

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATRINA SANDIGO

An Oral History Conducted by Nathalie Martinez

Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2018

Produced by: The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Director: Claytee D. White

Project Manager: Barbara Tabach

Transcribers: Kristin Hicks, Maribel Estrada Calderón, Nathalie Martinez, Rodrigo Vazquez,
Elsa Lopez

Editors and Project Assistants: Laurents Bañuelos-Benitez, Maribel Estrada Calderón,
Monserrath Hernández, Elsa Lopez, Nathalie Martinez, Marcela Rodriguez-Campo, Rodrigo
Vazquez

The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) Grant. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the *Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada*.

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas

PREFACE

Katrina Sandigo is a Las Vegas native who grew up on the eastside of the valley. She graduated from Chaparral High School and is the current educational director for the Anti-Defamation League in Nevada.

She is the epitome of family assimilation, embracing one's familial story, and establishing one's own individual identity. On her father's side, the ancestral story is rooted in her grandfather's Nicaraguan heritage and journey. Katrina's mother, on the other hand, is a born and raised Las Vegas.

Katrina studied history and education at UNLV. She recalls the significant mentoring of particular professors who influenced her natural interest to embrace the diversity of one's community. Along the way, Katrina converted from Catholicism to Judaism and was active on UNLV's campus in Jewish organizations.

When she became a teacher, she enthusiastically relocated to rural North Carolina. It was an enlightening experience and her observations solidified her openness to cultural diversity. She brings her wealth of experiences to her current role with ADL.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with Katrina Sandigo
August 28, 2020
in Las Vegas, Nevada
Conducted by Nathalie Martinez

Preface.....iv

Las Vegas native; grew up on eastside; graduated Chaparral High School. Blended family ancestry; includes her paternal grandfather’s journey from political strife in Nicaragua to Mexico and the assimilation that occurred; how her family preserves cultural backgrounds. Traced Jewish roots through ancestral research; her conversion to Judaism.....1 – 6

Father grew up in a Hispanic area; experienced racism. Mother born in Las Vegas; father moved to Las Vegas after serving in Vietnam War. About growing up on the eastside of Las Vegas; learning Spanish in school. Attending UNLV and appreciation of professors; Dr. Eugene Moehring; Dr. Mehran Tamadonfar; Dr. Shaoan Zhang; exploring political sciences and education fields.....7 – 14

Campus activities and organizations; including AIPAC Campus Allies, Sigma Kappa sorority. AIPAC leadership conferences; continuing education for her master’s; managing the unique first teaching experience was in North Carolina, reaction to her Latino name and Las Vegas roots, encountering racism.....15 – 21

2014 her move back to Las Vegas; first local job at her alma mater Chaparral High School. Learning about ADL, where she currently works as education director; Holocaust education; Walk Against Hate and other events; started the job day after 1 October (2017). ADL throughout the state’s Jewish population; actions with anti-Latino episodes; general observations.....22 – 31

Parents’ work careers; mom’s journey from casino work to a classroom teacher. Improving her Spanish speaking skills and learning Hebrew. Talks about the Covid-19 pandemic and impact on life so far; ADL’s concern with anti-Asian sentiments, George Floyd protests, reactions; undocumented community support. Thoughts about value of oral history.....31 – 41



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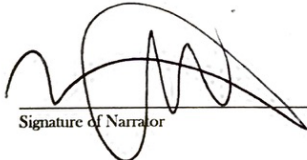
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Hello. Good morning. Today is August 28th, 2020. We are in the Reading Room here at the library. My name is Nathalie Martinez and with me are...

Barbara Tabach.

And...

Katrina Sandigo.

Would you please spell your name for me?

Yes. K-A-T-R-I-N-A, S-A-N-D-I-G-O.

Thank you. Let's start with your childhood. Where were you born here in Vegas?

I was born right here at Sunrise Hospital, 10:33 in the morning, only time I was early to anything in my life. I showed up two weeks early. I am my mom's own biological child. She was super excited to have me. Her and my dad were there to welcome me into the world.

What part of Vegas did you grow up in?

I grew up on the east side of town on Trop and Pecos. We still own our original family home. I attended schools in the area and I had lots of friends who were my age on the street and attended the neighborhood schools. I attended Lewis E. Rowe down the street from here at UNLV. I went to Woodbury and I also went to Chaparral High School.

What can you tell me about the area growing up there?

Growing up there it was very family oriented. We were right next to Paradise Park. We grew up riding our bikes as kids on the street down to the park and running around on the dirt track that they had for the exercise equipment. We would ride our bikes to the different stores around us once we got old enough where we were allowed to cross the street. We would take our trips to Walmart with our pocket change and things like that. It was always very family oriented. There was always kids there and always lots of families outside watching and talking with one another.

Where are your parents from?

My mom was also born and raised here. My dad is from San Francisco.

What is their heritage?

My mom's side of the family is Canadian and Irish, and my dad's side of the family is Spanish and Nicaraguan.

What can you tell me about your Latin heritage, roots or practices in your family?

We do kind of a blended thing. When my grandparents immigrated on my dad's side to the U.S. in the '20s, they wanted to assimilate as rapidly as possible. They felt that it was important for their own safety and just to have a very American life. It was a struggle for them to get here. My grandfather moved from Nicaragua. They escaped from a time of political strife. They moved from Nicaragua to Mexico, and my grandmother's family moved from Spain to Mexico; that's where they met. Then they came here and got married and had eleven children, one of which is my dad. They spoke Spanish in the home and that was it. Outside of the home they spoke English, so that is how I was raised. We didn't speak Spanish at home. My dad thought it was really important that we only spoke English. Why was beyond me, but we'd go with it because that was the rule.

But we were a very connected family and we still are. We follow a lot of, I guess, gathering type cultural traditions. When it comes to my dad's side of the family, when we gather it's always grandma's recipes.

What recipes?

My dad's favorite thing from my grandmother was Spanish rice and chicken. She would sit there and make it for hours with a side of homemade beans, which he can still make to a tee. To this day it's one of my favorite dishes that he makes. That's how she passed along things in the house

was through cooking. The kids would get there and they would all help out in the kitchen, especially when you've got eleven kids. It's a lot of mouths to feed, so everyone pitched in. They would sit there and they would do things together. My grandmother apparently made sourdough bread that I never had the opportunity to have, but growing up in the Bay Area that's one of the things that they did together. But it was always about being together. They may not have had a lot, but they were always with one another. They prayed together as a family. They went to services together as a family.

What did they practice?

My grandmother was born Catholic. After some ancestry DNA testing, we discovered that we are indeed Jewish by blood on my dad's side of the family. We were able to trace it back a little bit and figure out that at one point they were probably—not even probably—they were Jewish and then converted to Catholicism in Spain and moved to the U.S. and kept practicing.

They were probably Sephardic Jews from Spain. Do you know the story of when they discovered their Jewish roots?

We don't. We have a family historian and he has not—he's found some stuff on my grandfather's side, but there is limited stuff on my grandmother's side. They've had a very difficult time tracing a lot of that for whatever reason. We do know DNA-wise that it pops in all of us, so it's definitely there. But we know that my grandmother has been practicing Catholicism for some time until she...even when they lived here, they were a very devout Catholic family.

How did this switch happen, or where did it happen for you individually?

For me individually? I've always been attracted to it. It's always something that I felt a connection to.

What aspect of it?

The interconnectedness, the family part, the coming together to celebrate, the general belief system behind it. I always felt called to it. Growing up I almost gravitated towards other Jewish people and those were the people that I made my closest friends and my second family. It was not really a surprise for anyone when I made the big switch. But my immediate family isn't very religious. They were supportive and said, "If that's how you feel, great, go for it."

Let me ask you a couple of follow-up questions. Did you do a conversion and all of that? Can you talk a little bit about that whole experience?

Yes. The conversion process I actually found to be really interesting. I reached out to Rabbi Tecktiel at Midbar because at the time my friend was working there. I was most comfortable at that temple. I reached out to him and set up a meeting. He said, "What are you doing here? You don't need to convert." I'm like, "Rabbi, I'm not really Jewish yet." He said, "What?" I said, "Yes. I show up and this is what's comfortable." I had been going to High Holiday services for quite some time because I've always gone with friends. It was always an open invitation. I felt comfortable going, which was the opposite of attending other religious services. But I always felt comfortable going.

It was about a yearlong and it was something that I really enjoyed. It started out with a group of three or four of us and I ended up being the only one that finished the course. It was this really wonderful time where I got to sit there with the rabbi once a week and discuss not only the readings that I was supposed to do, but random questions that I had. We would sit there and talk about why eggs are pareve and you can put them on chicken, but you can't mix meat and dairy. We would have fun arguments and back-and-forths about things. It was a really wonderful process. Of course, you get to go to the mikveh after you do your bet din.

What's that?

The mikveh is kind of like a big baptismal fountain, for lack of a better way to explain it. It's a pool built into the ground with natural water. The one that everyone else goes to here in town is at Temple Beth Shalom and it's in this beautiful room with stained-glass windows. The rabbi stands outside the door. You say the prayer. They hear or they listen for you. They knock on the door. You say it again. Then you're done. You hop out. You go back into the ladies' dressing room and you're good to go.

Tell Nathalie about the bet din. Who was present of your bet din?

A bet din is a rabbinical court of sorts and they evaluate your seriousness, essentially, to convert. It's different than converting to Christianity or even Islam from my understanding where you show up and you say, hey, I'm going to do this, and you get baptized in Christianity. My bet din was three rabbis. It was the rabbi I did my conversion with, which is Rabbi Brad Tecktiel, Rabbi Benny, and then the third gentleman was... Was his last name was Rabbit Katz, perhaps? ...

But they were all part of that and they asked questions. I had to write several essays beforehand. I think my beth din packet was probably eight or nine pages. There's questions in there: How do you see yourself living a Jewish life? How do you feel connected to the Jewish people? I feel like Jews take our conversion process really seriously. I've had other friends that have converted as well, and their process was very similar. One of them went to L.A. to do the orthodox conversion.

What is that?

There's varying levels of observance in Judaism. For the orthodox Jews or Chabad, which I know is on campus here, they are the most observant, I would say. Then you have conservative and reform Judaism. Each system has its own level of observance. Orthodox Jews will keep kosher; they won't eat meat outside of the home unless it's kosher; they all go to a special

restaurant. Whereas conservative and reform Jews are somewhere in the middle. I think it's a little bit more acceptable to make your own choice in that scenario.

It's a fascinating process. They ask you a wide variety of questions. I think the one question that always sticks out to me was, what would you do if your family asks you to celebrate Christmas? I said, well, it's my mom's favorite holiday. I'm not going to not celebrate Christmas with her. Christmas has never been a religious holiday for us. It was always one of those things where I certainly wouldn't tell my mom no. They're like, "Great, that's what we want to hear." It's your family at the end of the day. I think that really spoke to me about the importance of family in Judaism in particular is that even though you may be leaving a part of your family behind, they're family and you're still with them.

It was maybe thirty, forty minutes top, and then after that I went, we did my dedication, I picked out my Hebrew name, did the mikveh, went and had lunch.

Going back to Nicaragua, did you hear any stories of their migration? You mentioned through Mexico. But did you hear any stories of what their childhood was like?

From my understanding my grandfather grew up incredibly poor in Nicaragua. When they fled they fled for political asylum reasons. From what I know from the stories that have been passed around between our families, they fled in the cover of the night. They took what they could. Made it to Mexico. They worked where they could. My grandmother's family was very wealthy. They owned a very large hacienda. Somehow they managed to meet one another and they made it to the U.S. after that. I know getting to the U.S., as my dad tells me, they followed all the proper rules. There was never any questions about that. Okay. I know that they were around in the '20s; they immigrated to the U.S. in the '20s. It was definitely a very different time, most assuredly. They wanted to leave even though my grandmother had a large, beautiful home that

she could continue to stay at, they were done and they wanted to live in the United States for all the things that they could have.

What was it like, if you know anything more about what that assimilation process was like or how it made your father feel at the time not being able to speak Spanish?

When my dad was in elementary school, they lived in a predominantly Hispanic area, so it wasn't too big of an issue. As they got older things started to change. My dad is somewhere in the middle of the range of children. He was born in the '40s. He experienced racism. He experienced not being able to be like the rest of the kids because people spoke Spanish at home. They called him all the names that were there depending on where they lived at the time within the Bay Area. But my grandmother did her best to keep the cultural things alive inside the home and the religious aspect of things; that was important to her as well. They went to mass in Spanish, so that was one of the ways that they kept that alive. But it was really more my grandfather that did not want them to speak Spanish outside of the home for fear of retaliation or some sort of violent act, not that that happened all that often where they were, but they were concerned, obviously.

What kind of work did your grandfather do?

They owned a farm that the kids worked on with them. From my understanding—my grandfather passed away before I was born, so I never had the opportunity to meet him—but from my understanding he owned the farm. He did agricultural type work. But he had lost his foot at some point and couldn't always be up and about. The story in our family is that he got bitten by a snake. There was a snake in his boot in Mexico, and he lost his foot because of that, which I think is maybe a little questionable. But there are photos. People tell me it's real, so...My aunts and uncles tell me it's very real and that he really did have that. So, okay, whatever you guys

say. He owned that and my grandmother was a homemaker, especially with eleven children. He did that and then from my understanding at one point he was in logistics, like trucking and those sorts of things, somewhere where he could work for a period of time and then be home in between.

How does your family history get to Las Vegas?

That's a good question. My mom being born here, she was here for seven or eight years, and then they moved to Washington for some time, and then they moved back. My mom moved back when she was fifteen to live with my grandma and her new husband. My dad moved here—I'll be thirty-two this year—my dad moved here almost forty years ago. He moved here after he had left the service. He left the military. He served in the Vietnam War, got out, was in North Carolina at Fort Bragg and wanted a new start, so he went to California. California didn't really work out, so he moved out here with some friends of his.

Around what time was that?

Forty years ago, so the early '80s. They were both here. They had similar circles. That's kind of the long and the short of it. My dad had two other children before my mom. They were in North Carolina. They moved out here briefly and then they ended up moving back with their biological mom.

Growing up on the east side, what was your interaction with the Latinx community there?

It was always interesting. Especially going to the schools that I went to, it didn't really feel like you were actively going out of your way to do that because everyone on the east side is part of the Latinx community, it feels like; even if you're not, you're a part of it. I remember thinking that this is just normal. When I taught out of state and I didn't have those experiences with my students, I thought to myself, oh, this must be how other people live. It's not that I didn't have

friends in other parts of town. I was really active in high school. We would go all around the city going to different things, so I knew that it existed. But even at my friends' schools, the Coronados and the Palo Verdes, they still had the same general experiences I did. It's like, oh, this is just how it is here.

We were involved with different things. My dad didn't necessarily want to associate with the Latinx community as a whole. He felt it was important for him to be an all-American. He fought in the war. He was really—he is very attached to that part of his identity. He didn't necessarily associate with it. As I got older and started taking language classes and things like that he would bring up different memories and things and we would practice here and there what he could remember of Spanish. But directly, we didn't live in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. I went to schools that were predominantly Hispanic. It was definitely guided heavily by my dad, and he did not want—he wanted us to know that we were American and that's it. Okay.

You said you were heavily involved in high school. What were you involved with?

Let's see. In high school I attempted to run track; that did not go well. I'm not the most athletic human being. I took part in speech and debate, which is forensics here. I was heavily involved in that for all four years of high school. I was involved in student council. I was involved in Honors Society in middle school and high school as well. It was all a good opportunity. I was never discouraged from doing any of those things. I briefly played tennis. I thought that that might have been a good option, too. Maybe a little bit less running. It wasn't a great option. I'm not that coordinated, definitely not that coordinated.

I volunteered quite a bit. At the time there was a church not too far from our home, so that's where we went. That was something I was pretty involved with, with the youth group. We

would do volunteering with the church, which was always exciting for me because I enjoyed doing that whether it was putting the food boxes together for families for Thanksgiving or holiday services; things like that. It was definitely something that I really enjoyed. I was involved with the young teen life program of being in leadership and planning things.

What drew you to stay here in Las Vegas and go to UNLV?

I live about seven minutes from here and that was a big draw. The cost was a big draw. But in all fairness I knew that this is where I wanted to go. Growing up I went to basketball games at UNLV regularly. There are pictures of me I think as little as seven or eight months old at Thomas and Mack in the tiny infant cheerleader outfit. It was always something that my dad and I would go do together. I knew that I wanted to be here because of that.

Throughout high school they take you on college tours and all of those things. I had gone other places. I was like, this isn't what I want. Not only is it not close to my family, but it doesn't have the same feel. In speech and debate we would take trips out of state to go on forensics tournaments. We got to go to UC Berkeley, we went to ASU, we went to SDSU; all these great places. So much fun. None of them felt the way UNLV did.

Not only did I love UNLV so much the first time, I loved it a second time and came back. Even then I had friends that gave me a hard time and said, "Why are you going back there? You can do this online." I'm like, "It's not the same. It's just not the same." The professors and interactions I was able to have with people made that much of a difference. The history classes that I got to take and the fact that the professors that I had knew so much about the city and how it evolved and all of those really important details of Las Vegas that I want to be able to pass along one day, it was why I loved being here. It feels like home. Even though they took out

North Field, it still feels like home. There is a giant building on top of North Field, but that's okay.

North Field?

Yes. You know where the new hospitality building is? It used to be a lovely field. I used to sit there and do all sorts of things with the Greek life and everything else. They put a building on top of it instead.

It's a very lovely building.

It is a very lovely building. We walked through it. It is a lovely building.

Any specific professors that made a huge impact on you?

Particularly in my graduate program, his name was Dr. [Eugene] Moehring in the History Department. He pushed me to write things from a totally different perspective, which I loved. He encouraged me to explore different aspects of things within the city.

Like what?

I was a grad student in his class.

He's a very important professor of history.

I love him. He is a Las Vegas historian essentially for a lot of different things. I was the only education major in his class as a grad student. One of the papers we had to write was pick a topic on this time frame and go from there. I wanted to write something about school segregation. He actually sat down with me. We all had to email our topics to him. He emails me back and goes, "I really love this, but I want you to go further." Okay, that's fine. What are you thinking? He sent me copies of his book that he had worked on, his stuff about how Las Vegas was formed, the railroad tracks and the redlining that occurred. I ended up writing about school segregation as a whole and then funneled it down into Las Vegas school segregation and how you can still see it

today in many parts of our city. I ended up actually taking part of that research and then putting it into my final program with my supervisor. It was definitely a fascinating topic.

I took as many of his classes as I could. The only one I didn't get to take was the History of Nuclear Science. It was offered at eight in the morning. I could not do it. I was working full-time.

He was definitely a huge impact on me as just wanting to be excited. I would go to class at night and I would go teach the next day and tell my students, "You'll never believe what I just learned." They're like, "Really?" I was, "Yes. You guys don't think this is exciting?" They're like, "No, Miss, we don't think that's exciting." "Well, you guys are missing out because this is really exciting stuff not just about Las Vegas, but about everything."

He would sit there and tell us stories about how—and he was alive during World War II, which is always shocking to remind yourself of—he would tell us stories about the different warplanes and things. He swore that he saw German submarines when he would be out. He grew up in New York. I just remember sitting there and saying, you know what? That's too much to not be real, so I'm going to go with it.

I think for my undergrad professor [Dr. Mehran] Tamadonfar was definitely influential for the opposite reason; in the fact that he was someone who pushed me to look at things differently.

What department?

He was in poli-sci. He's a political science professor. He taught my Poli-Sci 101 class. He also taught several other classes that I took as I went through my undergraduate. He taught my class on Islamic politics, which I thought was really fascinating. He really pushed me to think outside of the way that I viewed things, like Israel and Palestine. I never really been challenged like that

before in a class to think differently. At the moment I was an excitable twenty-one-year-old college student. You're like, this is terrible; you're angry. But as an adult you're able to sit there and reflect and say, you know what? It's important to have those kinds of conflicting moments and think to yourself, you know what? He might not agree with me, but that's okay because we still were not only able to get through the course, but he wanted to have those discussions. I remember taking his class and other friends saying, "Oh, you don't want to take his class. He's a hothead." He's really not. He just gets excited. He gets excited the way that the rest of us do and he's passionate about it, so he wants to have a conversation. I always thought that that was really impactful.

I think out of both programs I had a professor who ended up being my supervisor for my master's program whose name is escaping my brain right now. I feel so terrible. He's probably on campus right now. Who I absolutely loved. He was kind and supportive and helpful. I remember going in for office hours with him one time and saying, "I got an A-minus." This is my first semester in grad school. "I got an A-minus and I'm thinking about retaking this." He looks at me and he goes, "You got the best grade in the class." I'm like, "You really couldn't have just given me a regular A?" He goes, "Nope, I can't. I can't do that."

Dr. Zhang. Yes, his name was Dr.[Shaoan] Zhang. But he was so supportive of what we were trying to do. At the time our social studies program wasn't active in the Education College. He sat down with us and crafted a program all on our own; let us study the things that we wanted to study. He really made grad school a vastly different experience, and a lot of other people that I shared that process with.

Going back to your undergrad, what did you decide to study?

Originally when I started I wanted to be a political science major. I wanted to run campaigns. I had friends that did that as a job. Then I decided that was a bad idea.

What drew you to that?

I had always been really into politics. My parents are very politically active in a sense that I grew up hearing about the election, what's going on. We voted every election. It was a very important right in our family to have that ability. My grandmother was very much the same way, my mom's side, and really made sure that all of us did those sorts of things. I loved it. I loved what it stood for. I had friends that were sort of involved when we had gotten to the tail end of high school, and so then I got the opportunity to go phone bank for the first time and I just thought it was the most amazing thing. Now I don't even want to be called on the phone. But, no less, I thought it was just amazing that there were all these people behind this campaign, kind of seeing how it was made.

When I entered my freshman year of college, I stuck with political science. I was very eager to do it. As time went on, I had friends that were older and had graduated and done those jobs, and I saw them not have social lives and not have sleep for more than two or three hours at a time. I was like, I think I'm good; I'd like to have a family one day and I would like to not wait until I'm in my forties to do that. Not that working in a nonprofit is so much less stress, but you do get some time off. Then after that I switched my major to education.

What drew you to education?

I figured if I didn't want to do political science and run campaigns, I could teach kids about history and about the government, and I could hopefully instill that passion in another child, so that's what originally drew me to that. I also really enjoy being with students. I think that it's something that brought me a lot of—not just joy, but it brought me a lot of energy being around

my high schoolers. Even though they were seventeen, eighteen years old, and most of my boys were much taller than me, they were still my babies, and they knew that. It was another extended family by the time I had gotten in there. Just the ability to pass it on...I had a really wonderful AP U.S. history teacher in high school. I thought, she did such an amazing job, I could probably do that too. Even if I'm only half as good as she is, it'll still be pretty good.

What was your involvement like here on campus?

I was involved in Greek life as a Sigma Kappa. I was involved with AIPAC Campus Allies, which is a pro-Israel organization. I was involved in Hillel. I'm trying to think what else I was involved in. Different political opportunities that would come up, Students for...insert campaign name. I would take part in those sorts of things.

I worked part-time, so that kind of hindered my ability to participate in daytime activities, but I also loved going to football games, basketball games; that was definitely a fun thing to go back to as a college student. My dad didn't go with me to every game, but he would select a few and say, "Let's go sit at the top of the student section and we can sit here and enjoy a good time." We can do that; I can make that happen.

Tell us more about AIPAC, what you did there.

AIPAC is a group of students normally on college campuses who go to Washington, D.C. to learn political lobbying skills, to work with your elected officials, all of those folks. I got involved with that through a friend of a friend. They had taken the actual position and they wanted to kind of restart things on campus. It was me and several other people that I had known for some time, one of which I had known since middle school. We all met fairly regularly, at least twice a month, and we would discuss different activities that were going on on campus around Israel. We've always been really fortunate here at UNLV that we don't have a lot of anti-

Israel things that happen here the way that they do in some California schools where they have apartheid weeks and everything else.

But they sent you to D.C. twice a year, which I was all about. You didn't pay a penny. You had to bring some spending money. I was very excited. I had never gone to Washington, D.C. We went four times with them. You go to this (leadership) conference and they train you from the ground up how to have conversations with not only legislators, how to call people, how to fund-raise, how to organize meetings and how to get folks to come together for one particular topic. I feel like it's something that has served me well not just for what I do currently, but it's served me well for things in my teaching career, for my personal life, when I work with the temple. It's always done me good to have those ground skills.

What made you want to continue your education, to get your master's?

Well, to be completely honest with you, at the time with the school district, there was the pay scale increase. But I also knew that I just didn't want to get any old master's, which is why I came back here to do that, because I wanted to actually be able to focus on history and learn some of the things that I didn't have the opportunity to take as a course when I was in my undergrad program. With the years of expertise that some of the professors that we have access to here at UNLV, it was a real draw, and I knew that I wanted to improve my own ability whether it was to teach or to just have the knowledge for myself.

We're definitely a family of lifelong learners, so it was heavily encouraged to go back. The day I graduated with my undergrad, my dad said, "When are you going to grad school?" And the day I graduated with my graduate degree, my dad said, "When are we applying for your PhD?" which we're still working on. I haven't gotten that far yet. It's another chunk to chew a different day. I was always encouraged and I knew that I wanted to do that not just for myself,

but I also wanted to do it to make my family proud. I knew that it was important to them. My dad never had the opportunity to go to a full four-year college let alone grad school. My mom didn't finish college until she was in her thirties after she had had me. I really wanted to make my family proud of the fact that I had stuck with something. I graduated high school on time. I graduated from college on time. I took a few years off for myself, got my career ready. Then I took that next step of going to grad school.

You mentioned you started teaching in North Carolina.

I did.

What was that experience like?

Vastly different. I had never lived anywhere outside of Las Vegas prior to that.

Where in North Carolina were you?

We lived an hour and a half south of Raleigh. Fort Bragg is part of Fayetteville technically, but we lived in a town that was next to it called Spring Lake, North Carolina. I actually finished my student teaching there. There was a hiring freeze at the time with the school district, and I had an opportunity presented to me to move there. I said, well, you know what? Maybe I can complete my student teaching there. I called the student teaching coordinator at the College of Education and said, "Hey, I have this opportunity. I hope it's okay to do this. I'd really like to explore this." She goes, "I think that's wonderful. They're not hiring social studies teachers here. Go for it."

I told them the town that we were moving to, and they found me someone to student teach with. I showed up. I was there a week and a half before I started student teaching. But the high school I taught at was across the street from a tobacco field, because that's what they grow there. There was corn and soybeans, also, but they were interspersed. We were in between a pig farm. The grocery store had hours from eight to eight, so did the gas station; that was a real

interesting one. If you needed gas at night and you were already in our part of town, you could not get gas. You had to go back onto the main road, which was about fifteen minutes set back from where we lived. There were two or three highways that kind of connected each other. Yes, it was vastly different. I've never had to drive to go to a Target. I live in between three Targets. There was one and it was forty-five minutes away, so vastly different.

I was the only one who taught there who had any sort of an inkling of a Hispanic last name. My students always had questions like, do you speak Spanish? Are you from somewhere? Some of them were very worldly; they were kids of military officers, and other ones were kids that literally had just grown up in this tiny town. We had four high schools, so that should probably give you an idea of how small this place was. We have over forty high schools in Las Vegas. There were four, and there's no need to build extras because we had twelve hundred students at each of them. It is a very small place.

But it was fascinating. It was a fascinating experience. Kids wanted to know what it was like living in Las Vegas, and they wanted to know if I knew this person or that person. Apparently, people from Las Vegas, when they go particularly to the south, we have an accent, which I was unaware of. I did not know I had an accent until I moved out of state to people with an accent, but that's all right. They always had questions about what it's like living in a big city and those sorts of things. It was fascinating.

It was definitely a life-altering experience for sure. It was probably one of the first times I really realized that there were predominantly white communities. Growing up, even thinking about my street right now, we have families of every race, religion, every different kind of family. We have a family that lives right across the street from us that's a multigenerational family living there. It just doesn't occur to me that that doesn't happen elsewhere. I'm like, oh,

normal, right? That was definitely an eye-opener. I will give them some credit. They took education very seriously there. The families that I worked with in particular wanted their kids to graduate because they knew it was their ticket to getting a union job. We were surrounded by factories in the surrounding towns, and that was a really big thing for them. You'd call and get families, saying, "Hey, your child is not doing so well," this, that and the other. And they would say, "We'll talk to them." You'd meet them in person and they were like, "I want my son or daughter to have a good job and support their family and not have to struggle the way that I did."

The demographics of where you were in North Carolina and comparing it with what you grew up around, can you talk about that a bit?

Vastly different. The demographics of where we lived in North Carolina—we somehow managed to find a very nice guard-gated golf course country club type place to live—that neighborhood was predominantly white. You didn't wave down the street the way that I do in my neighborhood. It always kind of took me aback because it was a close-knit community if something were to happen, but you weren't that friendly with your neighbors.

I had maybe a handful of students in the two and a half years that I taught there that were Hispanic or Latinx or Black or African American or anything that wasn't white. I had comments made to me by other staff members about students that were in interracial relationships that took me for a real spin. The older generation that was still there, still living their life there, they didn't like the fact that folks had moved into the area. With the factories surrounding the town that we lived in, they didn't like the newcomers, so to speak. North Carolina processes a lot of chickens, also, which brings in a large immigrant population normally. They were very adamant that they did not want that there; they did not want to speak Spanish in the classroom unless they had to.

Were you learning new things about people?

Absolutely. I definitely learned things about people. Growing up here, it's funny because you don't think that it's different. This is how it is. Going to a place that was literally the exact opposite of Las Vegas—there wasn't any nightlife; there wasn't a hotel for miles—people felt comfortable to talk about their biases, but they didn't see them that way; that was just how they grew up and how they grew up in that area. It was very interesting to me.

The school I was at, there was a river that bisected the town that we lived in; the Cape Fear River ran through and drive over the bridge. It was the first time I had really understood “the other side of the railroad tracks” or “the other side of...” large object, and what that really meant. The other schools on the other side of town, even though it wasn't far, were treated differently. They were of higher caliber because they were closer to the university that was in the next town over. People didn't want the riffraff from where we were to come over there. But they also made it abundantly clear that if you're not white, Christian and going to fit into that mold, there were people who were happy to be vocal about that.

I have so many questions to ask about that. The time with Dr. Moehring, was that before or after?

It was after.

Okay, the context of that experience, I'm sure...You didn't really know specifically about Las Vegas' history at that time.

No. Just what my family had told me.

Sure. Then you personally, did you have prejudices directed at you?

Not directly-directly. Comments would get made. I had already started my own personal mental transition into Judaism, and I was fairly observant of certain things. I didn't eat pork partially because the school I worked at was next to a pork farm and the smell is absolutely disgusting. It

is enough to make you not want to eat it ever again. That was a big part of that. But people would make comments and say, “You’re the only person here who knows about that,” talking about a Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah. It was always little things. I had teachers that I worked with that were African American, and they weren’t necessarily targeted, but you could tell that there were parents that were uneasy around them. You could tell there were teachers that would make little one-off comments and things like that. They add up over time.

The incident that I had referenced earlier about the interracial couple was two students. They were valedictorian and salutatorian, wonderful children. A woman that I worked with at the time said to me, “What do you think her daddy thinks about that?” I said, “Well, I’m sure he’s probably very happy. He’s the star of the football team. He’s salutatorian. He’s going off to a great college. I’m not really sure what there is to be upset about.” She just kind of looks at me, and I said, “I’m not really sure.” And she’s like, “Well, you know.” I’m like, “I don’t know, actually. Can you maybe explain a little bit more?” And she’s like, “Well, you know, her dad can’t feel comfortable knowing that she’s dating a black boy.” I’m like, “Oh okay. I’m not really sure, but I know that he’s a really great kid and that he has a really good head on his shoulders, so anyone would be lucky to date him.”

I walked away. I had no idea what else to say because no one had said anything remotely close to that to me my entire life. After that I was like, we are going to avoid you. I ended up avoiding that person. She’s a nice person, but she grew up in a very different time where it was completely acceptable to say and do those things, and I had students that carried those beliefs. They would make comments here and there, and you’d do your best in the moment to try to educate and say, “Not only do we not say those things, but this is why it’s inappropriate.” It’s definitely fascinating.

For sure.

Is that what drew you to come back to Las Vegas?

That was part of it. I didn't really love being away from home. I didn't love being that far away from my family. While I was living there, my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer, and I could have come home then, but I made the decision not to because I didn't want to be overbearing to her since that's what would have happened. But I knew that my time was up there. It was a wonderful learning experience for so many reasons. But I was definitely ready to come home and work in my neighborhood.

What year did you start here at CCSD?

2013 or 2014? Somewhere along those lines. I graduated December of 2011. I started teaching that January in 2012. We were there for two and a half years. Yes, 2013—2014. Twenty fourteen; there we go. Sorry.

Describe the district at that time. Where did you work?

My first job was at Chaparral High School. I was super excited because I had gone there. That was actually one of my personal selling points in my interview with them. They said, "What are you most excited about to teach?" I said, "I actually went to school there, so I would love to come back."

I taught U.S. and World History my first year there. It was a wonderful experience. The campus hadn't changed at all. The feeling was still there, the excitement. The love of Chaparral was still there because it's such an old school in town. There are really longstanding traditions that are there and they were still going on. I loved it. I thought it was amazing that they were able to continue that on.

What traditions?

Just the cleat game with Eldorado every year. The trophy has been going back and forth between the two schools for years. The fact that my mom had friends that went to school there and they had recollections of those things. When I took over student council there, we did the Back in Black assembly, which had been going on at that point for twenty-plus years. When I was in high school, they had been doing it. As an advisor I was able to put that on and I loved that also. I thought, this is great. This is so exciting. I get to completely pass down a tradition that happened. My friends that had graduated Chaparral came back to help me with the assembly and were part of it. It was an opportunity to really kind of give back in a totally different way.

What was your first interaction or work with ADL? What brought you there?

I had moved schools; I left Chaparral and I went to Sunrise Mountain over on Hollywood and Carey. At that point I knew I was ready for a change. I didn't necessarily know if I wanted to stay at the school district or not. But a friend of mine said, "Hey, Miguel is looking for an education director. We think you would be a really good fit." I had already finished my master's degree at the time, so I definitely had a lot more understanding of programs and curriculum and all these different things by the time I took the job. I applied.

I have learned more about the organization. Actually, to be completely honest, I didn't know anything about the ADL until I had applied there. I did my best to learn all that I could. It had occurred to me that I had already been using their resources as a teacher in the classroom. They have a program about Holocaust education called Echoes and Reflections. It was something that I had been trained on in my undergrad and continued to use because I thought it was such a great program. When I went to my interview that was one of the things that my boss had asked me. She said, "What is it exactly that you love about ADL?" I said, "Well, I actually use your materials already. What you have is wonderful."

There was that and there was the fact that I wanted to continue to impact the community, but I wanted to do it in a bigger way. I loved teaching and I loved having my two hundred and thirty students a year and them going through my room, and my athletes and different things, but I knew that I wanted to do something larger that would lead me to a different path. Then this particular position opened up and I was selected and now we're here.

Talk to us about what it is you do specifically. What is your position?

I am the education director, which is the person that coordinates trainings with schools, districts, groups, all sorts of different things, for anti-bias education. In that anti-bias umbrella I also do programming around anti-Semitism; I do programming around Holocaust education for teachers. I have the opportunity to work with the Nevada Holocaust Resource Center. I also do programming with law enforcement and then we do hate crimes trainings and we work with synagogues across town as well to bring them security information.

My job is a job that exists in almost every ADL regional office, and every ADL regional office has a different look for their education director. We're a small office here; there's only four of us. We all kind of take on different things. One of the things that I chose to take on was community outreach, so working with the temples, working with churches, working with mosques, working with law enforcement. When I was in my interview process with my boss, I had asked her, and she said, "We do stuff with everyone in the community." I could feel myself inside just getting so excited about the opportunity to be engaged with people in a different way that wasn't in my classroom with one subject. I did my best to always encourage my students to go try new things, but it was very different.

I also help event plan, which is maybe not the most exciting portion of my job, but we have our Walk Against Hate that we do every year and I'm a big part of that. We honor our No Place for Hate Schools, which is a bullying program that we run out of our office.

We also do incident response; that's something else that I took on as my role as education director. When people have issues in the community, they reach out to us, not necessarily for legal aid or things like that, but we'll help connect the dots. If someone called and said, "I'm being harassed," I file a police report. We have a really wonderful relationship with Metro and Henderson police. We're able to pick up the phone and say, hey, this is what's going on. Are we able to help out and follow up? But we're also there for the big stuff; when there is a shooting or some other horrific act of violence, we're there in the community providing resources and other information and supporting our people.

At the core of ADL, it's a Jewish organization. Our goal is to make everyone feel comfortable and confident. The last time that there was a thing, like the Tree of Life shooting that happened in Pittsburgh, when that happened the entire organization got on the phone within hours of it occurring even though it was a Saturday and our CEO does not work on Shabbat. We sat there and we listened to what he had to say, and we all mobilized together. We reached out to the office in Philadelphia and said, "How can we help you? What do you need?" We sent out resources to teachers here in town about how to have those conversations. We do resources for families as well to talk about those difficult issues and say, hey, your kids are probably going to ask you questions; how do you approach this conversation? That's not easy for any parent. We get to do a lot of that.

But I think the best thing that I get to do is I get to work with teachers directly and provide them resources for things. They call and say, “I’m looking for this. I had this issue happen. What can I do?” And I get to be that one-on-one guidance for them when they need it.

Are there any specific episodes or experiences locally that have meant a lot to you, good or bad, and eye-opening?

My first walk that we did with ADL; that was the second year that ADL Nevada did the Walk Against Hate. I wasn’t really sure what to expect. I had never planned anything that large. I had done student assemblies and things like that, but everyone is contained in one space, it’s forty-five minutes, you’re good; you don’t need a lot. But it was something that really just reminded me of how close Las Vegas is to one another.

I started fifteen days after October one (2017) happened. My coworker’s first day was the day after that; it was October second. When we both started there was a lot of chaos and things going on around the city, and that still hasn’t really—not the chaos part, but the interconnectedness, the coming together really stuck with me, the fact that we might just be a small office of four people at a Jewish organization that people don’t always think of, but we sent our resources to family members and we came together as a community. We went to the temple and we sat there as a family and said, “We’re not going silently; we’re here; we’re a group of strong people who are going to support one another.” And I would say that that’s true for, unfortunately, any of these acts of violence that have happened in the last almost three years that I’ve been with ADL, is that every time these things happen I think to myself, what would we suggest to people? And the suggestion is always the same: Don’t stand down, and to come together as a community. That will stick with me whether I’m at ADL or whether I am somewhere else twenty years from now. It’s always been impactful and meaningful, the fact that

I know that if we need someone to be there, not only is the ADL there, but so is the community as a whole.

To see the community come together to support things is, well, vastly different from my teaching experience, from parents not really be interested in showing up to things or not being able to or what have you. The level of community has been very different and not only eye-opening, but it's reaffirming to me that I moved home and that I intend on raising a family here. When people say, how could you imagine raising children here? I say, well, I was raised here. I see the wonderful things in our community. I see the hotels that will stop and donate supplies directly to families that need things. The fact that we all are here to support each other. We might be far apart because we're a very large city now, but we're never that distant from one another.

You said you were involved with the northern and southern Hillel.

Yes.

How does the Northern Nevada Jewish community compare with the Southern Nevada Jewish community?

It's definitely smaller; Northern Nevada is much more spread out than we are. Despite Reno's tagline of being the biggest little city in the world, they are very spread out. They have five or six synagogues up there. The number of places to worship are similar to what we have in Southern Nevada, but the congregation numbers are much smaller. There are some folks up there that I have a good relationship with that will tell you that there's a lot more Jewish people living up there; they just don't associate with the temples for whatever reason, but it is growing. They are definitely growing the Jewish population because you have a lot of families that are moving from the Bay Area to the Reno area for cost of living.

In regards to your work with ADL, does the office here also do the work over there? Is this the office for Nevada?

Yes, we are the office for Nevada, all four of us, so we service the whole state. I have had the opportunity to go up to Reno five or six times now, and my boss goes up there several times as well throughout the year as much as she can, obviously not right now. But we have had the ability to work with UNR pretty closely.

Every time I've been up there, as close as they are, I'm reminded why I chose to stay here. The campus there has had numerous hate speech issues. They've had issues with anti-Semitism. They've had issues around international students being yelled at to go home. A wide variety of things, unfortunately. It reminds me that—I know that that happens here, but—

Here being UNLV or Southern Nevada?

Southern Nevada, yes. But we don't have people standing on street corners passing out fliers about blood and soil and hate. The people that are down here saying those things, people are pretty quick to pass off and say, oh yes that's the guy that stands on the corner; ignore him, whereas there's a hate group headquartered in Northern Nevada, so it's there. It is real. It is alive. They know just where to stand so that way university police can't tell them to leave campus. They pass out fliers and they yell things at students to try to grab their attention. But it's very different because the handful of incidents that I know of that have happened here at UNLV directly were handled vastly different. When the young woman had a swastika carved in her door in the dorms that door was sanded out that night. They replaced the door the next morning. There was no question about what happened or why it was inappropriate. There was an email sent out within hours from the university. Every incident that has ever occurred at UNR that I've been involved with, their departments will send out emails and say, this is unacceptable; UNR is a

diverse campus; this, that and the other. There is one voice missing from that and it's the person on top; he does not come out and chooses actively not to say anything. It's a shame because there are kids there that want that support. They don't feel like it's safe to be on campus and to be openly Jewish or to be openly gay or to be openly...insert any other difference than the average kid that goes to Wooster High School in Northern Nevada, which is a predominantly white area. It's a shame, it really is. But there are people there that are trying to make an impact and hopefully they'll get there. I know they're getting a new president here shortly. Everyone has work to do; theirs is just a little bit more than ours.

As the education director what are the next goals that you have for yourself?

With my remaining month as the education director at the ADL, my goals are to continue to impact the community in whatever way that I can to the point of knowing that what I do and going home at the end of the night and thinking I've done something to impact other students, parents, families, teachers, college students, whatever it may be, I think about my next role that I'm taking on and I still think that I'll have an important impact with students, giving them education and guidance. It's always been an important value in our family to help other people, and I intend very much so on continuing that whether that is as an education director or working with college students. If I were to go back to school again, what can I do to continue to improve things for other people? I've been blessed with a lot of things in my life, and to be able to pass that on is really very important to me. It's not to be necessarily the next CEO of anything, but it's definitely to continue making that impact and making Las Vegas the most amazing place to live.

The Latinx community, has there been victimization or dealings that you've had within that community that you can talk about?

We have had some. We get a weird crossroads of people who will report incidents to the ADL. Even at my own temple there are several Latinx people who are also Jewish, which is a whole other grouping of people. I don't recall if I learned about it here at my JLEADS program or if I learned about it from the rabbi, but there's a whole group of essentially lost Jews that had converted to Catholicism or some sort of Christian religion at some point and practiced the secret traditions and didn't really know why. They'd go light the menorah down in the basement, or they would light Shabbat candles down in the basement, which is not where you're supposed to do those things. But thankfully I don't see it here. As a classroom teacher I saw it; there were definitely adults that would make comments about Latinx families and Latinx students. At the ADL we've had a few issues reported, but thankfully nothing completely hate crime related.

The issues that we get the most are issues around, believe it or not, LGBT issues with police not understanding how to necessarily handle the scenario properly or the person felt like it wasn't handled well, and then issues around hate speech and people putting hateful, nasty things on the internet.

Again, we're very fortunate. I always tell people that we're very fortunate in this community that while things do happen, they do occur, there's no doubt that bad things happen, but at the end of the day we are a community of people that is accepting, I feel, and open. Because Las Vegas is such a patchwork type city, you go through the city, drive up and down Eastern, and go from multimillion-dollar homes to Section 8 housing, and all of those people in between are going to be kind and welcoming with open arms. My students that I taught at Sunrise Mountain never were concerned with where I lived; they just knew that they liked me because I was nice to them. I always felt like that was important to push with them in particular.

We had teachers that would say, “They are so lazy. Why don’t they just learn?” There’s probably other schools where you could work where you wouldn’t have to have that experience.

The issues we do get even still today with schools are bullying issues. We’ll get parents that call us after a bullying issue has happened. Kids being called nasty names still. The thing that I always remind parents is that they’ve learned that from somewhere, and to make sure that you tell your child that even though they’ve said that, that they learned it from home and that it can be unlearned; that you don’t need to be their friend. That’s always the heartbreaking part especially with middle schoolers. They want to be everyone’s friend. There are parents out there who still espouse those things and those beliefs and that’s definitely not ideal.

One thing that we really didn’t talk about—going back to your parents—what kind of work were they involved in here in the community? What is that foundation that you come from?

My mom worked in the race and sportsbooks for twenty-plus years. She was a true Las Vegas. She worked at the Stardust.

Oh wow.

Yes. Which is gone now.

Classic. That’s great.

She worked there and eventually she worked at the Rio. At that point, after I was about five, she went back to school. She came to school here. I went to classes with her regularly, which was always exciting. I was always the class guinea pig because my mom went back to school to become a classroom teacher. She wanted to teach elementary school. She is in her twenty-sixth year of doing that now. It’s her second career. She’s wonderful at it. She is one of the reasons why I probably ended up becoming a teacher.

My dad owned his own business for a long time running electrical wiring and phone lines and things like that for commercial properties. Then after he shut that business down, he sold it off to someone, he went into logistics and warehouse management. He did that until he retired. My dad retired out in Prescott. He lives with his brother-in-law and my aunt, his older sister that helped raise him.

Language skills, you mentioned—did you take Spanish?]

I did take Spanish. I have much better Spanish skills now than I did when I took Spanish one, two and three in high school. My Spanish skills mostly come from teaching and working with students and having to learn kind of on the fly how to translate things. Chaparral, when I taught there it was one of the schools that they would send newly immigrated families to because the population was fairly diverse. I remember I had a student who emigrated from Cuba. He was the most adorable little boy. We would trade off because he wanted to learn how to speak better English, as he would say, and I wanted to improve my Spanish skills, so we would trade off because there was a girl in his class that he wanted to write love letters to. I told him that if we practiced them in Spanish, I would help him translate them into English. We had quite the deal going on. It was the most adorable thing, though, because he was just so enamored. He went to an all-boys' school when he was living in Cuba. He had never gone to public school let alone a school with girls. He was just all about her. He's like, "Miss, I need to know how to write this." We would translate to each other on Google Translate, and we'd go back and forth. But it was just the sweetest thing, so I have that.

Then I have a light touch of Hebrew, light touch. Thankfully I have friends that have children and their kids have learned Hebrew, so I practice my Hebrew with them because they're five and they don't scare me when I ask them how to say the color green for the fifteenth time.

But I think I could probably carry on a conversation, light conversation, probably educationally oriented, in Spanish. Hebrew probably not, but that's okay. Luckily the signs in Israel are in Hebrew, English and Arabic, so we're good.

You're funny.

You mentioned your mom's teaching from home, and previously you were mentioning how it's like at your home right now.

Let's talk about COVID-19. Here we are five months, going on six months since the world shifted its axis.

Working from home with an elementary school teacher is interesting.

What grade?

She teaches second grade. She teaches over at George E. Harris, which is down the street from _____. Also, a wonderful neighborhood that I had friends. It's all great. It's like this tiny, little bubble that we're in.

But it's been interesting. Technology was not a degree that she got, ever. I've learned a lot about the platforms in which I left behind at the school district. I'm still really good at them apparently, which has been helpful for her. It's interesting to watch her try to maneuver teaching seven-year-olds and explaining to the parents, this is how this works for now. It's bizarre, though.

We got sent home to work from home on March 13th with my organization, and the school district cut about a week or two after that, I think. In the beginning of quarantine we worked opposite schedules. I would check in in the morning with my people, and I'd say, hey, I'm going to do my work in the evening. My mom would do her stuff. And then once everyone

would go to bed, I would stay up at night and work in the peace and quiet of the living room without having to answer fifteen hundred tech questions all the time, every day.

It's been interesting, though. She's learned a lot. I will give her credit. If my mom is anything, she is persistent and she has taught herself many, many skills in the last three weeks with learning how to teach online. It's definitely been fascinating.

I would not wish this upon anyone. A few of my good friends are teachers, also. I said, "I love you dearly, but I don't envy you right now. I miss having those summers, but I would not want to be in your shoes today. That is most assured."

How has your work with ADL been impacted during this pandemic?

Initially we were planning for our walk at Springs Preserve. There was a little inkling of hope that we were going to be able to do that. That did not happen. It was impacted pretty dramatically because we went from sixty to zero rather quickly. Our national office is in New York, so they said, hey, it's this bad in New York; everyone is going to have the same rules. No one is going into their offices, no gatherings, no in-person meetings. It's been difficult because I'm very good friends with one of my coworkers; her and I are attached at the hip essentially in our office normally.

It's definitely slowed things down. It's made an impact to an extent for fund-raising, not so much this year, but predictions tell us that it's not going to be great next year with all of the loss that the Strip has seen. We've seen families also just reach out to us for general support. For Asian families that are being called certain things, I know that that was an issue on campuses not just here, but across the country. Having people say Kung Flu on national television didn't make it any better when you're trying to sit there and say, this is a virus; viruses can't see anything; you can be infected regardless of what you look like. We've done a lot of education around that.

Can you expand on that? What kind of education have you done to support for that?

Nationally we have someone who writes lesson plans and curriculum for us. They wrote several lesson plans and what we call a table talk, which is like a parent lesson plan sort of, about COVID and about the different issues surrounding it. Thinking about how COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting low income families, not just because of the actual virus itself, but because of job loss, because of food insecurity; those sorts of societal issues. We've had other regional offices where there is a larger Asian population come out and stand in support, or do specific programming around COVID-19 and the resources that are available to families to fight the racism that somehow managed to tack itself onto a virus that has absolutely, obviously, no concern about what you look like or what ethnicity you are. But it's been interesting. We have people on the opposite side who call us and say, "We're not going to get that vaccine," especially older Jewish people in particular are very concerned that this is going to be a way for them to be tagged. They're concerned about their own safety now. I'm like, just stay home, just stay home, please; stay at home, wrap yourself in a bubble, don't go anywhere, but also no one is trying to tag you, I promise.

Were you surprised by that?

At this point at ADL, no. Our newest coworker, yes, he was a little surprised. But I think people over time, and especially now in the last few years, have become more—I don't want to use the word *paranoid*, but they've become more concerned about the intentions of other people, especially when they are different or look different than they are. It's created this very clear divide that people have become more wary of others and they're concerned about sharing a space all of a sudden, not just because of COVID, but because that person isn't their person; they don't look like them; they don't practice the same religion. Yet, here I am talking to schools and

teachers, saying anti-bias education is about recognizing our differences and celebrating them, but also coming together as a community. There are people out there that don't want that; they want to continue that divide. We see it here. Again, it's not that bad here. I think it's much more prevalent or probably visible in Reno just because of the nature of how their area is laid out. It's much more sectioned off essentially, not quite as integrated as we are, I would say.

During the summer after the killing of George Floyd and—I won't say protest—the uprising of peaceful protestors are going around the country, what role did you see ADL play within that whole scheme?

As a regional office we decided to do a webinar series around racism and understanding it and all of that. I was so excited about doing the program. I don't know if I've ever been that excited to put together a webinar.

It is very good.

Thank you. I was just over the moon about having the opportunity to have those voices heard and elevated. As an organization and as an office, we said, this is what we want to see. One of the things that I love about ADL is we are big promoters of having a seat at the table and using that seat at the table to elevate voices that don't get the opportunity to sit there. It is something that I am hopeful that I will be able to continue to do as I move on with the federation, But it is something that we sat down as an office and kind of mourned together to an extent that this was going on in 2020, no less in the middle of a global pandemic and the world kind of crumbling against us. As an office we took initiative to read together. We started doing anti-racism readings as a group and talking about them and discussing our feelings in an open and really honest way with each other and assessing out some of those details and sharing life experiences that brought those ideas to us.

Also, as an organization we work closely with law enforcement, and that was our opportunity to reach out to law enforcement and say, how can we improve this? What can we do to help you? We are very fortunate here—I actually heard it on NPR; I was so proud—they cited Metro here in town for their incredible work in community policing, which is a model that not everyone uses, but probably should. We were one of the first major police departments in the country to transition to community policing. You had the police chief in Minneapolis, you had other legal experts and those sorts of things all on this radio show talking about how what we do here is great. I'm like, wow, this is so exciting. I mean, I already loved Metro, but this is wonderful.

I get on the phone and I call my boss. I'm like, "We were on the radio." She's like, "ADL?" I'm like, "No, no, no. Metro was on the radio today. They were talking about how great we are."

We had that opportunity to then sit down with—not sit down with since we can't meet people in person—but have those phone conversations with law enforcement and say, if you need assistance in understanding what this is or what these symbols are or how to have a conversation about hate speech, we're here; we want to give you whatever resources we can. We increased our amount of information on hate crimes trainings. Our national office took on a huge task of updating information about hate crimes and really taking that information and saying, how can we better improve this? How can we make this easier for police officers to understand? What can we do to get this information in their hands in the fastest way possible?

We also as an organization pushed for the eight things that they want to see all police departments stop doing, including chokeholds, non-defensive shooting; those sorts of things. We definitely stood up as an organization in that way as well, and that was really impactful to me.

One of the other fun things, sort of fun things that we get to do with this as well is that we had the opportunity to do a program for young adults with Jewish Nevada, do a program around race and racism and how it intersects with anti-Semitism. At the ADL we always say, anti-Semitism is the canary in the coalmine; if you see anti-Semitism happening, you know very, very clearly that other kinds of hate are happening, it's just not on the news yet. It was very eye-opening to me because I had always thought, oh it's not that bad here; it's not that bad here. But then to watch some of these things unfold on national television, you start really looking into it and you're like, oh, okay, so there were other hate crimes happening and there were other things leading up to this; this just didn't happen out of the blue.

We got an email from our general counsel that said, "If you want to attend a rally or a protest as an ADL employee wearing an ADL shirt, by all means. Make sure you wear a face mask. Bring a water." It was wonderful to know that that support was there.

And did you?

I chose not to. It was still pretty early in quarantine when that happened. Both my mom and my stepdad are in a high-risk population, in their sixties, and I didn't feel comfortable potentially exposing them to that. I would have loved to have gone. I have friends that went, though. I had friends that went as legal observers or trainees. I had friends that went just to escort people and pass out water. It was definitely interesting to kind of watch that through their Instagram stories and through their pictures that they had shared and things like that.

One final question. You said ADL is about putting up unheard voices. What have you all done for the undocumented voice, for the undocumented community, if you have?

We have, yes. We have done work around that. We are supporters of the DACA Act and all of those encompassing things. We have actively come out against the policies, the more recent

immigration policies that have occurred, including separating families and things like that, saying that of course that's never okay, and then using it as a way to remind people that this is not the first time that those things have happened and reminding people what the consequences are of leaving that behavior unchecked and those kinds of policies unchecked.

We do a program every year called The Nation of Immigrants Seder, which is based on a book. It is to honor and celebrate everyone who is a part of our community. It's done in probably ten or fifteen offices now, but the largest one is in Boston. It's one of the most amazing things I've ever seen photos and videos of because they bring all of these communities together to highlight the issues that are going on. We obviously did not get to do ours this year, but the Boston office did, and that was one of the things that they highlighted was undocumented families and their continued plight to gain citizenship and the issues that they are working through in order to do that despite promises that have been made.

I'll ask one wrap-up question. Your background is so fascinating for your young life.

Not that young, thirty-one.

It's all relative, okay? But your focus and your interest in history, as well as political science and activism and community, when we do oral history projects like this, we are trying to capture the history of the individual. Why do you imagine that that's important? How would you assess what we do?

That is a fabulous question. I actually asked my coworker that on the way over here. I was like, "I know that I'm really cool, but I don't think I'm that cool." And she is like, "Katrina, stop. You are that cool. You'll be fine." Driving over here I'm kind of having a moment of, wow.

I think it's important for a lot of reasons. I think what I'll do, especially having seen the Holocaust related program that you do, is capturing the moment, capturing what's happening in

the world and what people have brought to...whether it's a city or state, what have you, and then insuring that it's there for future people to review and reflect and gather information from.

I actually asked my mom this other day. "Do you have a photo of me for my first day of kindergarten?" She goes, "Maybe. Why?" I'm like, "Well, my new office is where I had kindergarten, Paradise. I really want to be able to hold a photo of me on my first day of kindergarten on my first day of my new job, which is on that campus." She goes, "I'll look." She comes back and goes, "Sweetheart, we didn't take a picture on your first day of school. We're sorry." I was like, "Man." She goes, "Well, we didn't have camera phones." I go, "Yes, Mom, I remember how we used to develop film. We had a camera that we took the film out of and dropped off at Walgreens and then had it developed. I remember this." And she goes, "Yes, I guess I wasn't very good at taking photos of you." I'm like, "Geez, Louise, this is a big day. It was my first day of kindergarten, Mom."

I think about that and a simple comparison of my niece and the volume of photos we have of her and the recordings we have of her versus the recordings of me and my stepsister that are mostly nonexistent because apparently there was never camera around.

But I think that's why it's so important is that we have the technology now that we didn't have forty, fifty, sixty years ago. I think about my grandfather, for example, who was here when the Rat Pack played on the Strip and his stories and his memories of that. We always say, "Grandpa, you really should write this down." He said, "Eh, no, it's fine. The memories are with me and that's what matters." I'm like, "We really should write this down, Grandpa, I promise." We're working on that. I think if it's not there, how are we going to remember what happened? I think it's so important and so wonderful that you all have taken on this project to preserve not just the history of people, but the history of Las Vegas, the history of our state, because who

knows what this is going to look like in twenty years from now, thirty years now, when one day hopefully I have great-grandchildren and they're wandering around and Las Vegas doesn't look anything like it does today?

Thank you. That was great.

Thank you.

Thanks.

[End of recorded interview]