvian restaurants in Las Vegas?**

Oh, several. If you want to eat *pollo a la brasa*, you go to Peru Chicken. If you want to eat a good ceviche, you can go to Once at the Venetian or you can go to Nobu at Caesars. Nobu, it's a fancy restaurant, but you are going to find at every Nobu in the world ceviche and *anticuchos*, which are Peruvian dishes. Yes, in Las Vegas, aside from Peru Chicken and Once are my favorites, but I also like Mi Peru in Henderson and Lima Limon. I remember more names, but I can't say them right now.

**Do you cook Peruvian food at your home?**

I don't cook.

**What?**

Because I don't know how to boil water. I'm really bad.

**So what do you eat?**

Whatever anybody wants to feed me.

**Who cooks in your house?**

Right now I live with my mom, so my mommy cooks.

**She immigrated with you?**

No. She came to live with me this year. She's been living with me for a year now.

**What is that like?**

Amazing.

**Has her adjustment hard, easy, for her?**

She is right now enrolled in two different colleges learning English. Remember I said she had this amazing memory and she's the most studious person I've known? She is a straight-A student right now at college and she goes every day, so she's very busy. She is very busy, but she finds time to cook for me to make sure that I don't disappear. Yes, I'm a terrible, terrible cook. I don't even try. Food really, it's not my thing. I'm a nerd. I'm a proud nerd. You may think, oh she's so good at this, or, you are so good at this, but you are really bad at other things. I'm really bad at cooking, really bad.

**You just like to go eat Peruvian food.**

Yes.

**Do you still have family in Peru?**

Yes, my brother lives in Peru, my niece and his wife and all my *tíos* and *tías*. Yes, I have a lot of family in Peru.

**Do you see yourself ever going back to Peru to live there?**

When my clients say, *one day I'm going to back, I'm going to retire in my country*, I have the same dream. I don't know if I will be able to do it, but I have the dream.

**I feel like that's a common trend that we see with immigrants; they want to retire over there. Why is that?**

Because your heart is there because your childhood memories are there. People who are not immigrants don't understand. But we are here working like beasts trying to make a living, trying to raise our families, but when we relax, when we have a minute for ourselves, our memories go back to where we come from. When we go back, when I arrive in Peru, I am royalty. All my *tías* are going to cook for me and they're going to invite me. All my cousins are going to take me out. Everybody is so excited to see you. You are only going for a week or for two weeks or for three weeks, and then you leave. When you arrive you are so happy that they're going to greet you that you always bring a little something for them. You come back with those memories and they're awesome memories. But can you really go back and live over there? I don't know. But that's why we all want to go back, because we're treated amazing every time we go back. If you cannot back that nostalgia that you have is ten times worse, so you idealize where you came from.

I always tell this story because people think how frivolous I am, but that's how I am.

When I came I went into this one-bedroom apartment. It was very pretty. My ex-husband worked really hard to pay for it, bless his heart. In my head my bedroom from my house in Peru was bigger than the whole apartment in Las Vegas. Eight years later I went back to Peru, and, of course, my bedroom in Peru was a tiny, little corner of that apartment in Las Vegas. But I had

idealized it so bad that in my head whatever I had in Peru was better, but it was not true; it was not real. It was just what I needed to feel because I was so missing my mom and my life and everything that I had left. We idealize and that's why we all want to go back.

**Going back what is the political climate like in Peru? I know that you left in a time of turmoil. Has it gotten better?**

Oh yes. When the Shining Path disappeared, then the economy got better. But we have a lot of corruption, so we struggle as a country with corruption nowadays. But things are so much better than when I left, a thousand times better.

**Do your kids identify themselves as Peruvians?**

Yes, Peruvian Americans. When they were little they used to say, "I'm Peruvian, but I was born in Las Vegas." That's how they identified. "I'm Peruvian, but I was born in Las Vegas."

**Now how old are they?**

Twenty, seventeen, sixteen and seven.

**There's a big gap between the third and the fourth one. What happened? Did you just want another kid?**

I allowed God to do his job and he sent me four in that order and with that difference.

**Does the oldest still live with you?**

No. My oldest lives in New York. He goes to NYU.

**Wow. Congrats. That's awesome. Does he want to be a lawyer, too?**

I don't know. He's only twenty. I pray for him that whatever he does he figures out a way to serve others. I have raised my kids the same way my parents raised me, telling me that the reason—my dad used to say this. He would sit me down and look in my eyes and say, "If you are so blessed and you have everything you have, it's not just a coincidence. It's not because you



deserve it. It's because you have a big responsibility to serve others." That's how I was raised. In every job that I had I always looked to fulfill my mission, which was to serve others.

When Daniel was little I would look at his face and say, "Daniel, you're so blessed, not because you are too pretty, not because...No. You have a big responsibility to serve others. I pray every day that one day, whatever it is that they do in their lives, they will find that that's the way to live a good life, serving others.

**Currently what part of town do you live in?**

I live in Summerlin.

**How has that area changed since you started living there?**

I didn't start living in Summerlin. Remember, I started living by Sunrise Mountain and then I went to the southwest. Because my kids go to the Meadows, I had to move around that area. I've been in Summerlin for seven years. It's okay.

**Are there a lot of Latinos there?**

No. But I'm there.

**Representing, right?**

Right. Daniel, who is now twenty, when Daniel went to the Meadows, which is a private school, Daniel was probably one of two Latinos in the whole class. Now Karla is at the Meadows. She's seven. Karla is one of six. So there is improvement.

**How has Las Vegas changed since you arrived?**

People say that Las Vegas has grown a lot and it's more diverse. I think—and it's maybe because I haven't moved from my environment. I'm still surrounded by immigrants night and day. To me the city has grown, but we're still a small town. I still feel like I live in a small town. I still feel like I know everybody. I still feel that Las Vegas is very blessed. It's a booming place

because of the efforts of immigrants. I think the success of Las Vegas, it's not because of the casino industry; it's because of the immigrants who support the casino industry.

**Going back to your pro bono work, do you get to decide which ones? Do you get assigned your cases?**

No. God sends me the work and I just take it.

**On average how many pro bono cases do you do?**

Oh, I don't know. Too many to count. Don't make me say it because my manager will kill me.

**On average do you and your lawyers work with?**

Thousands.

**On average how long does it take for a case to go through?**

Two or three years.

**And have you seen that process slow down?**

Completely. The process that used to take us six months now takes two, three years.

**Why is that? Is it the amount of applications, or is it just harder?**

No. No, no, no. It's that there is not enough workers at the Department of Immigration and the government doesn't see the need to speed things up. They're okay with things being so slow.

**How does that affect your clients?**

Completely, right? It totally affects them, but we don't have control over the situation, so we just have to take it. We don't have a right. Immigration is a privilege. When we understand that part, we act accordingly. Immigration is a privilege. We don't have a right to anything.

**You're coming from the lawyer process part of it. What do you think would improve the process if implemented? Ideally what changes would you like to see?**

You mean in terms of speeding things up, or in immigration?

**Just the process in general.**

Oh, we definitely need immigration reform.

**What does that entail?**

The first thing, I think, is to bring people out of the shadows. We need to figure out a way to legalize the undocumented in the United States. We have to figure out a way to create legal paths for people to come, to do unskilled labor and skilled labor and highly educated jobs. We have to reorganize all the processes that we have because right now they are too messy.

**Can you talk a little bit about your videos, your segment that you do daily? What is your process like? Walk me through a segment that you do in the morning.**

I arrive normally at 7:30. The show starts at 8:30. I go through all the news trying to find my topic for the day. If there is something to talk about in the news, then I probably need to read a decision from a court or read statements from people who are involved in those news. If there is nothing in the news, then I am going to go back to policy memoranda from the government. And if there is nothing there, I'm going to go to the law, any topic about the law. I prepare for that. Then around 8:00 I start turning on all the lights and setting up my computers, the cameras. At 8:15 I start praying and meditating. At 8:30 I start.

**How long do you go for?**

Half an hour.

**In that half an hour, how many questions do you answer?**

First I talk whatever comes out of my heart about whatever I want to talk about. Then I talk about the law. Then I start answering questions for ten minutes. In ten minutes I probably answer twenty, thirty questions. I probably have three hundred, four hundred already in the queue.

**What platforms do you use?**

I go live at the same time on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

**Do you set them all up at the same time?**

Yes.

**How have you seen social media influence access to education?**

Amazingly. I think social media is amazing, if it's used for a good purpose, right? It's a great marketing tool. I don't use it as a marketing tool. You will never hear me saying my phone number or my address, *Immigrando con Kathia*, because I want people to see me not because they think that I'm selling them anything. I've earned their trust by staying away from marketing. But as a marketing tool it's great, too. But I just want to get the information out. I believe if they feel that they are not helping me sell anything, they push the share button easier.

**On average how many people tune in?**

Thousands.

**Do you ever feel self-conscious of your platform? I know that you're speaking to a camera, but do you ever actually visualize how many people are behind, on the other side?**

No.

**Ultimately where do you see your platform going or where do you want to expand your platform?**

I would love to figure out a way to reach all the immigrants. I would love not only to talk about immigration, but also to educate the Latino community on things that are basic for their improvement. In this case I'm concentrating on immigration. I think the only reason some people get to succeed and others don't is because of the lack of information. I don't think it's a matter of how educated you are or how lucky you are. I think it's just access to education. Especially with my young kids and my young crowd, they don't know what responsible means. Responsible

today means something different than what it meant for my parents and what it means for me. We all have to come to middle ground. Nobody talks about those things. Nobody talks about basic standards of how do we live to succeed in the United States and what is success because the meaning of success for you is different from the meaning of success for me. You keep saying, you're successful. I don't know that I'm successful, but I'm happy and that's the definition of success for me. I want to be happy, comfortable in my skin, happy to be alive, grateful for my life. Is that success? I don't know. I don't really care. I would like for every person to feel proud of themselves. I'm proud to be Latina. I'm proud to be who I am. I don't care what anybody thinks. I'm happy to be who I am. That's my message and that's what I'm trying to share with my immigrants every day.

**Earlier in your interview you talked about Quechua, which is one of the indigenous languages in Peru. Do you speak it?**

No. My mom speaks it fluently. I don't speak it fluently, but I sing a lot in Quechua.

**Where did your mom learn it?**

My mom is from a town in the islands called Ayacucho.

**And then she moved to Lima when she was little?**

Yes.

**Did she teach you Quechua growing up?**

My mom was an aristocrat girl and she learned Quechua because the housekeepers, the nannies, spoke Quechua. It was not her primary language. I'm trying for her to teach me now, now that we have time and we're living back together, but it's not easy. It's not an easy task. It's harder to learn than English.

**Yes, because it's a whole language family isolated in the Andes. Can you talk about what Quechua is and the context of Quechua?**

It's the language of the Incas. Peruvians come from the Inca culture and the Incas spoke Quechua. It's still alive in Peru in the Andes.

**Have you seen a growth in how many speakers there are or a decrease?**

No. There is a decline. There is a decrease, yes.

**When you go to Peru, do you sing or perform in Quechua?**

For my family, of course. They all make me sing and dance and everything.

**You are still in some way connected to music.**

Oh yes. I am a member of the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Society, and we have a presentation March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Ham Hall at UNLV, and I sing classical. Everywhere I go I have a piano around and a guitar. Yes, I am very much a musical person.

**So you're still performing then.**

Yes, yes.

**That's awesome. What kind of music do you perform? Do you just do the classical?**

Yes. I'm a classical junkie.

**When your kids were growing up, did you ever play classical music for them?**

I played everything. When I was a teenager, I was an opera singer and I was a Salsa dancer and a Marinera dancer. When I came to the United States, I quit dancing. But when the kids came in my life, I found an excuse to dance again, and so I raised them with lots of music around.

They're boys. They're not so much into music as girls. But they had no choice, so they had to put up with all my Salsa and all my Cumbia and all my classical and the news because I'm a news junkie, too.

**Is there a big Peruvian community in Las Vegas?**

I don't think so.

**Do you have Peruvian friends?**

Very few.

**Are there certain pockets in the U.S. that have a Peruvian community?**

Yes, New Jersey; Paterson, New Jersey is a huge Peruvian community, and Los Angeles is a huge Peruvian community. Miami has a huge Peruvian community.

**What about those communities attracts Peruvians to go there?**

Miami is the language and the weather. It's very similar to the weather in Lima. Los Angeles, same thing. Paterson, I don't know what to tell you. I know Paterson is like another barrio in Lima. It's crazy.

**Very concentrated.**

Very, very, very.

**Is that close to New York City?**

Yes.

**Maybe that's why. Thinking of all the things that you've done in your life and all the education you have, did you ever practice as a journalist?**

I think I've been practicing as a journalist all these years.

**Interviewing people about their cases and all of that.**

Yes, yes.

**Did you want to be a journalist, or was it just something that you were studying?**

I wanted to be a journalist because I wanted to be a writer. The reason I went into journalism school is because I couldn't be an actress, so I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to be in arts. I was

in dental school when I started journalism school, so I was going to two universities at the same time. But then I moved to the United States and then life...I always think that God sent me to dental school so I could treat every single one of my immigrant clients as a patient, understanding their pain, understanding their discomfort. I always think that he sends me to journalism school so I could educate my immigrant clients at their level, so I wouldn't have to talk to them like a lawyer, but as one more immigrant.

**Going back to that what's your process like of breaking it down for someone to understand in plain Spanish or plain English from the legal language? How do you break that down for someone?**

I always think I'm talking to Karla.

**And Karla is your baby, right?**

Karla is my seven-year-old. When I wasn't talking to Karla, I was talking to Roberto when he was five years old. That's step number one. Step number one is Karla has to understand what I'm saying. I think that's what makes it happen. I talk to my immigrants as if I would be talking to my kids. When you are a mom and you start talking to your kids, especially when you want to teach them something, you do it out of love. You don't do it worrying about how you're going to look or what they're going to think about you; none of that. When I talk to my immigrants in *Immigrando con Kathia*, I don't really care for me at all. I'm so comfortable in my skin when I talk to them because I have adopted them as Karla, as one of more of my kids. I just want them to understand and I will do whatever it takes for them to understand.

**That's great. I feel like every lawyer should have that approach. Can you talk about a case that really made you realize, this is why I'm doing this kind of work?**



So many. I have so many. Most of the cases that I remember the most is where I was working for a U.S. citizen kid and not for the parents. People don't understand that that's what I do. When people ask me, why do you do this job? Why do you help the undocumented? They break the law, right? My answer is always, I don't work for undocumented immigrants; I work for U.S. citizen kids. I work so they don't have to sleep in fear any more days. I work so they can experience a life full, complete, without the pain of not living with one of their parents, without their parents having skills but not finding a job because they don't have papers.

The stories that I remember the most are always the one that involve beautiful eyes or a beautiful smile that I couldn't resist. For example, I have the case of Carlos. I met Carlos when he was—four years old? He had Kabuki syndrome, a genetic disorder. His parents were in deportation proceedings. They had already been deported, and so they came to ask for my help. ICE had stopped them or they were going to be deported somehow. It was something terrible. Of course, I looked at the case and it was so complicated, and I really didn't want to take it. I was going to refer it out. Because I was so busy. I mean, I do hundreds of different things. But then Carlos walked in. He was barely walking. Mom was pushing the walker. I don't remember much. I remember his face like it was yesterday. He hugged me and that was it.

It took seven years for that couple to get their green cards. In those seven years I went through hell and came back, several times, so bad that a government lawyer from California cursed me on the phone, with the F-word and everything. I cried on that case many times. Seven years later they got their green cards. Carlos was twelve or thirteen when his parents got their green cards. I saw him and he hugged me and he said *thank you* and that was it. I promised him when he was four that I would help his parents, and I fulfilled my promise.

**That's beautiful. You talked a little bit about identity. This project is called the Latinx project, and we have this new word being used to identify what is known as the Latino community. I just want to know your thoughts on the term *Latinx*. How you feel about it? Do you think it will stick; will we use it in five, ten years?**

Yes. I think Latinx identifies the Latino after the 2000s. They are the Latinos of the X generation. I think it's fun. Any way that we find to let the new generations be proud and identify with who they are. I think that recognizing and being proud that your parents are immigrants, it's amazing. But remembering that you are an American, but you are Latino, it's even more amazing, feeling proud of your roots and your identity. As much as we want to assimilate to this country, we have to assimilate keeping the essence of who we are. We are so special because we are Latinos and our culture is so strong, and so we're very blessed with that.

Some of us lose the connection to the Spanish, to the language, but that doesn't make us less Latino. We're still Latinos even though we don't speak Spanish. Some of us, like me, choose to live in Spanish and stay in Spanish in this country. I am very Latina and I am very proud of. I deserve respect for how I choose to live my life in the United States even if it's in Spanish. I think it's awesome. I think that any possible ways we figure out to convince our new generations that they should be proud to be Latinos and they should keep our culture alive, it's awesome.

**What are your hopes for your children and their identity? You said when they were young, they were like, I'm Peruvian but I was born in Las Vegas. Have you seen that identity change as they've grown?**

No. No, no. They are first generation. Their father and I have done a great job making them understand and realize that it's a privilege that they were born in the United States; that it was an act of God that we both were in the United States when they were born; otherwise, they would

have been born anywhere else. It's a privilege and they are very blessed. But they are very Latino, they're very Peruvian, and they are in this county to serve others, and we stand by it.

**Las Vegas was the city that you first arrived to in the U.S. What makes Las Vegas home to you? Why did you decide to stay in Las Vegas, if you have family in L.A.?**

Las Vegas is a great place to grow, even now. When I came in 1996, it wasn't as big as it is today. The university was so much smaller. But there was a lot of room to grow if you wanted to get educated and put in the hard work. Today we can still say the same of Las Vegas. It has grown, but it has so much potential and all it takes is a little bit of education and a great desire to work, hard work. If you have those two things, you are going to make it in Las Vegas. It's a lot easier than the big cities.

**Now with your firm, what are your goals for your firm? Do you want to expand it? Do you want to grow it? What is your vision for what you want it to become?**

I love what I do. I love the amount of people that we help. We are growing constantly, not because I want to, because I have to because of the need. I'm just going to keep doing whatever God wants me to do.

**I was looking at your website and I was looking at your staff and most of them are women. Was that a conscious choice that you made?**

No. no.

**They just come in and it's like, you're hired?**

I have men and women, but it's mostly women. I think it's because of the nurturing type of law that I practice. What I do in immigration law, I treat my clients as patients. They are in pain. When an immigrant comes to see an immigration lawyer, they normally come with a lot of fear and in a lot of pain. What I do in this office is, if I see that they have a case, I hold their hands

and I help them walk through the process of Office of Immigration or the process of the court until the day they are safe, they are free from deportation, and they have a green card in their hands. The whole process is a very nurturing type of process. I have to take on their anger, their fear, their frustrations with love. I think women are more prone to that kind of attitude. Once you know me and you see what I'm looking for, it's like a good match. But I also have men. When I find that attitude in men, I hire them. I love having men working with me. But it happens to be that this office is full of women.

**Any stories you would like to share? Any anecdotes of living in Las Vegas, being an immigration lawyer that you want to share that I haven't addressed?**

I'm a conservative.

**Okay. Conservative in what way?**

I'm a Republican. And that shocks people because they think that immigration lawyers cannot be Republicans. I'm not a Trumpist, but I've always been Republican. I've always been a conservative. I'm a woman of faith. I am very respectful of the ideas and the values of everybody else. Before I have any political views, I'm a woman of faith. As a woman of faith, I don't judge. I try to stay away from judging. I do a bad job with my kids, I have to admit, but with everybody else, everybody has the right to do whatever they want. I've been a Republican since I arrived in the United States. As things have progressed with the political parties, and as you can see nowadays, everybody relates Republicans with being anti-immigrant, and that's not the truth. There is a segment, there is a group within the Republican Party that it's very anti-immigrant, but there is a group of compassionate Republicans, people who believe in the same way that we need immigration reform. I stick with my political views because I think we need representation. We need to be in the party to let others know that their views are not the views; that they're going

against history by trying to support anti-immigrant ideas, xenophobic ideas, racist ideas that are only bad for this country.

**Was it hard for you going through the 2016 election with Trump as the nominee? Can you describe what you were feeling?**

I was feeling sadness. I was feeling sad, very sad. I am not politically active because I don't have time. By the time I get involved in politics, I would lose helping too many families and I can't afford that. My life is much more important helping my immigrants than getting involved in politics; that's how I see it. But I was very sad. I didn't vote just by party lines. I always vote pro-immigrant. I don't care. That's something that I don't advocate for any political party; I advocate pro-immigrant. When there is election times, I always tell all my viewers, all my fans, please vote pro-immigrant. I don't care what party line you are, just vote pro-immigrant.

**You're Republican in the sense of, if I'm understanding this right, like physical, like the conservative views of money and economy and government, in that sense?**

Yes.

**Like smaller government?**

Yes. And I'm pro-life. I'm anti-gun, but I'm pro-life, and I am small government.

**Small government, so it's not like the extreme Republicans that we know now.**

No, no. I'm not a Tea Party. I'm just a normal Republican.

**The whole rhetoric—I feel like both the Democratic and the Republican Party are going through an existential crisis in what their values are. It's not just the Republican Party, it's also the Democratic Party with, are we leftist? Are we moderates? Centrists? I feel like the party system in the U.S. is very much going through an identity crisis.**

Yes, definitely. But that's like the fun part of me; I do this job; I march every year for my immigrants. I march for all of the things that I consider are the right causes. I am pro-life. I am also a defender of human rights and LGBTQ issues. I will go to the extremes for them. I defend them anytime. And then people say, oh but what kind of Republican are you? A good one.

**I feel like the Republicans—well, both parties, I feel like their missing their values.**

Yes, and that's all you have. You are your values and who you really are in your soul, in your heart, and that's what I stand by.

**Anything else you'd like to share? Last question. I know we talked about identity and where you're from, growing up. I want to talk a little bit about the work that we're doing as the project and recording the oral history of Latinos in Las Vegas. What are your thoughts on the work that we're doing?**

I think it's awesome. It gets out of the shadows. We exist and we are so interesting. I think recording it and leaving an archive of who we are, it's a very nice idea. I hope that forty, fifty years from now some young kid will want to know about how it was to be Latino in the 2020s and will find us.

**Thank you so much, Kathia.**

**[End of recorded interview]**

