

AN INTERVIEW WITH SANDRA CANDEL

An Oral History Conducted by Elsa Lopez

Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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University of Nevada Las Vegas

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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*.

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PREFACE



Sandra Candel is a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, where she was raised by her maternal grandparents and extended family. She describes what she refers to as “a legacy of migrants” within her family including her often absent mother.

As a child she was instilled with a love of education and the value of hard work. As a young adult, she migrated to the United States, southern California specifically. There she joined her mother and began her higher education.

After meeting her husband, life took detours which complicated her studies but created a wonderful foundation for her future as a dedicated and nurturing educator. Her husband Joaquin, a pilot, and she along with their three children found their way to Las Vegas, where she enrolled at UNLV to pursue her PhD and be a professor.

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October 3, 2019

in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Elsa Lopez

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Hello. The date is October third, 2019. My name is Elsa Lopez, and I am here in the Oral History Research Center. Today with me are...

Barbara Tabach.

Monserath Hernandez.

And...

And Sandra Candel.

Sandra, can you please pronounce and spell out your name for us?

I'm going to pronounce it the way I'm used to listening to it, which is Sandra Candel. My last name is spelled C-A-N-D-E-L.

Thank you so much. Sandra, can you tell us how you like to identify?

I'm a sex gender woman. My pronouns are she, her. I'm also a Mexican, an immigrant, and a mother.

Perfect. The first thing I wanted to talk about was actually the name of this project. We are called The Latinx Voice Project, and we found that a couple of times when we are interviewing someone, we have a group of people who maybe are not familiar with the term; we have others who like; some who aren't that big of a fan. But I wanted to know what your thoughts on the term *Latinx* are.

Well, I would like to give you my perspective as a Mexican. I have to say that I have no issues with the term. In fact, it's a term that I embrace because of my own beliefs. However, I am aware that not everybody feels that comfortable with the term and, in some cases, it even has negative connotations.

I'll give you the rationale in Mexico. There is a pushback in Mexico against that term, first of all, because change happens very slowly, and especially in a place like Mexico where

patriarchal and colonization are so, so engrained. The arguments against it is that, first of all, any inclusive language is pushed back against. The more progressive countries, I can say, would be places like Argentina. But in Mexico, unless you are in a very progressive circle, people push back against it.

Why? One of the things that they will tell you is you're butchering the Spanish language even though Latinx is probably—in this case it's an English word, right? But they would say things like you're betraying the language; it's not feasible; it's not practical. You can use it maybe in the written language, but how are you going to pronounce it? As a matter of fact, I don't know how it gets pronounced in Spanish, [pronouncing] *Latin ekeese*; I'm not really sure.

That's a good question.

Right? Me, personally, I like it; I embrace it; I'm proud of it, only because I want to be inclusive and I think it encompasses everything that I believe in. But I also am aware of people who push back against it, and I think I know where the resistance comes from. But I think if we educate our audiences a little bit better, they would probably understand, also, while we're using that X.

Thank you. I want to begin with your childhood. Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like growing up?

This is something I often talk about with my own children. Not too long ago, a couple of weeks ago, my youngest one, my fifteen-year-old, said, "Well, Mom, you have had a very eventful childhood." So I'll share a little bit about that.

I was raised by my grandparents. My mother and my father met when they were young and they were a rather progressive couple. They had me when they were not married, but then it got to be too much for my father, and so unfortunately he left my mother, I believe, end of pregnancy or something like that. I don't have memories of them together. Unfortunately, it was

in the sixties, late sixties, so there was a lot of negative stereotypical narrative around single mothers, especially in a country like Mexico. My mother started to be denied employment because she was a single mother. She was told literally that she would set a bad example for others in her place of employment. I think I would have done the same thing. She looked for alternatives to just leave that environment, and so she met another person and they got together. That person encouraged her to migrate north, and so she did.

When my grandparents learned about this, they said, “Are you crazy? You’re not taking this child with you.” I must have been two or three. I really can’t recall. My mother, thank goodness, came to her senses and she agreed, “That’s right; this is crazy,” and, thank goodness, she left me with my grandparents.

I really had a wonderful childhood with both my grandmother and my grandfather. I had a wonderful childhood, but I cannot deny the negative impact of not having that nuclear family, if you will, because I do remember I was the only one whose parents did not come to special occasions or if I had a family event, I was the only one who did not have the parents with her. I was the only one. In Mexico it’s very common that not only the nuclear family lives in the household, but also the *tíos*, the *tías*, the extended family as well.

I’m sorry if I throw Spanish words in there. I feel so comfortable.

I encourage it.

BT: *We’re good with that.*

Okay, great. Let me know if I need to translate.

As I was saying, I lived in a household with not only my grandparents but also extended family. In a way, the negative impact that had was not only was I the only one all throughout kindergarten and elementary and, also, secondary school who did not live with my parents,

whose parents did not come to parent-teacher conferences, et cetera, but I was also the only one that did not have a home, a real, real home. I was always either at my grandparents', which was my home, but then when they moved to another daughter's house, it was *tía* so-and-so's house or *tío* so-and-so's house. At the time I didn't know it had a negative effect. It's now that I am an adult that I know it had a negative effect.

Why was that? Because being in households that were not my own home...Have you ever heard of children that misbehave—they're perfectly fine when they're in preschool, but then as soon as they see mom and dad, they start misbehaving? I did not have that relax, I'm going to misbehave, because I was always in survival mode. *If I don't behave, I might get sent back with my mom.* And I didn't want that because I loved living in Mexico. Thinking about it that really was engrained in me; that survival mode, always having to be the child that made the right decisions; otherwise, I'm in jeopardy of being sent away. Imagine for a child...And I didn't know it, but I guess I was smart enough to know I better be good or I could be sent away. Imagine the pressure of a child who always has to be good, or who always feel likes she has to behave in order to keep the environment in which she feels safe.

For some reason, living in the United States with my mother and the partner who became her husband eventually; that was not appealing to me at all. Then they started a family, and having a new family wasn't appealing at all to me, being in contact with my father's family who also remarried and started a family. I was my grandparents' child, only child, and I loved that, but that also came at a price. It was wonderful, but it was wonderful in a sense that I was given a lot of attention, a lot of care was put into my upbringing, but, on the flip side, it was this survival; I was in a permanent state of survival, and that remains to today. That's one of the things I'm struggling with in trying to realize, relax, you're no longer in survival mode....In a nutshell, it

was really, really happy, really happy, surrounded by cousins and uncles and aunts and living in just the best possible environment, doing things that I loved. I loved my school. I loved my middle school. I loved my high school. I simply loved my home city. It was just home.

Where in Mexico did you grow up?

Guadalajara, which is the second—I hope it still is. Back in the day it was the second largest and most important city after Mexico City. I think it still is.

Can you talk to us a bit about your grandparents? What were they like?

I come from a legacy of migrants. That's what I've learned as an adult. My grandmother's father came here when they were young. Actually, my grandmother experienced some of that. When she was growing up, she got to come with her father. The father would bring the entire family and would stay here. They worked in the field. When the fieldwork was over—it was that period in which it was easy to obtain legal permits or whatever to live here, apparently, and then they would go back. That's my great-grandfather.

Then my grandfather was part of the Bracero program. Again, he would come and would go. The difference was that my grandfather never traveled with family. My grandma would always wait back there.

Then my mother became also a migrant, and very different circumstances because she was pushed out of Mexico for different circumstances, but she never really came back.

Going back to my grandparents, they were born in a rural place. They married there, but then, as we all know, there's very limited opportunities working in agriculture, so they migrated to Guadalajara. They had friends and family who had already migrated in search of better opportunities. There was no work. They were at the mercy of a good crop or not, and you could not predict that. Eventually they got encouraged to move to a larger city, and they chose

Guadalajara. They brought the family. They had five children all together; the oldest is my mother. They came with their family; they're all women. They all started working and little by little they just made their life there. That's where my generation, the first generation was born, in Guadalajara.

You said that you really enjoyed going to school. What about your time in Guadalajara and being in school there was so special?

It has to be genetic. It has to be genetic, but I'm not really sure... Both my parents were fond of education. Unfortunately, neither one of my parents—they both valued it; they both knew of the importance of it; and they both wish they could have been formally schooled longer. But, unfortunately, they both came from families that needed them to work, so none of them had the opportunity. I always say this has to be a genetic thing for both sides because I'm one of those weird people that I will be an all-time learner. What is that term? Eternal learner. Lifelong learner. I will be one of those. Actually, it's sad for me when I finished my last part of education because it's like, uh, I won't get to be a student anymore. To me school has always been a refuge, always, since kindergarten, since preschool. I remember my first day of school. I wasn't scared. I was just thrilled.

Something I have to really thank my mother for—unfortunately, my father never took care of me financially, which is very common in Mexico, so my mother had to take care of that. My grandparents—I don't know actually who it was, if it was my mother's request, but I think it was more my grandparents. They made sure that—my mother would send money for my upbringing, and my grandparents always made sure that I had access to the best education that they could offer me. I don't know if that was good or that was bad. That was good for me. But

they always sent me not to the best schools, but to the best schools that money could afford, and that was always Catholic private schools.

It was good because it was a nourishing environment. I grew up very well taken care of by the adults that were around me, by my teachers. I have nothing but good things to say about them. I never, ever, ever had issues with bullying or being treated badly. Fortunately, I don't know, I was really, really glad and really—obviously I was glad, but I was fortunate that it was nothing but great experiences. That was home in a way. This is like, oh, this is home, also. But, then again, I didn't feel threatened at school that I would be kicked out, but I also wanted to be a good child at school. I was also a model child almost, but that's because I had already that mentality from home. Instead of wanting to come to school and rebel and be the bad child, no, I wanted to continue that line.

I don't know. I have never been asked what was so great about it. But I have nothing but fond memories. The knowledge that I gained during my formative years, K through twelve, in Mexico really, really, really prepared me to make it here. That foundation—

It was quality schools.

I would say definitely yes. But then it's funny because when I ask my classmates—I'm still in touch with some classmates, especially middle school—not everybody felt that way. Not everybody loved school. Not everybody felt the way I felt about school, so that was a very personal experience. I made of school what I wanted to make from school. I don't know. That's how I explain it. People say to me, “Really? You learned all that at school? I don't remember learning that.” But it was also my opportunity. I think I saw it as: This is an opportunity for me and I'm going to take advantage of it to the best of my ability.

Do you remember having favorite teachers?

I do, teachers that I was very close to, yes, of course.

What about them made them your favorites? What qualities did you like?

My first one started in kindergarten. As I said, I went to a private school and she was a nun there. Contrary to what you usually hear—you hear horror stories about nuns being abusive and things like that—thank goodness, it was not my case, either. As a teacher now I understand it. As a teacher you tend to gravitate towards the children that are easy and they don't give you a lot of trouble and they're the good kids. Teachers tended to gravitate to me for that reason. But she was very nurturing. She saw something in me. I don't know what it was, but she saw something in me that she started teaching me—I left kindergarten, which it was not the norm back in the early seventies; it might be the norm now, but now back then—you didn't leave kindergarten knowing how to read or write; that was not expected. I remember she taught me how to read and write. She put a lot of care in me. I was too young, I don't remember if it was just me or she did the same for everybody else. We were, I don't know, maybe ten, twelve kids. I don't know if that individualized attention was just mine or everybody else got her; that I don't remember. But it was so much so that when I got to first grade, I got bumped to second grade because I already knew the content for first grade. It was all thanks to her.

You know what a First Communion is?

Yes.

This is from a Catholic background for those who are not Catholic. She was my godmother for my First Communion. She prepared me for the First Communion. She just paid a lot of attention to me. I think not having that motherly figure—I know it sounds kind of weird, right, a nun? But to me she embodied almost what I would have liked in a mother figure.

Then in third grade I had a wonderful, wonderful teacher. She was knowledgeable. She was beautiful. She was great at teaching what she was teaching. Then I also grew very fond of my fourth grade teacher, fifth, all of them, all of them.

Then in middle school it was a different type of bonding that I did with them because that's when I started to kind of rebel and not—it was more covertly than overtly, but I would start to rebel against policies or rules at home. I wouldn't say it to my grandparents or to my uncle and aunt, but inside I would say, "Why? This is not fair." But I would never dare to say that openly. What I found in my middle school teachers was that safe space for me to express myself and for them to tell me... There was a generational gap between my grandparents and myself, so that was hard. As wonderful as they were that was also hard, them connecting with me and what I wanted. It was hard. My teachers in middle school did that for me. They said, "If you feel frustrated, it's okay. If you feel alienated by the rules at home, it's okay." Most of them were young psychologists; there were teachers during the day and finished their work with us and then in the evening they would go to college to finish their psychology degree. We were in our teenage years and they were in their early twenties, and they would be the ones that would make us feel like we're not terrible; we're normal; the things that we feel are normal. Then again, they became not parental figures, but they became that cool older brother or sister who understood who you were and we could express ourselves. I knew that yes, my parents were being unfair; yes, somebody else can agree with me, so I'm not crazy and I'm not a bad child for thinking, uh, this is unfair. They provided a great, great safe haven, not only for me, for all of us. In that we do agree, my classmates; we all found that safe haven then to be able to express ourselves.

That's amazing. I want to know, what was something that your grandparents taught you, something that you remember to this day?

Oh my goodness, what didn't they teach me? From my grandfather I learned my work ethic. He was just an amazingly responsible person. Work ethic definitely from my grandfather. He was also very, very, very organized with finances, and, thank goodness, I got that from him.

From my grandmother, oh my goodness, she was such an amazing woman. Generosity. I'm not nearly as generous as she was, but she was a well-respected woman. I would say strength, more than anything else to be strong, to have values. All my values, all the values that I have—respect for elders, respect for everything—come from her. But I think more than anything else, if I could just sum what I've learned from her, would be unconditional love. That encompasses everything.

That's beautiful.

Thank you.

Moving on to graduation, what did you do after finishing high school, or what you would call it at the time?

Middle school was sort of my rebellious phase, but I was also a good child even in my rebellious phase. After middle school I wanted to try public school because I had been schooled all in Catholic schools. Thank goodness, my family agreed. My high school years were in a public school. In high school in Mexico—I don't know throughout Mexico, but in Guadalajara, when you did public high school, it was already part of the university. Imagine CCSD's high schools being part of the UNLV system. For me I was part of Universidad de Guadalajara at the high school level.

I have to bring that up because that was a change for me. It was questioning for the first time the dogmas of the Catholic school and all of that and opening my eyes to Marxism, to

socialism, to a world that had been kept from me in private school. I had new goals, inquiries. I wanted to know more about different things.

Something funny happened to me. Lots of family members, when they make this transition, women in my family—I'm the oldest, but those that came after me and even the generation after me, my nieces—when they made this transition that was too shocking for them and they couldn't handle it and they left school or they went back to private school. For me, yes, it was shocking at first. For the first time I took classes like philosophy where they really made me question what truth is. What is the truth, universal truth? Things like that. For the first time I started questioning the world around me thanks to that philosophy class or my philosophy teachers. Something that I'm very, very, very grateful for is I was never afraid to ask. I was afraid of the unknown, but I was never too afraid to not pursue what is behind—

To accept it?

For example, there's a lot of things that Catholicism taught me that my public education made me question, and at first I wrestled with that. *Oh, I shouldn't be thinking this. I shouldn't be doubting this.* Those dogmas. Dogmas? I don't know how to pronounce it in English. But you should never question. I was going against that you should never question. I started questioning everything, everything, everything.

Thanks to that and also because I knew that I would have better opportunities if I went abroad—and I had the opportunity to go abroad because at that point my mother was already documented. She started as being undocumented and then she became documented. Thank goodness, she got the great idea of getting me also, petitioning me. I was very fortunate that I had that second option. When I finished high school, because of this newfound knowledge and because the world opened up to me, then I knew that I wanted to leave.

Many things led to that also. My grandparents became older. It was harder for them to take care of me. The house where we lived with the extended family, my mother's sister died and it was hard to be in that same household. We were not welcome anymore. A lot of things just made it so that it was impossible—I thought it was impossible for me to stay. Also, again, this was late eighties, early nineties, when the idea of globalization started to sort of emerge, at least for us. Maybe it existed way before, but for us... And so everybody who had the opportunity to leave and go to higher education abroad did.

It may sound glamorous—*oh, I had the opportunity*—but the truth is there were things that were more structural things. My grandparents couldn't take care of me anymore. I couldn't live there anymore. Because I started being inquisitive, I wasn't accepted anymore. That wasn't something accepted of a good girl. There were structural things behind it. In my case, now that I'm older, I think it was also sexism because I wanted to do so many things and my family wouldn't have allowed me; society wouldn't have allowed me. That's when I came.

I don't know if I answered your question.

You did. Were your sisters also interested in studying abroad? Did they follow you?

They didn't follow me. Remember my birthparents separated and they both formed their own families. My maternal siblings were born here. My paternal siblings were born back in Guadalajara. My father never left my home country. I have two sisters. I have lots of siblings, but I have two sisters. One of them had the opportunity to go abroad, but it was not because of following my footsteps or anything. But that's where the gene, the schooling, education gene comes from, I think, because we never grew up together, but as adults, when we started seeing each other, we recognized a lot of things in each other. We thought maybe... Jokingly I say, "It's

that gene that we have.” They have the same fondness for education. She did go abroad, but I couldn’t credit that to watching me because we never had contact growing up.

When you did decide to come over, what were some of the things that you brought with you?

In what sense, material things or ideological things or...?

Both. That sounds really good.

I knew it was going to be temporary. I knew it was going to be years. I knew that because my goal was to do my higher education, undergrad, here and then come back home, so I knew it was going to be years. But, then again, I knew it wasn’t going to be permanent either because I never, never, never really embraced the idea. You know how for a lot of people—and I recognize there’s a lot of privilege in what I’m going to say and I recognize it and I own that and I try to not say it in a...It’s an oxymoron, but I try to be humble about it because I realize the privilege in what I’m going to say. A lot of people dream of crossing the border and coming here in search of better opportunities, and here I am. I want to go there and I want to live my dream, but I don’t want to stay there. That’s not my goal. That’s not my dream. I don’t aspire to be there. The U.S. being the great country that it is, I live in a great country as well. Again, I do realize the privilege that those words carry, but then when I think about I was also escaping from patriarchy and all these things that were really holding me back.

Anyway, I diverted a little and I forgot the question. Oh, what did I bring? I packed a small suitcase. I brought my most favorite couple of books. The letters and books and cards that all my friends brought me. Sorry. It’s a mourning period for me. It’s a period of mourning still to this day. What I brought with me was specifically my grandparents’ love, but specifically, specifically my grandmother’s. I think it’s a mourning period because it was a place I loved, it

was a life I loved, but I knew I couldn't—there were, again, structural familial things that forbid me from continuing enjoying that life. Leaving my loved ones behind, really.

What I packed were, I remember, a Bible. Now I'm a cultural Catholic, as I always share in my courses, cultural Catholic because I cannot get rid of my Catholic upbringing, but I'm no longer practicing. As a matter of fact, I don't know if Catholics would consider me a Catholic anymore, but I'm a cultural Catholic.

I brought my Bible. I brought the letters all my friends wrote me. I brought my favorite books, my favorite records. I don't know if anybody here knows what an LP was back in the day. If don't you know, Google it, for millennials. I brought a couple of those. Most of all, just having that memory, the memory of Grandma; that's what kept me in my darkest moments. I would close my eyes and I would say, "Oh, that's Grandma." That's what I brought.

BT: *How old were you?*

I was a young adult. I was probably twenty; something around there.

Oh, I skipped something. Remember when I wanted to make the transition from private to public? To go to public school, you don't just say, "I want to go to public school." You have to apply and there's a process. In that process I was admitted to the public high school. I wasn't admitted right out of high school because I wasn't accepted. Back then if you came from a private school that showed that you had means to continue in a private school—if there were a number of seats to be filled up, they gave preference to those who came from public schools; meaning they probably don't have means to pay for a private. If you came from a private, chances were that you were not going to be accepted in the first round. It went more by socioeconomic means than by aptitude and by grades. Everything was taken into consideration,

though. I had a gap of a few months and in that gap I came here to study a little bit to perfect my English in high school, and for the first time I knew what bullying was.

Tell us about that experience. Where did you come, what part of the country?

I was really disappointed I wasn't going to be going to high school for at least six months. I don't know who suggested it, but the thing is I came with my mother. She used to live in the L.A. area. Actually it was a school in the Los Angeles District; something like that. I can't really remember the name, but it was a high school there, a lot of Latinx population. This was early to mid-eighties.

The opportunity to come and see something different was really good because the system here was completely different from the system back home, so I loved that. I loved that I had a lot of classmates from all over Latin America. That was my first time getting exposed to people from Cambodia to Nicaraguans to...I just couldn't believe it. Also, something very funny that happened was people from Mexico from all over the place. I had colleagues from Mexico who not only lived in big cities, but also rural places. The diversity, I remember, it hit me like, wow, it's so diverse here. I didn't have that language back then, but I knew it was so different and so many different people.

But, unfortunately, and this is very, very unfortunate, and I don't know why, my own Latinx classmates starting targeting me. I don't know if I was different. They didn't see me as part of their group, probably. It was relentless, relentless bullying, so much so that I remember that I stopped going to school for a while. It was a situation that I had confronted for the very first time, and if you ask anybody knows me, especially my nuclear family now, my children and my husband, they will be able to tell you that I'm not able to even listen to the music I would listen to in those days because it had such a negative impact. It was like a spirit murder for me, I

don't know, being treated badly and just bullied. There was no social media, but if there would have been, I feel probably that's how it would have affected me. Then again, it gave me all the more reasons not to want to live here. But it was only temporary and then after that I came back.

The experience was wonderful. It was wonderful, but, at the same time, it was horrific. It was wonderful in all the new things that I got to experience and I got to learn a lot, but it was horrific in the way that I had never been treated. I had never been bullied before. Back home I never was.

Back home and at the private school, you said, for example, that the nuns looked out for you and they were able to take care of you. Then the teachers in L.A., was it different there?

I also have to mention that most of the classes that I took were ESL classes and I took very little mainstream classes. I had really good teachers. I never felt really connected, but that's also because I always knew that I was only here temporarily. *I'm only here temporarily*. It's like I didn't give myself a chance to bond with them because I knew this is just weeks; I'm only going to be here weeks or months.

Something I would like to mention now that I'm an adult and I can reflect on it, the very reasons why I was well liked in schools back home, I think they were the very reasons why I was very disliked here when I started being that...not teacher's pet, but when I started to be that good student, et cetera, et cetera, that's when the attacks started. I couldn't understand. I was like, why? This has always brought me positive results. What's different here? I couldn't really navigate that.

You said you came to the U.S. partly to practice your English. Did you find that it improved during your time here?

My oral and my listening and my pronunciation, yes. But I also have to credit my middle school teachers in Mexico with my grammar. I have almost, almost perfect grammar, but that's—well, now with the autocorrect...I don't know if I could survive without it. I used to have almost perfect grammar. What is that when you are able to match your verbs and all of that?

Verb agreements.

All of that. I had all of that. The theory, I had it very, very well established thanks to my teachers in Mexico. But, of course, my pronunciation was different; it was not the American type. My listening, I couldn't understand anything. But that foundation, grammatical—it has a name, grammatical foundation, whatever, the theory behind the new language, it came from there. I didn't come here and start from scratch, definitely. If anything I came to polish it. yes, I think I did.

How did the Spanish that the students spoke in L.A. differ from the one that you spoke when you came over, coming from Mexico, I mean?

That's a really good question and that's a really tricky question. Remember a little bit earlier—and I say this with respect. I say this with respect and I say this in an analytical way, in no way in a denigrating, deficit based way. One of the first things that really—it was like a cultural shock was there were some classmates of mine not only that spoke with an accent different than mine, which were the Latin American, Central American peers. We all spoke Spanish, but it was funny that I sounded funny to them and they sounded funny to me. But also within the Mexican population there were a lot of rural classmates. I remember myself thinking, wow, when I'm back home we are all homogeneous in the way that we talk and the expressions that we use, et cetera, et cetera. Here we were from all over the place and even within our Mexican colleagues we both would use words that we didn't recognize from each other. For example, I remember

that I said something that is very, very common in Guadalajara. A friend of mine from Tijuana laughed at me because she said, "That's not how we say it." I said, "That's how I've said it all my life." I had to become a little bit more careful with the way I spoke, but I'm not going to deny that I remember thinking, oh, this is how they speak at my grandma and grandpa's little town. That's where I hear this accent and that's when I hear this vocabulary, because it's different. It's different when you're in a rural environment to a big city environment. Did I think more than or less than? No. I just remember noticing it's different. I remember thinking, I get more exposed to all that; not even in Mexico am I exposed to such variety between the rural and the city.

I know that kids can sometimes be a little mean. Was there ever a moment where they told you, "No, your Spanish is wrong," or something like that? "What you're saying isn't right because we speak like this here."

With the Spanish-speaking kids?

Yes.

Not really. Not really, no. The girl that made fun of me happened to be my best friend, and probably she made fun of me because we were close. I remember she made fun of me because she was one of these sarcastic, dry humor kind of friends. Well, yes, I felt a little offended at first, but then she was my friend and somebody else intervened and said, "Well, that's the way she speaks in the place where she comes from and you may speak differently." Somebody came to my rescue almost. But because the person that said the mean things was my best friend also, I think we must have somehow figured it out.

After that incident, no, I didn't have anybody denigrating the way I spoke or telling me my Spanish was deficient. I didn't have any American kids also giving me a hard time for my English. I didn't experience that. So, so sadly, my bullying came because I guess I was compliant

all the time. I don't know. To this day I cannot figure out what was it that triggered that attack. Well, it was maybe because I must have given them the impression that I felt superior even though that was not my intention, but probably I came across as that. *Oh, I always went to private school.* I don't even think I disclosed that. But I think there are some things that your upbringing is something that you bring with you. I don't know.

But, no, because of my language I never received any negative messages. However, however—I never received any negative messages, but I knew if I wanted to succeed in the U.S., I had to get rid of my Mexican accent and that's something that I regret.

Did you know that even as—

I didn't know that as a child. When I came to the period in high school, no, I didn't know that. I knew it when I came for my higher ed.

Talk to us about now coming back to pursue college here.

BT: *First of all, you said you regret.*

I regret it.

Talk about that.

I regret it. I regret thinking that I had to kill that part of my culture in order to be accepted and to make it. I regret it because now I realize that—is that acculturation we're talking about when you completely erase yours and you want to take on—

You feel like you have to.

Right. I regret it because I wish I would have had the confidence to know that even with a thick accent I was still valuable and the things that I had to say were valuable. I didn't learn that until I was an adult, until I went back to school, until we started talking about language issues and discrimination and all these things; that's when I started to gain that awareness and that

consciousness, and from that point on that's when I regretted it, when I had more knowledge and I had this new consciousness, a more critical consciousness. Back then I thought, if I want to be respected in the U.S., I need to sound like an American, because the stereotypical image was, okay, you come from Mexico, you must be—and, again, it pains me to say this because it's so stereotypical, but I used to believe it. I bought into it. I drank the Kool-Aid. You're from Mexico; you must be a gardener, which there's nothing wrong with that. My family worked in the field. But these are the messages that you get that you start buying into it if you don't have models, if you don't have education, if you don't have this critical thinking. I thought, I don't want for people to say, "Oh, you're from Mexico, then you must be a hotel worker," which there is nothing wrong with that. But it's just I believed it. That also makes me angry now, not being able to push back against it and being part of the status quo. I'm not anymore.

Good. Now can you talk to us a little about coming here the second time?

I came to my mother's house. I also knew that being at my mother's house was going to be temporary because that was a household I never, never, never enjoyed being in. I remember enrolling in a community college.

Where is this?

In Southern California as well, in Los Angeles. Before I came in, the schoolyear had already started. My very first education school that I came in contact with was an adult school. I used to go at nights and that's where—adult school?

Yes, it's called adult school.

Okay. I went there because I was already a young adult. I remember that it was too late for me to join the community college. I had to wait until the next semester. In the meantime, I used to go every night there. I remember I even took my GED. It's like, I'm already here, so okay. I don't

know if my schooling from back home was valid here. I don't remember. But I just thought, oh, why not? I took my GED. I loved it also. I have my little GED diploma. I also took ESL courses.

Then in January is when I could join the community college. The first semester or two, undergraduate would be like seven years—no, not that much, but it did take me the four. It took me a lot longer. I took nothing but—I remember vocabulary classes, ESL classes. I took a course in which they taught you slangs and things like that, not necessarily slangs. It has a name, but I cannot remember it. More colloquial English. I remember thinking, I want to know the academic and the formal English, but I also want to be able to know the more colloquial English, and so I took a class for that.

Did you find it was very useful?

Yes. Yes, for the first time I knew what 'pulling my leg' was. Don't pull my leg, or break a leg. Things that would have made no sense if I hadn't taken that. Or I'll take a raincheck. I loved being able to use that language because I was like, I almost sound like a native. I almost understand like a native. Yes, it was wonderful. My teacher, Mrs. McDonalds, made the whole difference. She was probably my favorite teacher from that period. She is the one that taught me slang.

What did you aspire to get your degree in?

I didn't really know what it was, but then I started working and I started getting into the business world and that drew me to the business. I was good at numbers. I was good at accounting. I got my AA in business management. The buzzword back then—all my friends were going into international business. I thought, my two passions; I'm an international student and I'm in business, so I think it's just the natural step to take. But it was more that I was being a follower. That's the truth. I didn't really know what it was and most of my friends were going towards that

major. For the AA, I got it in business administration. Then for my BA, I got it in international business with a concentration in Spanish. But it was all because I was influenced not only because of my friends, but mostly I was doing work in an office for a business.

Did you find that there was any guidance for you or your friends or international students on how to go to these American colleges?

Not at all. That's why we relied so much on each other because we were all first-generation students, all of us.

What was that like then? It must have been very different to what it is like now.

First of all, I don't know how it is like right now. I'm a little out of touch. I don't know how it is for your generation or probably my kids' generation. My kids didn't have to go through what I went through. I really don't know. But back then, gee, you didn't think about it. You just did what you had to do because it was, again, a matter of survival for everybody I knew. You didn't stop and think, okay, who's going to help me? Help wasn't going to come from anyplace, from anybody. Help was going to come from you. You tried to look up to colleagues or friends that were one or two semesters ahead of you. They would be the ones who would tell you, "This is what you would do." But I don't remember having a lot of resources. That doesn't mean that there were not resources in those institutions. That just means that I didn't know about them. I relied heavily, heavily on those before me, my friends, my colleagues before me. I tried applying for financial aid once; I didn't get it, probably because I didn't make the applications—I don't know. Something happened. I definitely needed the help, but I didn't get it. I stopped trying. But the advice and the help came mainly from other friends and other colleagues who were in the same situation.

It was like a network and you would tell one another.

Yes. They were all in the same situation. We were either immigrants or they were Mexican Americans or from Latin American decent, but first generation.

What jobs did you have while you were going to school? You mentioned one.

Yes. I remember my mom got me a temporary job at the place where she was working. It was for a company that takes all the portraits for schools. I loved, loved, loved it. What did I do? I can't remember. It wasn't office work, but it wasn't manual work, either. It was like sorting and all the types of pictures and taking boxes, like negatives, from one place to another. It wasn't office, but it wasn't manual, either. It was sort of in between and it was temporary.

The very first job I was able to get by myself was at Taco Bell, and I'm really, really, really proud of it because it was the first interview I held in English with an Indian supervisor. He hired me on the spot, so that's my greatest accomplishment, to date.

Did you prepare for your first interview?

I didn't. I just showed up. There were no job announcements. I just went to the closest Taco Bell because I liked eating there. I didn't even know I would have free stuff or anything. I just thought, I can come here; I don't have a car, but I can walk; I like this; I like the food. I just showed up and I said, "I would like to fill out an application." I don't even know if I said it correctly, but they gave me the application.

You asked me earlier: What did you inherit, or something, from your grandmother? I guess my people skills, also. For some reason, adults usually like me, and so it was the same case with this supervisor. He interviewed me right there. I don't remember what he asked me. I must have answered the right things. He must have understood me well enough. I had a job the next day.

MH: *You mentioned liking the food. There is always this debate between Mexicans and Mexican Americans that is Taco Bell like real Mexican food?*

Oh, it is not, I'm sorry to say. I'm sorry to say it is not. If Taco Bell wants to come to my country and say, "I'm going to sell you tacos," oh no, you're not because these are not tacos. You're not coming here and telling me, "I'm going to sell you tacos." Taco Bell has never been successful in Mexico for that very reason. But I recognized we're in the U.S. now. I like my Tex-Mex food because that's more what I would consider Tex-Mex. I don't have an issue as long as you don't try to sell it to me as authentic food.

You don't want to brand it as so.

Yes. If you want to sell it to me as authentic food, I will be the most oppositional person telling you, "Huh-uh, no." But if you know your place and you know your Tex-Mex and if you know your niche, I'm good with that. I'm going to be a customer, yes.

No, I didn't relate it to my authentic tacos at home. That's why I didn't have an issue with it. But that's a good question.

When you were at community college, was there a group of immigrants—you mentioned the network before. How big was that network?

Remember I told you I first started in ESL classes, right? That doesn't mean that all of us that were there were Latin American, but the great majority of us were, in numbers. From there you start to form your first friendships and then from that ESL group they start to introduce you to people that either came here a lot younger than I did or that weren't Mexican Americans; in other words, that still are close to their roots, but they already are American. They helped a great deal. Did I have a huge network? Not really. We're talking about probably a dozen, maybe, that I was sort of in close contact. Of those, very few were either Mexican or immigrants like me who came

as adults. Others, the ones that helped me a lot, was the ones who already knew how to navigate the system either because they were born here or came here way before me, or Latin Americans who had a little bit more experience who came as adults, but not within the last six months; they had been living here a year or two, five, whatever.

To be honest that group of Latin American friends who had been living here longer than I had and knew how to navigate the system a little bit better, those were the ones who provided the most help navigating college for me. They told me what to do, how to fill out the forms. Many of us went to the same institutions following each other. I went to the higher education institution I chose because I had friends from community college there. I knew that I wasn't going to be navigating the new system alone and that's what brought me there.

Once you gained those skills, were you also helping the newer students that came after you?

That is a very, very interesting question because once I gained those skills as a young adult, I started—remember when I first started my college education, I was living at home, but I didn't want to live at home that much; it was just a temporary thing. I left home. I started working full-time. I put myself through college, no financial aid whatsoever because I didn't know how to access it. The first time I tried, it was a failure, so I never tried again. I put myself through college.

I don't remember, to be honest with you, looking out for other people. I never would have turned my back if somebody would have asked me. But actively, no, because I was too busy surviving a full-time job, paying for everything that I had to pay. I remember I started work at six in order for me to be able to leave at four, drive, and then start my classes from five to ten, and then go home and do that all over again. To be honest, I don't remember actively helping others.

I was sort of isolated because I went to college just to take classes. That's something that also kind of pains me from my undergrad. I had to do a lot of sacrifices. I never belonged to a club. I never belonged to anything. I wanted to, but that was not—I was a nontraditional student in that sense. I always had to, "I can't stay because I have to work; I can't join this because I have things to do." I was too busy putting myself through college.

I'm sure when somebody needed information or things like that I did provide that. If I actively looked for those that needed help, I would lie if I said yes. No. I was still in survival mode once more.

Yes. Did you have any experiences of cultural shock when you came over the second time around?

Yes. I remember when I first got into my mother's house and turned on the TV, advertisement after advertisement. I felt like I was being bombarded. I make this motion, like things out of the TV coming at me, because they were advertising food and clothes and all kinds of things; all this consumerism. Is that a word, consumerism? Consumption, consumption, consumption. It was like, oh my goodness. It was something that I didn't experience back home and it was really shocking for me. You turn on the TV and you're constantly bombarded, *buy, buy, buy*.

Hyper capitalist Americans.

Yes.

BT: Give me historical context. When was this again? What year?

Mid-eighties. In the eighties. Mid-eighties, I would say, mid to late eighties. That was shocking.

Another shocking thing was the line between good and bad. In Mexico, in my upbringing, there was no doubt this is good and this is bad, especially coming from a Catholic background, and Americans are a family like mine. This is good and this is bad. I remember

thinking, wow, the gray area here, oh my goodness. I wouldn't be able to tell what's good and what's bad because there are a lot of things that are permissible. I thought, how do people know when they're doing something good or something bad if the gray area is so ambiguous? Back then I liked it A or B; good or bad; black or white. It made it easy for me to make decisions. I don't think like that anymore. I like the gray area. I understand that gray is beautiful. But back then it was...

It was more of a negative?

Being black and white, knowing this is good and this is bad and having that definite line, I think was good for me growing up to keep me out of trouble, but then the problems started. I'll give you an example. People who do drugs are bad people, are the worst kind; they're bad people; they might hurt you. People who don't do drugs are always good. Well, then guess what? One of my cousins who is also almost like my brother, the one that I grew up with, started doing drugs and started drinking. I was like, okay, this is not a bad person, so how do I do that? Having sex before being married, oh, that's such a sin. Then I came here and it's like, ah, it's a natural thing. What's the big deal about that? Of course, it can lead to other things like unwanted pregnancies and things like that, but there's also preventive measures. I started to realize why that gray area was necessary. But growing up it helped me. It helped me from making stupid decisions, if you will. Black and white served its purpose, but then I'm glad I didn't stay there. Then I started to realize why the gray areas were not only good, but they were necessary. Not everything is black and white. Not everybody is just good or bad. There's always that yin-yang sort of.

That was something you kind of embraced about the culture here. Was there anything else that you—

Can I ask another question related to that? You described yourself earlier as culturally Catholic. Did it coincide with becoming less religiously Catholic, you know what I mean, that evolution or change?

It didn't happen overnight. Again, I come from a very, very devout family, a very conservative family, and they hold their religious beliefs very high. But I must also say my grandma was also open-minded. She held her religious beliefs, but she was not a fanatic, and that's something I appreciate. She was open to new ideas, to new knowledge, so that's another thing I got from her, learning to be open. This was very gradual, very gradual. But when I really made the transition to calling myself "I'm no longer religious," it was as an adult in my thirties as a result of another experience that we might get to it, but that's when it started, my early twenties, with this questioning. Even in Mexico when I switched from private to public that's when the transition slowly started. I have a definite point where I can tell you. It took a decade that little by little I started to see, hmm, no, this belief system no longer fits what I believe. I remember precisely when we were reciting in mass the *El Credo*, the creed. I don't know how to translate it. I said to myself, "No, I can no longer recite this. I no longer believe this." I stopped. But that was in my thirties. We'll get there.

I want to ask about after you finished your undergrad. What did you pursue after that?

After that I went back home, happy, because finally my dream had been completed after six years of being here. I remember I went back so full of hope and dreams. *I'm going to reunite with my grandparents.* I still get emotional because this is a new beginning for me and you can tell I haven't really worked it to the point that I cannot get emotion. This is an area that needs a lot of work still. I went back because my dream was—being here in the U.S. had only been a parenthesis—I was going to come back and buy a house and bring my grandparents with me.

Remember my aunt died, so my cousins who are like my brothers became sort of parentless. They were left without parents even though they had the dad. My goal was to reunite the family and just buy a big house and bring my grandparents along and my brothers, well, my cousins, but they were my brothers, three cousins who are my brothers, and just be a happy family like in old times.

I get home. I get to Guadalajara. I never stopped going. Every vacation opportunity I had I went back, but this was the time that I was never going to come back again to the U.S. at least on a permanent basis. Unfortunately, I get there and Mexico is undergoing—this is in the mid-nineties—Mexico is undergoing the worst recession that we have experienced in modern times, the worst. I was very hopeful because in Guadalajara a lot of American companies started establishing themselves there. At that time in the nineties Guadalajara was called the Mexican Silicon Valley.

What companies, what major ones?

Hewlett-Packard. This was pre-Google and pre-Facebook and pre all of that. All the technology. No, not Microsoft. I remember Hewlett-Packard. I can't remember. IBM. Sony. I don't know. Technology, technology all around. I thought, okay, I'm going to be very well positioned. I speak English. I have a passport. I can travel. I'm an international business graduate. I'm perfect.

At that time my father worked for Kodak. You probably don't—Kodak is—

Yes, the photo company.

Oh yes, you know, yes. My father worked there and I thought, okay, he knows people. He might be able to get me in. He got me interviews, but nobody would hire me, not even as an intern. I begged and begged. "Don't hire me, just let me be an intern for you. I will not ask for a salary until you can pay me. I will not even ask you to do it retroactive." Nobody would.

If they weren't even hiring someone with your qualifications, who were they hiring?

Nobody. They were just trying to keep afloat. They were letting people go. They were trying to keep afloat. I can understand that. But what I don't understand is why wouldn't they keep me as an intern? But, oh well. When I ran out of my savings, I started pulling from my credit card, but then I knew that that wasn't going to be sustainable.

Then again, here comes my mourning again. It came the time I realized I had to go back. I know this is a wonderful place to be and I realize that, but that's not where I wanted to be. That meant again leaving my family, leaving my grandparents, and that was the second time that I had to do this. But I remember in the plane—and this is when I started getting that consciousness—I kept thinking, I cannot believe I'm crying when a lot of people here would be so thankful to be in my shoes. There was this contradiction within me, like I know I shouldn't be feeling this way, but I am because this is not where I want to be.

I don't know if I ever will be able to recover from that because that's a life you always wanted to have that you never had the opportunity. But then I understand. I understand why that was because my life here is wonderful. It's wonderful. I met people like you. I have my children. I met my husband. It's wonderful. It has been so fulfilling. In the personal realm, in the professional realm, I have been able to accomplish everything I wanted to, but I wish...

That dream.

Yes. That was an unfulfilled dream. I'm fifty-one years old. I still dream of the day when I will be able to go back home. I don't know, I got carried away and a little distracted. I don't remember what the question was.

You were telling me about—well, now you're return.

My return, yes. I'm in the plane and I'm thinking all these things. I'm crying my eyeballs out and people around me are looking at me, the flight attendants and everybody, like I had lost someone. I was acting like if I went to a funeral, really, believe me. The way you see me here right now, crying my eyeballs out, that's how I was in the plane because I just couldn't help it. In a way I came from a funeral almost. I came from a funeral because it was an unfulfilled dream.

I got here. Thank goodness, the company that I had always worked for took me back, so I started working. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go back to get my master's eventually, but then because that had been very, very difficult, so I wanted to give myself a little breathing time. Then in that transition of not knowing what to do, like what now, I met my husband who was in the exact same situation. He was here. He is originally from Spain. Exact same situation. He came here to do some higher education and then went back to his country, no opportunities there, and then came back to finish his licenses. I was already a graduate and he was in the tail end. We met and we realized that we both had a broken dream. We won't be able to come back to our home countries under our terms.

We got married and we started family and I decided to become a stay-at-home mom and raise my children because definitely I was influenced by my own childhood. Unfortunately I thought, my children will not have this wonderful grandma. Sorry, Mom. But I knew my children would not have this wonderful grandmother to raise them, and that's not why I had children. I wanted to experience everything.

I worked for a little bit with my first child and then it broke my heart that I got home and my mom would say, "Oh, she said the first words." I was like, oh no. what made me realize I'm leaving my work right now, like tomorrow, was one day my daughter said something. My mom used to watch a lot of TV, *novelas* and things like that, and my daughter repeated something, like

a commercial. Not that there's anything wrong with it, but I was thinking, um, I don't know if this is the kind of exposure I want my child to have. Bless her heart, my mother was doing her best, but that was not the stimulation I wanted my child to have and I knew I could do better. That's when I knew, no, this is not working out for me. I left literally the next day or the next week or whatever.

My husband and I were in agreement that it was best for me if I stayed home. I stayed home for ten years. I homeschooled them in those ten years. I became aware of the Montessori Method. To this day I swear by it. I would never do anything different for ages zero to six, zero to five probably. I became really knowledgeable. I read every book. My husband's aunt was always at Montessori school, so she shared everything with me. She is the most wonderful, most experienced. She's been a Montessori teacher for probably thirty years or more. She taught me everything that she knows and she trained me. My children started going to a Montessori school and then I didn't like it because I knew what a good Montessori school could be.

Where is this?

By this time we were living in Salt Lake City. They went to a Montessori school, and I told my husband, "I think I can do a better job schooling them. Instead of spending the money on their schooling, give me the money and I'll start buying the materials and I'll homeschool them." My house became a little Montessori school.

That's amazing.

Then we moved to L.A. All my friends and siblings started bringing their own kids, so I did that in my little school.

You taught all of them?

Yes. Then their friends started bringing others, and so I did that for seven years.

You were a Montessori teacher.

Yes. I'm sorry. Strangely, surprisingly, I never talk about those years as productive years. I never talk about those years as—you asked me what did you do? Oh, I was a stay-at-home mom for ten years. It's until recently that I'm starting to recognize that what I did was valuable. What I did, I did it for seven years. I opened up my own homebased little, tiny Montessori school. But when somebody interviews me for jobs and things like that, I always say, "Oh, there was a ten-year gap." It's not until they probe that I come back to, "Oh yes, my Montessori." I don't know why I never saw that as valuable. It's now that I'm starting to realize that that was really valuable. I did things.

Yes. They're very trendy, at least nowadays as I'm going through the College of Ed. We talk about the benefits of having that kind of schooling. Essentially with the help of your aunt you were able to develop this. That's amazing.

But she is amazing. I've walked into other Montessori schools and I can immediately tell they're using the name, but they're not using the method.

How many methods did you use?

Well, it's very, very indirect, very indirect. I loved it. In my Montessori years? What I loved about it is, for example, you teach children with concrete stuff, everything that you teach the child. There is no abstract concepts to teach the child. You don't talk to the child about *dah, dah, dah*. Everything that you teach the child has to be some manipulative. Then from there you transition them from manipulatives, from the concrete to the abstract. There's always an order. There's always a method. Kids are doing something that they don't really know that you're preparing them for something else. The learning is so natural. I loved that you had to put a lot of care into the environment. It's what they called the prepared environment. There is nothing the

child cannot touch there, but there's always an order. Before you can work on this, you need to first master that, and they know it. It's not an imposition. They know that before you can work with harder stuff, you need to know how to do the easier stuff. They understand that you need basic knowledge and foundations in order to move on to more difficult or abstract things.

I could go on and on, but for lack of time. Anytime you want I can talk to you about it. It's very well designed. If it's implemented properly, I love it. Unfortunately, there's not a body that oversees it, so anybody can say it's Montessori when they're really not, so that's the drawback to it.

Out of curiosity, was the majority of teaching done in your home, physical home?

Yes. I converted our garage. I had to get permissions and all of that. I didn't want to make this a school-school because I still wanted to take care of my children. The way we did it is I inquired with the city and they said, "You cannot have more than..." I can't remember the number, maybe ten. I cannot remember clearly. They said, "You can operate it as a daycare and nobody can tell you cannot teach Montessori in your daycare." It was opened as a daycare, but it was managed and run as a Montessori school. I didn't offer after care. My children came from eight to twelve, I believe it was, because the Montessori cycle is three hours. I didn't offer after care. I didn't offer any of that. The parents that brought me their children were really committed parents. They didn't bring me their children to be a babysitter. They believed in the system and they believed in what I was doing. Yes, that was a wonderful time.

How did you separate schooling life from home life as both their mother and their teacher?

I didn't. They've always been together. If you ask any of my children, they cannot draw the line between home and school. Home was always school; school was always home, always, always, always. Even before I had this daycare Montessori—it wasn't really a daycare. It was really a

Montessori school, but filed under a daycare. But even before I formally started doing that I always had a place in my house, always, always. My children opened their eyes and there was an educational thing somewhere. That was one of the criticisms from my family. “Ah, you’re going to make your children so sick of education.” I was like, “I disagree. You’re stimulating them. It depends on how you do it, how you stimulate them.” I was always that. To date, my nephews and nieces don’t call me auntie or *tía*; they call me teacher.

Really?

Yes. I’m the teacher family. “Teacher, teacher.” At family reunions I’m literally that teacher.

That’s amazing. You homeschooled from what grades?

When I told my husband, “Give me the money and I’ll just buy the materials and set up our school in our basement,” my oldest was three and my youngest was one. Then when we moved from Salt Lake to Los Angeles, my daughter was five. The age group that I taught was my own children, zero to six; the children that came to my little school, two to six. They left my school when they were going into first grade.

What was the transition like into public school for them?

Horrible, and I knew it. I knew it because that’s one of the things that my husband’s auntie said. “It’s going to be a very, very hard transition.” It didn’t fail. My own children and those that were with me that didn’t belong to the family would come back to me and invariably what they all would say would be, “My teacher doesn’t listen to me,” and, “My teacher doesn’t respect me.” Those were the two things that when they were in public school they didn’t feel heard or respected.

This is in L.A. still, right?

Yes. And from L.A. we came here.

Now, as their mother how did you—was there any help for them to help them transition over, or did they just dislike public schooling for the rest of the time?

My own children, when we were in L.A., the area that we were living at the time, it's a very expensive city and we couldn't afford that because I wasn't working, so we lived in a place that we could afford. Unfortunately, the drawback to that was that the schools around us were not the best, and so we opted for a Christian private school. If I had to do it over again, I would not go directly to a public school, but back then we thought that was the best decision for us. But we knew that they would go to private school up until only a certain point. When I broke away from that private school that's when I said, "Beyond this, they can handle anything that comes to them." Even in private schools, my own children would say—it's the traditional method. It was different for them. When they made the transition to public school, it was when they were older and they were able to manage it. As a matter of fact—I have a daughter, son, daughter—my son was never cut for traditional schooling, never. He never did well in traditional schooling. Thank goodness, in 2009 we moved to Vegas. Something that I'm really grateful for in Vegas is that Vegas gave me the opportunity to have a child in private, a child in charter Montessori, and a child in public until we transitioned all to public.

They didn't have any support in those transitions, but I'll tell you they didn't need it because they had me. I'm always thinking, what happens to the children that don't have that parent who knows how to navigate the system? What happens to the children that don't have that parent who knows? If my child is not responding well in traditional education, there's other options for me. What happens to those children whose parent cannot advocate for them? I'll tell you a lot of times I had to advocate for my children. Sometimes they wouldn't be offered honors or AB courses. I had to be there and ask for my children to be placed in those courses. This is

always in the back of my mind. I speak the language. I know the system. I know what to do. I can advocate for them. But what about the thousands that don't have that parental figure? That's another struggle.

Yes, definitely, especially if the teacher who is meant to advocate for them doesn't do it, then it's put on the parents or the guardians or whoever.

You said you moved to Las Vegas in 2009. What were your reasons for coming to Vegas?

My husband had better opportunities here. We saw the opportunity and we took it. L.A., as I said, it's a very, very expensive city. We lived comfortably, but we knew that we had to face college expenses at some point and we were not positioning ourselves to do that. My husband had the opportunity to come to Las Vegas. He kept the same salary, but because housing was less expensive here and we didn't have to pay state taxes that was automatically like a raise for us. There were better opportunities for him. Financially it was a good move for us.

Had you been to Las Vegas before?

Yes, but never, never, never considered in a million years living here. As a matter of fact, I was very against the idea. I almost came against my will. Like, I'm doing this only because I know it's a good move, but I don't like it; I don't want it. Now I don't want to leave. I fell in love with Vegas.

What were your perceptions of Las Vegas or even your first impressions, whichever one you're more comfortable answering?

Of course, everybody all over the world knows that this is the capital of entertainment and gambling and all of that. I didn't see it necessarily as Sin City; that wasn't really what came to mind. I had been here. I had been to casinos and things like that. All I knew were the nightlife

and cheap housing, the cheap, cheap, cheap housing. Those were the stereotypical images that came to me. Okay, lots of gambling. I had the image of the Strip on one side and lots, lots, lots of housing complexes; that's how I envisioned it, nothing in between, just in the middle of a desert, even though I had been here. But when I moved here that was my mental image, the Strip and then a whole bunch of housing complexes around and nothing else, no schools, no churches, no universities, nothing else. But then I was pleasantly surprised.

What was that first couple of months like transitioning to the Las Vegas culture?

It was really, really hard because I remember it was, again, one of those tail end periods. We bought our house very, very cheaply. We were very happy about it. But the drawback to that was every time we applied for a house, we never would get it because a lot of Chinese investors were paying cash for it. Here we were, perfect credit, but we didn't have the cash. House after house after house was taken from us because we were literally told, "There is a Chinese person that bought it because they had the cash." For about two or three months we had to live out of the long-stay hotels, and that was a fun experience, but it got to be tough after a while. Then after that we finally were able to find a nice affordable house in a better neighborhood than we were living in L.A., but it was not an upscale neighborhood here, but it was a decent neighborhood.

Where was it?

Henderson. There were more trendy places to live, but we knew we couldn't afford them. Something that my husband and I have always been very, very careful about is as far as housing is concerned, we will never live beyond our means because we know we need that money. We would much rather spend that money on preparing for college and education. A house can always come. We will always be able to have better jobs and better opportunities. But if we miss

that window of opportunity for education for our children, it may, but it may not come back. That was always clear for us. The priority as far as finances was always schooling.

What did your husband come to do in Vegas? What was his career here?

He is a pilot. Being a pilot in Spain, his country, is extremely obscenely expensive. It's very expensive. It was cheaper to come and get licenses and flying hours. Just like you have to do service hours, they also have to do flying hours before they can get a real job. His family couldn't have afforded it in Spain.

Where did he get his pilot's license?

In L.A. as well, a flying school. I really can't remember, but it was a school in L.A.

I don't know if this is how it works, but were you ever able to go on the planes with him?

One of the best benefits he has is we're able to fly for free, those who are under him. What do you call that? Beneficiaries? Dependents. My children are getting to be adults. They're still able to be his dependents because they're going to college full-time, but once they graduate they won't be able to benefit from that. Children, spouse and parents of the employee fly for free. That's how I go to all my conferences.

Very nice. You spoke about your bachelor's degree. I don't know if somewhere in there I missed when you began your master's degree.

Yes. Ten years of staying at home and seven years of teaching. I remember my last year of teaching in Montessori I had a neurodiverse student whose parent was in denial and I didn't know how to handle that. I didn't know how to handle that situation and I decided to go back to school. At this point I knew my passion was no longer business. My business days were long gone. I wanted to do education. I closed my school. We were getting ready to move here, also; that was in 2008. I closed my school. I started looking for a master's program first in Montessori;

there were none. Then I thought, okay, what's the next best thing? I love that international component, like we were talking earlier. An international component must always be in my professional life, always. I'm not a local type of person. I'm not a national type of person. I'm a transnational in that sense. I thought something that has to do with international and I love education. Fortunately for me, Drexel University back east was offering an online master's program in international education, so I took it. Thanks to that half in L.A. and half here I was able to finish it.

From here I became hooked and addicted to graduate school, and that's when I decided, why not a PhD? The PhD happened because during the master's—my master's in my mind was my ceiling. During my master's, one of our textbooks was written by an Argentinian author, and for the first time in my life I saw a Latin American person in that position by reading his books. I went ahead and contacted him. I emailed him. He was teaching at UCLA. He not only answered to me, which I was, uh, he not only responded to my mail, but he invited me to attend to shadow one of his classes. That's when I knew I'm not stopping here. That was mid-master's and for the first time that's when I knew a PhD is available to someone like me. He did, so can I. Here I am.

What's this author's name?

Dr. Carlos Alberto Torres. He is in comparative international education at UCLA, Dr. Carlos Alberto Torres. Other than inviting me to his class, I cannot honestly say he was a mentor, no. He opened my mind to the possibility of a Latino and a Latina can have PhDs, something that I had never seen before. He opened my mind to that. But I couldn't really accredit him with being a mentor. He wasn't a mentor. He was someone who opened my mind. By just answering my email and inviting me to that class made the world of difference to me.

Who were some of our mentors?

At UNLV and they're all females. They're all women. My chair from my doctoral program. Once I determined I wanted to pursue a PhD, then I started to see what was available to me because I didn't want to do it online anymore. Then I found Dr. Clark who is in multicultural education. To be honest, what hooked me was not multicultural at all or cultural studies at all. What hooked me out of that program, I stumbled upon the cultural studies, multicultural education, and international education program. I didn't care about multicultural. I didn't care about cultural studies. I saw international education and I was like, uh, my dream come true, and that's why I applied. Once I got here I realized that the international educational component was almost taken out because the faculty that developed it had left, so I was left with multicultural and cultural and now they became my passion, multicultural.

Mentors. Dr. [Christine] Clark who interviewed me for my doctoral degree. In my interview I remember saying, "I don't know if I have much to offer because I have been out of school for ten years." And she stopped me right there and she scolded me and she said to me, "Don't you ever, ever say you haven't done anything. You said you had opened a little Montessori school or daycare." And I said, "Yes, but I didn't think that counted." "Of course it counts. You said you've been a mother for *dah, dah, dah*." "Yes." "You said you homeschooled your children." "I did all these things, but what do they have to do with my PhD?" I couldn't make those connections, and she was the first one who helped me make those connections and really see me as valuable for all the things that I did outside formal schooling and working outside of home.

Then she became my chair and she introduced me to other powerful women. Dr. Anita Revilla, she was another one. She was the first faculty of Latino decent. She was the first Tejana-Mexicana; I think that's how she introduced herself. Wow. She was just like Carlos Alberto

Torres was my model of I can pursue a PhD; Dr. Revilla was the one who opened my world of possibilities to I can also be a professor someday and be to others what she's being to me. That representation, I cannot tell you—well, I don't have to tell you, right? That representation is just so, so important for people of color in general, like me.

Especially in higher education, it's so hard to find.

Yes. The colleagues, we formed a really, really great cohort of strong women, all of them women of color. The only non-person-of-color that was my mentor was Dr. Clark, but, then again, she acts like a person of color, so I see her almost like a person of color. I say 'us' not because of the color of her skin, but she gets me and not everybody gets you. Not everybody gets the struggles that you go through. Not everybody can sympathize with the types of things that you struggle with that others cannot. People in non-minority positions, they don't have to think about many things that you do, and sometimes there is that disconnect. I have had wonderful, wonderful teachers and professors, but there is not that sense of, oh, they get me; they know where I'm coming from. My colleagues from my cohort: Dr. Clark, Dr. Revilla, and strong women that I have met in academia, and they're all women. I didn't realize it until somebody else interviewed me and this came up. I was like, oh yes, I have no men.

That's so rare, but it's amazing.

I guess that's why I realized I was a feminist. Oh, I forgot to identify myself as a feminist as well, but yes. I've always been. I just didn't have the language or that knowledge; that theory. Now I have the theory and I have the language and I have the disposition and I have the skills.

Did you learn most of this language during your doctoral program?

Yes, it came late to me. It came late. I wish I would have had this in my teenage years, in my early twenties. But Dr. Clark always says, “The universe is perfect. It came to you when it had to come to you.”

One of the things I must mention here is all these women and all these mentors prepared me and my program gave me the language because what I did not know back then and when I entered the program was that I was going to become the mother of an LGBTQ child. That’s really important for me. Had it not been for this background knowledge and these women and the PhD program, I don’t know that I would have been able to navigate that. Now I proudly say I am a mother of a queer child. A lot of people misunderstand the word *queer*, but I’m reclaiming it. I not only accept her, but I embrace her.

I really wanted to ask you about that too. What have you learned from your daughter, her being part of the LGBTQ-plus community? How has that shaped Martha?

She has pushed my boundaries, coming from the Catholic world, et cetera, et cetera. She has pushed my boundaries. She has made me grow. She has made me—again, I didn’t think I was going to get emotional, but this is emotional in a proud sense, not in a mourning sense, okay? She has made me a so much better parent. What the religion couldn’t accomplish, which was compassion—we talk about religious people, myself included when I was—we talk about being compassionate and being accepting and all of that, but I didn’t feel like I really lived it. I never really did. Then here comes this child who is pushing me. That’s when I really learned unconditional love. I wasn’t prepared. We never imagined. She never gave signs, and there are such things, but she never gave signs that she had a different preference. I never planned to be a parent...I never, never...although I must also admit there was always, always an ally to the LGBTQ community, always. I always voted for the rights, always. Then here in the program I

started knowing people. A lot of my colleagues queer, both male and female, and they introduced me to their struggles. When my daughter comes out to us in the middle of the program, I wasn't at all prepared. We had a bumpy start. But, thank goodness—and you can also ask her—I became not only her greatest ally, but LGBTQs in general. Now my friends who are dealing with that come to me.

What advice do you give them?

First of all, be open. Let your child come to you and let your child know that no matter what they tell you—one of the things that my daughter said, and I hear this often, is, “One of the greatest fears is that our parents, our families are going to reject us.” No matter what you hear from that child, never, never, never give the impression that, oh, I'm disappointed; whatever. It doesn't change. Nothing changes. The only thing that changes is they're going to have more struggles, they're going to have more barriers, there's more strikes. In the case of my daughter, not only is she a person of color of mixed decent, because there's a Filipino, there's a Mexican, there's a Spanish mixture in her, but she is a person of color, she's a woman, and she's a queer woman. But I try to equip her with all. I tried to empower her. In my household I empower my girls like there is no tomorrow.

I don't know if this is right or wrong, but I know that my child being a male, he'll have it a little bit easier. There will be things that my son will not have to think about that my daughters will have to think about. Talking about that sort of equity, as far as patriarchy and things like that, my son is a little bit ahead. I need to make sure that my daughters at least have that empowerment to know that they can do it, and especially, especially—do you remember when you were my student, the first step, the second step and the third step, and you have to do the

most for the one that is at the lowest step? That would be my queer child, and then would be my other girl, and then would be my boy. That's how I sort of empower them.

I want to know a little bit more about your dissertation.

Okay. I'm going to give you the three-minute elevator talk.

Being an immigrant, I wanted to do something about immigration. It was around the time when Trump became elected, so that was a hot topic. What I realized was I had to do something that had to do with something international; I had to do something that had to do with immigration, me being an immigrant. I found this phenomenon of deported parents that were forced to bring their children with them because their children couldn't stay, and their children were U.S.-born children, American citizens. I started to wonder, what happens to these children? Once they go to Mexico they disappear from here. They disappear from the radar. Nobody questions, where are they? What happens to them?

I have close ties with people in Tijuana with the educational system. There is a big population of deported parents that get established in Tijuana. In a nutshell, I follow these transnational U.S.-born students who go to Mexico as a result of the deportation of their parents. What I found was that once in Mexico theoretically they're supposed to be Mexican citizens, but in practice, because they don't have documentation, they become undocumented in Mexico.

It's the reverse.

Yes, exactly. What their parents struggled with here, now the children struggle with in Mexico. What does that mean? That means they do not have access to social services, like health services, and if they don't get their documentation in check by the age of eighteen, which is adulthood, they will not be able to apply for higher education. You need to have Mexican documentation to have access to higher education.

Within my dissertation I also learned that the Mexican government surprisingly responded to Trump's threats and provided dual citizenship with minimum documentation, so that was a good unexpected finding.

BT: There was a more humanistic response on the Mexican side than we are demonstrating on the U.S. side.

Yes. Yes, in theory. But then when you look at, is Mexico really enacting those laws? You see that there's also barriers, but they're doing it. Just to share, I had three families that participated in my study, and I had eight children. From those eight children, at least four were able to get their documentation, but four others didn't.

It's a Catch-22.

Yes. That's my research.

Part of your research and a term I'm very interested in hearing more about is—and let me know if I'm saying this right—transnational sensitive teaching practice?

Yes. Let me talk to you a little bit about it. I also found that these kids obviously had a lot of obstacles and barriers once they entered school. Some of them did not speak any Spanish at all. Some of them spoke Spanish, but not academic Spanish. I know what that is. They were failing at schools. Something that helped them overcome that language barrier of academic Spanish specifically was the fact that if they had what I call a transnational sensitive teacher, meaning if that teacher had it in them to recognize these children were transnational; they were not like the rest of the children, when you come to the United States you look a little bit different typically, right? A little bit. When you go to Mexico, you look like everybody else in the classroom with thirty children. Nobody knows you don't speak the language. Nobody knows that you are from the U.S. Nobody knows that you were not born there. Nobody knows that you need help. These

teachers that have that transnational sensitivity were teachers in the border that themselves had had the opportunity in the past to cross the border and do some kind of schooling in the U.S. or they had children who were doing. They had some type of border-crossing experience, and that border-crossing experience gave them that special sensitivity to get that child. Something that I found was even when the teachers realized these kids did not speak Spanish, some of them would not help them. Some of them refused, actually, to help them. It was these teachers with that transnational experience that were receptive in helping and accommodating, and those children were the most successful academically, the ones that had that. But we don't have a teacher training like that.

No, and that's what I was going to ask. This is your research, but that doesn't necessarily mean we have all these answers yet.

We don't. There's people working on it, but it's a very, very emerging field because not a lot of people see the need for it. Let me tell you what the need for it is. These children that go back, there's over a half a million. The number, I'm sure, must be a lot higher because we're talking about 2010 Census information. There was a half a million children. Right now that number could be double.

Invariably, all of the ones that I interviewed talk about coming back when they're adults. Can you imagine if they don't have the education, if they don't have the means? They are going to come here, as a society how are we going to welcome them? I don't know the word. Integrate them. How are we going to integrate them? Nobody thinks about that. What about the fact that they're American citizens and they don't have rights?

The mothers I interviewed would say, "I wish there was a program in which we could cross the border and go to San Diego or a border city in which monthly or bimonthly, quarterly

they could get a physical, a yearly physical, dental coverage, something.” They don’t have anything there.

Even though they’re deserving of all the rights of the other citizens.

BT: I had no idea that many children could be affected. It’s just all overwhelming.

If I could share something with you really quick? I’m a teacher right now and I have this one student who is scared of that happening to him.

I know. I only say I know because you should hear the stories of deportation. The trauma...I only peeked a little bit about their educational experiences, but invariably they all go together. The trauma that they experience first because of the parents, the trauma here because the parents could get deported. It was a very, very surprising phenomenon because then in Mexico I expected this trauma to continue with the children, but then in Mexico the trauma came from the parents; that sense of loss that I just displayed right here, like my life was...I couldn’t fulfill it. That’s exactly what I felt with the parents because their life was here. It’s that cross almost. In the United States parents are suffering, but they’re in a place where they almost want to be, but the kids have this constant trauma. Then they go and the parents are now the ones that are in this trauma for their loss and the children, believe it or not, they adapt. They adapt. It doesn’t mean that they’re well. It doesn’t mean that they live under the best conditions. But in Mexico they adapted better than the parent. It also has to do with age. As an adult it’s harder, definitely.

The only thing I could probably say is reach out and raise them. There’s only so much we can do. But that trauma, we have to talk about it, definitely.

I’m so glad that more people are going into this type of research, transnational. You were telling me transnational is not synonymous with international.

It’s not.

It's globalization because of...

Yes. Transnational, and I learned this in transnational feminism because that was one of the theoretical frameworks I used in my dissertation. Transnational, what it means, it's border crossing. It could be global. It could be international. But transnational to me has a more sociopolitical underpinning to it and there is transnational feminism. I didn't know it, but I had the opportunity to write an article based on my dissertation, and one of my reviewers said, "This is important because we need to look at social justice. Nobody is looking at transnational social justice. Nobody is looking at social justice from the transnational lens." I was like, "Oh, I guess you're right." When you say globalization, I almost equate it to new liberalism, to more economic sources. Transnationalism, to me it's more rooted in a sociopolitical base.

I wanted to ask a question as an aspiring grad student. Because I'm a Latina, it's important to have that representation, but I need someone more like you to ask questions. What kind of advice would you give other aspiring Latinas who are hoping to continue in higher ed?

Nothing is out of reach. We're valuable. We need to learn to value ourselves because that value will not come sometimes from other places. It's sad, but I must recognize that we are inhabiting spaces that were not thought or created for people like us, but that doesn't mean that we don't belong there. Don't be afraid to question. Having imposter syndrome is very, very normal. Imposter syndrome: Feeling like you don't belong, like you're not good enough, like, *oh my goodness, people are going to realize I don't know what I'm supposed to know*, those feelings of almost inferiority, not belonging, not having the knowledge or credentials, those creep up. But at the end of the day, you have to know that what you have to offer is valuable. It's an uphill battle, yes, but it's also very rewarding.

I think we have the obligation to be for other people what others have been for us. I have the obligation to be that Dr. Redilla. I have the obligation to be that Dr. Carlos Alberto Torres, a little bit better, not just open up, but try to mentor, try to do a little bit more, but thank him for that.

More than anything else, think that you're capable. Nothing is out of reach. Nothing comes easy. Nothing in life does. Nothing comes easy. Something that a lot of people say is, "Oh, it's a long commitment." Yes, it's a long commitment, but the years will go by no matter what. So, do it, do it. Never doubt it. Never doubt yourself.

Something that was very important and it saved me during my program: Surround yourself with that network support. Surround yourself. For me it was these women. It could have been men. For me it happened to be these women. Whoever it is in your corner, surround yourself. Find this support system. Find your tribe.

I like that word.

Find your tribe, yes.

One of my last questions: What have you learned from your students here at UNLV?

Oh my goodness, what haven't I learned? They keep me current. I'm a fifty-one-year-old who gets them. You know what that means? I'm a fifty-year-old who can actually have a conversation with my twenty-one-year-old one on one.

Something that broke my heart was—when I met Dr. Redilla I started taking Women's Studies courses, but there are not many graduate-level women's studies courses, at least not for doctoral students, and so I had to go to my undergrad. I have a lot of colleagues who are undergrads. I've learned so much from them, including pop culture from the younger generations. Something that broke my heart was one of them shared that she wasn't able to go

home and talk to mom about what she was learning because the language—she could speak Spanish, but the language for mom to get what she was learning about feminism, about critical theory, about Gloria Saldúa, she couldn't come to mom to talk about that.

My students have given me that bridge to gap the age difference between my children. My students give me hope. I get really angry when I listen in the news or wherever, “Oh, millennials are entitled,” and then this and then that. I get so frustrated and so mad. I'm like, well, I don't know what type of millennial you're talking about, not the ones I deal with on a daily basis. You keep me fresh. You keep me grounded. You keep me hopeful. You make me believe in a better world because you dream. You dream. Up to a certain point you stop dreaming, and you remind me that I should never stop dreaming that another world is possible. You keep me hopeful and you keep me young and you help me with my children, definitely.

What's next for you?

I have a job here, but it's temporary. I'm in the job market. It's very competitive. I have learned to trust the universe. UNLV offered me last year Women's Studies; this year is Teacher Education, all under a temporary basis. But if my place were outside of here, I would have already found something outside of here. I'm in the market and I'm open. My possibilities not only include things in the U.S., also I keep sending my résumé and my curriculum vitae to places like Costa Rica or Mexico. I know when I'm supposed to be there, I will. For right now I enjoy what I'm doing right now, which is preparing future teachers as well. Keep applying. When the right opportunity comes for me, I know the universe has been so generous with me and has put me each step of my life where I need to be, even here that I didn't want to be here, in the U.S. Now I realize it was for a reason. What's next? That, and I never give up my dream of coming back home.

Thank you so much.

BT: *The only thing I wondered about was your mother's immigration story. Can you compare and contrast and tell me a little bit about that?*

It took me a long time to realize the reasons behind also my mother's immigration story. I never really looked at it from a sociopolitical perspective until actually I was doing my dissertation and I had to do all these connections. You have to self-disclose—you don't have to—I wanted to self-disclose why I had arrived at that dissertation topic; why it was important for me. I feel like self-disclosing lets your reader know why you arrive at the conclusions you arrive at. Inevitably I do not believe that research is—research is political. It is impossible, at least in my field, it is impossible for you not to insert yourself in your research, and that's something I hear over and over again, “You don't have to; you don't have to.” Well, maybe not in your field, but in mine, a decolonizing field and a decolonizing framework, it is perfectly valid. In fact, you use that background knowledge that you have, that cultural knowledge being from that background and inserting yourself in your research, you use that to make deeper connections, to make deeper interpretations, to draw deeper conclusions. I think that's called cultural intuition.

(Spanish/2:17:23) calls that cultural intuition.

I know that there's a term for that and that might be one of them. Is there another one where you talk about your stories and you use your stories as a...?

I cannot remember that. Well, oral history is what we're doing here. No, it's not that. Auto-ethnography, maybe not. Testimonials.

Testimonials, yes.

I use testimonials as one of my data-gathering methods in my research, so yes.

I imagine it's difficult having to put your own opinion...

Yes, your own experiences and your own opinion. But what I was getting at, testimonials, the only thing I wanted to add to that is that I liked it because a testimonial is not just a conversation; it's a conversation rooted in a sociopolitical analysis. Your interviewees make those sociopolitical connections. When I was going through all of this and trying to interpret my participants' data and all of that, I realized in their stories I was able to, in a way, recognize also my mother's story.

I already shared how my mother became a single mother. She wasn't young. She was already in mid-twenties. Back then she was old already. But she did that because she had to work all the time to help financially in the home, so she met my father. They had me. She became a single mother. She lost her jobs; nobody would hire her. Pushed by the negative stereotypes of a single mother, she was ashamed for the family, first of all. My grandparents loved me, but it wasn't easy for them to accept me at first. She brought shame to the family. Then she lost her job. She became ashamed not only to her family, but to her society. It must be next to impossible to live with that burden and to be reminded every single day that you failed or that you're not welcome or that you're a single mother. I think having this opportunity to leave that world and that toxic environment was what pushed her. I'm pretty sure she would have been able to find a job. Yes, she left in search of better financial opportunities, but at the bottom of that—I don't know if my mother was able to recognize that; we've never had that conversation—but at the bottom of that was that unbearable situation of living in a society that just has no place for you and that judges you and that stigmatizes you.

Did she find acceptance here in the U.S.?

She started a new life. It was a new life. When I came and I told you that gray area, the U.S. was her gray area. In Mexico she was on the bad side. You're a bad person. In here I think she found

for her a very comfortable gray area in which she could be and thrive. If you ask her she will probably tell you a million other reasons why she came. Maybe because she couldn't find a job. Because life was getting difficult. But at the bottom of it, if you really make an analysis, yes, but why couldn't you find a job? Because you had a daughter. Because you were a single parent. Because nobody would want you. The truth is you became that uncomfortable family member that had a child out of wedlock.

Without a support system it's so difficult.

I know, I know. My father, not so; he went back to being a single desirable bachelor.

Double standard.

Yes.

Thank you, Sandra.

Thank you.

Is there anything else you want to share?

No. Now I think I'm an open book to you.

I've learned so much and I'm sure everyone who listens to this will learn something whether it be Montessori or your doctoral studies. Again, thank you.

Thank you.

[End of recorded interview]