

An Interview with Sondra Cosgrove

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Sondra Cosgrove, Executive Director and Chair of the Board for Vote Nevada, and was conducted on 1/20/23 by Magdalena Martinez and Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with Sondra Cosgrove

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SPEAKERS: Magdalena Martinez, Carmen Solano-Patricio, Sondra Cosgrove

Magdalena Martinez [00:04]

Okay. We are here today, January 20th, with Sondra Cosgrove, who wears many hats, so I won't say which organization you're with because you wear so many. And just before we get started, Sondra, is it alright if we record this conversation?

Sondra Cosgrove [00:17]

Yes, I'm okay with you recording.

Magdalena Martinez [00:22]

And then anything that we write in the future, we will attribute to you if that's all right.

Sondra Cosgrove [00:27]

That's perfectly fine.

Magdalena Martinez [00:28]

And then we will also, once we transcribe this interview, send it to you for a final review.

Sondra Cosgrove [00:34]

Okay, thank you.

Magdalena Martinez [00:35]

All right, great. So I will defer to my esteemed colleague, Carmen, who will take the first half of the questions.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:43]

Okay. Sondra, so the first question will give you a chance to talk about all those hats you wear. So, just very plainly, can you describe your roles throughout the pandemic, and the roles of the organizations that you're affiliated with?

Sondra Cosgrove [00:59]

Sure. So my job is actually as a history professor at The College of Southern Nevada, and I teach Latin American Studies over at UNLV.

What I do in the classroom is often answer questions from my students related to civics. So they come for office hours, they'll email me when there's an election coming up, legislative session.

And so, 10 years ago, I was Faculty Senate Chair at CSN, and that's when the economy collapsed, and we needed to get everybody involved in the legislative session. So I started realizing the questions I was answering for my students were questions my colleagues had, and then I realized members of the public had. So that's when I got very active with the League of Women Voters, and since then I've been involved with the ACLU. I have my own nonprofit now called "Vote Nevada." I'm Co-Chair of the Nevada Center for Civic Education. So it's a lot of civics-focused types of organizations, and I just spend a lot of time explaining kind of crazy processes. That people need to know where to even begin if they want – like I just found an email from somebody that said, "Hey, I just got tickets for this event, and they added \$20.00 to each ticket at the very end. Who should I get a hold of to talk about that because I don't think that's right." And so she didn't know, was that a legislator? Is that the county commission? Is that the city council? What level is that? So I can then help her figure out, at least, where to start, and then she can take it from there. So I spend a lot of time doing those things, but all of the organizations I belong to are very focused on civics education.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [02:34]

Very concise. Thank you. So I'm going to take you back in time a little bit. If you could just pull through your many recollections in those roles, and walk us through a timeline of the pandemic, since its onset and maybe before, what happened? What did you do? And were there any pivotal moments that you believe shaped your response and leadership?

Sondra Cosgrove [03:03]

Sure. So we ended up getting the notice from the governor that we were going to go on pandemic lockdown in the middle of March. For me, that's the middle of the election cycle for the primary. So you've got the judges – the people running for judges file in January, and then in March is when everybody else files to run for election. We had kind of been hearing, before the actual announcement came out, that this was going to happen, so we were ready for it. But then came the question of how long is this going to last, and what are we going to do if it overlaps with the actual election, starting with early voting at the end of May.

I've been friends – Barbara Cegavske was our Secretary of State. She just was termed out, and now it's Cisco Aguilar. But I had worked with Barbara for many, many years in the legislature, and so I was actively engaged with her office, and we were getting information on elections. Wayne Thorley was her Deputy Director for Elections. So we were already getting information from her office about what was possibly coming.

When they did the announcement that we were going to have to go to all mail-in voting, that meant we were going from most people showing up in early voting or on election day using the machine, to all of a sudden, everybody getting a mail-in ballot. She needed as many community partners as possible to start getting information out because we needed everyone to log into their online voter registration account through the Secretary of State's office to ensure that your address was correct and that your party affiliation – because we have closed primaries here, so your party affiliation was correct – and that you were listed as an active, registered voter, and just by logging into your account automatically makes you an active voter. So we needed people just to log into their account, eyeball everything, click "submit," and then that way, we knew that they would get a mail-in ballot.

So many of us learned how to use Zoom really quickly because we needed to make contact with community members. So we were sending emails out to folks we were normally in contact with saying, "We need you to jump on Zoom or watch a Zoom recording to understand how to get into your account." Once we did that, then you have to switch to "What do you need to be sure to do when you do your mail-in ballot?" Because the problem that we still have with mail-in voting is – it's like a Scantron, so you bubble it in, you fold it up, and you put it in the envelope. If you don't sign the back of the envelope, they will not count your vote. So we needed to make sure that people signed, and they signed the way that they signed their driver's license or ID because that's your proof that you're registered to vote is that signature.

And so we needed to then pivot over and say, "Okay, your mail-in ballot is coming. This is what it looks like. Don't write on it – just do the bubbles. And then, please, make sure you sign correctly so that you're not having to 'cure' your ballot afterward. We went through – the primary things worked very well. They ended up doing two special sessions of the legislature in July and August.

And then in August is when they decided to make the emergency regulations for mail-in voting, everybody getting a mail-in ballot, and applicable to the general election as well. Because we weren't sure at that point how much in-person voting there was going to be. And so, as time went along, we started realizing that we were going to have to have two parallel election cycles running. That there was going to be – everybody was going to get a mail-in ballot that you can choose to use, or you could go over in person and do early voting. There were enough early voting sites, that they could spread everybody out and that we could do social distancing.

But for the average voter, now, if they're receiving a mail-in ballot, and being given an either/or – and so people got confused. They're like "Do I have to use the mail-in ballot? I don't want to use it. Can I do it in person?" So, again, getting information out.

And then, after the election, I was on TV a lot because everybody and their brother that was in the press outside of Nevada wanted to know why it was taking us so long to count our ballots. And then I had to explain to them why we couldn't go faster because the calendar does not go faster. We were under a timeline that says three days for the ballots to come in, as long as they're postmarked by election day. And then, after that, there's three days for querying, and then they have to fix – make sure that everybody that did same-day voter registration could vote. So it was a day-by-day timeline, and you can't go faster when it's day-by-day. I mean, literally, I was on British TV at two in the morning one time, because they couldn't figure out why Nevada was taking so long.

And so it was just making sure – and then by that point is when we started having the election denialism pop up. And so this is when the Trump campaign started filing a lot of lawsuits, and a lot of misinformation was going around. And so it was important for people like me to be able to explain clearly to the news media "This is what's going on. This is where you can look at the law. This is where you can see the statutes and the regulations." And then to say to them "I need you to be very clear when you're reporting this."

I also chaired the secretary of state's advisory committee on participatory democracy. And so, one of the things that we did is, we moved our meeting onto Zoom, and then we did the livestream through the secretary of state's Facebook page. And at that point, it was Wayne Thorley who was the deputy secretary for elections. And basically, we just did a meeting with Wayne, so that Wayne could give an official expert explanation of how they match your signature, how they count the mail-in ballots, and what the machines do. And for everything where there was misinformation, we just gave Wayne 90 minutes to explain it, livestream through Facebook, and took questions from the public. But then, when you livestream, it records it and puts it on the Facebook page.

So then what we did is, we made sure that every couple of months, we had another meeting. We did a livestream and had Wayne – and then when Wayne left and Mark came on, we had Mark do it. But to be the expert in the room, to explain "Here is exactly what's going on. This is how the software works. This is how we do encryption. Take questions for the public."

So let's say you and Magda were out talking to neighbors and friends saying, "No, you can trust our elections." If they were to say to you, "Oh, well, I heard that the Dominion machines could be hacked." You could say, "Well, actually, that's not true. And I could actually bring up this recording of Mark Voloshin explaining that they're never connected to the internet and that's why they can't be hacked. And then you could just have Mark explain it to them and say, "This is actually the expert who does this type of stuff, and you can direct questions to him." So that people didn't end up in those circular kinds of crazy conversations, where you might not be exactly sure why they can't be hacked, but you just know that they couldn't. But Mark can explain it and do it very well.

So it a lot of facilitation of making sure that accurate information was getting out. That everybody was singing from the same hymnal – so we were using the exact, same language and we were citing the exact same sources. So, a lot of what you do in higher ed when you're writing an article when you're doing a presentation, and you have to have your citations, and you do your literature review. But taking that process and then applying it to public education for civics.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [10:12]

Wow, Sondra. I just want to take this opportunity to thank you for doing all of that work – I remember what it's like to have been a voter then – and for bringing your whole self to the experience.

The next question kind of pivots a little. Who were the groups hardest hit by the pandemic, in your opinion, and how did you work with or observe those groups?

Sondra Cosgrove [10:39]

So I'm also the vice chair of the Nevada Advisory to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. And we noticed, through that commission, we actually did a study on the impact of remote learning on civil rights. And through that, it was very obvious to us who was being impacted the hardest. And it was certain types of criteria that were overlapping, and so, anybody that was a first responder or anybody – I mean people who were working in grocery stores were considered priority employees. If you had a mom and a dad that were both in those categories of work and

were going out into the very dangerous open that could be infected, that was a danger. That was something – that was a real stress on a family. And that was really impacting the mental health of children, knowing that Mom and Dad were having to go to work and that they could be infected.

On the other hand, you had other types of employees that were doing housekeeping and things like that, related to jobs on the Strip; that Mom and Dad both got laid off and you might be evicted, and what was that going to do?

And so it was what was impacting Mom and Dad and their job was trickling down to the kids, who were then also having to do remote learning for the first time. And those were the families who also did not have very good internet access. Those were the families that did not have laptop computers or even cell phones that they could use – a Smartphone – for the kids to be able to do teaching – or do their learning. And in a lot of those homes, one of the things that we heard when we did our study is that the older kids disappeared from their schools. And what we found out is, either the older kids were getting jobs to help, to make sure that they didn't get evicted, or the older kids were actually supervising the younger kids, so that the younger kids could do their own remote learning. And they figured the older kids would be able to remediate and catch back up at a certain point. But we're even still hearing from schools now that a lot of those kids did not come back. And so did not graduate high school, and now we have to make sure we're finding them and trying to figure out what to do. But we know, right now, that they can make \$25 an hour working at McDonald's, so they're probably still in the workforce. But if we go into another recessionary period, we know from 10 years ago that those are the types of jobs where you get layoffs first, and they tend to be in higher numbers. And now, all of a sudden, they don't have anything to fall back on. They don't have an associate degree or a certification.

So we're – especially at the community colleges – kind of waiting for that wave to come back at us. But now we're saying, what if this person that's enrolling in my class had to drop out when they were a junior in high school? They're going to need not only a lot of academic remediation but, more and more, they have developmental delays. That those things you do when you're in high school that teach you how to be an adult, like time management or public speaking, they missed. They missed all of those things.

And so we're trying to figure out, how do we build all those types of skills into a history class, like I teach, or an English class, or a math class? Because if not, I can teach you the content all day long, but if you don't have time management skills, it's not going to help you. And then you might also be having psychological problems because you're trying to fit into an adult world that you were never equipped to fit into.

And so, there are lots of families, especially in Clark County, where all of those criteria overlapped, and that's where the greatest burden is right now. And so usually, you could identify where Mom and Dad were working, but then, by zip code because they probably didn't have internet access, maybe not even having familiarity with how the internet and the computer work. So the families that had all of those overlapping criteria got hit the hardest.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [14:32]

Thank you, Sondra. I liked your piece in the *Nevada Current* about that issue, and the heat map that you identified and broadband access.

Sondra Cosgrove [14:41]

Yeah.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [14:44]

This next question, based on that experience because you did form part of the government, in a way – is there anything that you wish governments, at any level, had done differently or could do differently, now or in the future, in response to the economic downturn?

Sondra Cosgrove [15:03]

So in the report, we did for the advisory committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights – but then in my role as a community college professor – I sit on the board of the ACLU – the thing that really jumped out to a lot of us is, all of the crisis that happened after the pandemic, that we're still kind of seeing happen with inflation, are all longstanding problems. These are not new things. And so, all of the problems we found with remote learning were all things that we knew about for many, many years that got a *lot* worse during the pandemic.

So leaders, whether they're on the county commissions, city council, state legislature, in Congress, or even the President of the United States, we have got to get better on not allowing kind of endemic problems just to continue, assuming it's a small group of people, it's not really that bad, or it's going to resolve itself on its own. We can't let mental health continue to be – the number one mental health providers are still our jails and our prisons. That's unacceptable and it's got to stop. And it's "out of sight, out of mind" but now, all of a sudden, literally, our education system is collapsing, and our criminal justice system is collapsing because we allowed these problems to go on, and on, and on. And then we had a pandemic that happened, and then everything went to crisis level. And we're seeing it with inflation, that people don't have savings. They don't have ways to figure out alternative ways to get what they need.

And so, once we get to a point where things are level – I don't even know what "normal's" going to be anymore – but whatever that is, that's the point where we don't just go "phew" (wipes brow) "Okay, it's normal – we're not going to do anything," Where we sit you down and say, "All these longstanding problems have got to be addressed now." And I can tell you, in this legislative session, we have a 2.2 billion dollar surplus. There are going to be people like me who are going to show up, and I don't want to hear a bunch of nonsense. These problems have got to be solved.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [17:07]

I like that determination. I'll take this opportunity to pass it on to Magda, and hopefully, be able to add a question toward the end there.

Magdalena Martinez [17:16]

You could add it now if it's a quick question.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [17:18]

Oh, okay. I just wanted to know if you could convey any of your experiences with native communities in Nevada with regard to these same questions. Anything that you have to say in that regard?

Sondra Cosgrove [17:34]

Sure. So when you're looking at, though, those communities and families that had those overlapping criteria, the Native American community definitely fits into that. I mean we have some reservations that don't have cell service. We're not just talking broadband internet service but don't even have cell service. And so when you're looking at like Duck Valley, up at the very top of the state, the little reservations that are in the middle of the state, even Moapa, which is not that far from Las Vegas has spotty cell service.

And so, for Native American communities, they were even having a hard time just getting remote learning – that would have been a step up – compared to what was happening with them; is they were just having somebody drive out to their reservation with a bunch of worksheets, and say, "Here, give those to your students," and then the person driving away.

And so we need to make sure that no one, whether they're on the reservation or a rural community – because we have some rural communities that are in the same situation – everybody needs to have a certain basic package of communication tools. They need to have cell service; they need to have broadband internet; they need to have reliable postal service. And they need to make sure that they are connected to people who can make decisions *for* them. Whether that's the governor's office, their legislator, or their member of Congress. They need to know, if we are having *this* problem, we go to *this* office to get help. Because I was hearing from my Native American friends, and they were saying, "We're trying to get ahold of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. No one's picking up the phone, so we're assuming that they are overwhelmed. They're not answering emails. Where do I go now?" And I said, "Well, let's figure out who's your Member of Congress, and we're going to get you connected with an attaché in their office right now." But they weren't sure because of the different jurisdictions for reservations in-state. Who, if it wasn't the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who next? And I said, "You still live in this state, you're still represented by your members of Congress, and so we're going to go there." And then I was able to connect them with attachés in the Congressional offices who did then handle things.

But what I found interesting, when we did the study through Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Native American reservations, rural towns, and then poor neighborhoods in our urban areas looked exactly the same. They looked exactly the same when it came to – so when we said, "broadband internet access," – "Nope, it doesn't have that." In direct connection to their Member of Congress: "Nope, they don't know who to talk to." On everybody's maps to make sure that their kids are being taken care of: "Nope, not on anybody's maps." And so we can talk about – there's rural problems, but yet, I can show you, on the Historic West Side, they have the exact same problems over there as what the rural areas do, even though they're right in the middle of Clark County.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [20:25]

As an urban studies major, I can really appreciate the gravity of that phenomenon. And that the

notion has been echoed by even a private enterprise like the Broadband Group, who's been trying to introduce solutions to that problem. Magda?

Magdalena Martinez [20:41]

Thanks, Carmen. So, Sondra, you mentioned the surplus earlier, and we know that's largely due to a lot of the federal intervention. In your opinion, were there specific programs that were really game-changers at the state or federal level? And, if so, in what ways do you think they were game-changers?

Sondra Cosgrove [21:02]

Sure. I have to tip my hat to the State Board of Education. Once they did realize that there were many households that did not have internet access or did not have devices, they did public-private partnerships and made sure that every household had a couple of Chromebooks and made sure they had hotspots. Made sure that people knew who to call if they needed those types of things, or if they needed help with their computers. So, Jhone Ebert in the group did a wonderful job with that. They needed a lot more tech support, but they at least made sure that every household had a hotspot and devices in those kids' hands.

I would say, second of all was making sure people could stay in their homes. And so doing the moratorium on evictions and making sure there were supports for rent. Because there were a lot of people, especially if they got laid off from those Strip jobs, that immediately were getting eviction notices. And so, in the middle of the pandemic, they did not know where to go.

So I would say, federally, that was probably one of the number one things that helped people. Making sure that people got their pandemic relief checks. So, let's say, you had your job, you're still working, and you're able to stay in your home, there were still just a lot of strains on families if somebody got sick, or if they needed more childcare, or if they needed to – maybe you've got five kids in the household, and so you're going to need to have the higher level of broadband. And so, just making sure people got money in their hands was probably something that saved a lot of people.

Now, I do have a criticism, though, and it's not like a personal criticism against anybody in particular. But in emergency situations, sometimes you just have to move fast. We do know there was a lot of fraud for unemployment insurance, and you know, people where they were getting their checks. The government has to make itself more resilient, whether it's the state-level government or the federal-level government. That when we have another crisis – and it's not if, it's when – and right now, California's in a crisis because they're flooding, and then we have fires. I mean it's a constant chain of crises that are happening now.

That there have got to be ways to have oversight. There's got to be ways to protect against fraud. There's got to be a way to make sure that people are not being abused because people are being defrauded. The government should have the same capabilities as Amazon and Microsoft in making sure they can identify that if Sondra lives in Nevada, she shouldn't be applying for unemployment insurance in Ohio, and that should raise a red flag because that did happen. I got a letter from Ohio saying that had been approved for unemployment insurance, and I called them and said, "Did you not see the Las Vegas address that you just sent that letter to?"

And so the government has got to be a whole lot more resilient. And what I'm afraid of that is, going forward, we hear more and more about fraud and waste. That the people who don't want to help that are in Congress are going to say, "No, we shouldn't give people the money. We shouldn't give people help because it's all fraud and it's just all waste. We shouldn't do it." And so the people who want to do that have got to be better at making the government more resilient.

Magdalena Martinez [24:16]

Sondra, can you talk a little bit about – this is going off the questions here – but you said there's going to be a surplus. What are some ideas you have with [where] those monies should be invested at the state level?

Sondra Cosgrove [24:28]

We definitely need to be thinking about if there are any holes, as far as infrastructure. No Nevadan should be without broadband internet access right now. Because we now know, that's the only way some people were working, going to school, or getting their information about where to go get a vaccine. That has got to be a priority. So we have to make sure, whatever federal money comes in, if there are any holes, that the state dollars then backfill on that.

But at the state level, there's a lot of groups that are popping up asking for money. Because, as we know in higher ed, we really haven't had merit increases for 10 years. We've had COLA, but COLA goes up about the same amount that we have to contribute to our insurance, so we've been flat. We don't want to lose good people. We want to make sure we can attract the best talent. Our state patrol – I mean if you work for Metro in Clark County, you start out at \$100,000. If you're a state trooper, you start out at \$55,000. We need to have safety out on the road, so those folks are popping up.

We have got to address behavioral and mental health. We have got to because it's been a crisis, for the whole time I've lived here, since 1986, but the pandemic made things much worse. We don't have enough providers. And so, one bill – I'm working with Sara Hunt from there at UNLV – AB37 is to create workforce development centers at each of the universities to talk to kids when they're in junior high. And if they say they're interested, to make sure they're in the pipeline to become a provider. Because we just don't have enough providers to make sure everybody's taken care of.

So I know mental and behavioral health, because it's in the schools, it's in the prisons, it's in families, and it's a homeless issue. It overlaps with so much. I think that's going to be a huge priority. And then, obviously, education. Education's always a priority in every session. But to me, as a historian, the problem that I think no one wants to actually talk about is our education system was built for Industrial America. Where, if you got into high school, and it wasn't for you, you could go work at the factory, you could go work at the five-and-dime, or you could be a car mechanic, and you would be fine. Or the Nevada version of that is, you would go park cars or deal cards.

And after NAFTA, and deindustrialization happened in the 1990s, we're *not* that economy anymore. And so, we've tried to pivot to light manufacturing and high-tech things, but our K-12 system's not built for that. It's not built for getting everybody all the way through, and then,

either giving them certifications or an associate degree. And more likely, it's an associate degree with certifications looking at the jobs that are now coming in. Somebody has to be able to retool the whole system – so it's like rebuilding the car while you're hurdling down the highway at 90 miles an hour.

And so we've been trying that, but you fix a little here, and then it's clunky over there, and then it doesn't work here, and then something else happens. There's got to be a complete reexamination of education and how it functions with our economy, but also, how it functions with democracy. Because, you know, we keep saying people don't need a college degree, and then we wonder why January 6th happened, why people believe Q-anon conspiracies, why they think if you drink bleach, that's going to cure COVID or things like this. You're not giving people access to the types of education that make your brain good at critical thinking, and then we blame people for not being good at critical thinking. And so I think for democracy and for our economy, we have to completely reorganize the way we do education, and then based on that, fund it correctly. But it's going to be a hard job because, like you say, you're trying to rebuild a car as the car is driving pretty quickly down the road.

Magdalena Martinez [28:16]

Wow, that was a lot, Sondra, and I think that's really helpful. And I know Carmen's probably going to follow up, maybe after our interview here today or – okay, she's taking notes, yeah.

So could you talk a little bit – you started to allude to this – the ways that you think the organizations that you were involved with, and citizens were able to collaborate in innovative ways – or innovative ways in which organizations and citizens dealt with the challenges of the pandemic.

Sondra Cosgrove [28:53]

Mm-hmm.

Magdalena Martinez [28:55]

Uh-huh.

Sondra Cosgrove [28:56]

I think before the pandemic, there were a lot of nonprofits, organizations, and offices that were all doing good things. And we all worked in our area, and sometimes we came together to form coalitions, but mostly, people kind of worked in their own area.

And then after the pandemic, we started realizing, like for the election, making sure people had food and that we needed to coordinate more. That we couldn't let people fall through gaps. But then we discovered Zoom. And so, before, there were only so many hours in a day that you could go to meetings and talk to people on the phone. Now we started realizing, wait a minute. We could all get on one Zoom, and through Zoom and chat, kind of coordinate who was doing what, who's going to be in charge of things, and do a break-out room.

So I think, post-pandemic, we're much better situated to have coalitions and do collaborations. And just to have average citizens pop up and say, "I have an extra hour during the week. What

can I do?" and me saying, "Great, I have three things. Which do you want to do?" Because of technology and because we now have the ability to see each other, talk to each other, use screen share, and use the chat, to be able to make sure that we're being much more integrated, and that we're not working in silos anymore.

Magdalena Martinez [30:16]

That's really interesting, yes. Technology has definitely helped in those ways.

Sondra Cosgrove [30:19]

And I find that it's mostly women who were doing it, which I find interesting.

Magdalena Martinez [30:26]

Okay. Can you share an example of a collaborative effort that you think resulted because of the pandemic, that perhaps wouldn't have resulted?

Sondra Cosgrove [30:38]

Just looking at going to the mail-in voting. So down here, there was the League of Women Voters, Nevada Now, Mi Familia Vota, Silver State Voices, the ACLU, and the Republican's Women Club. I mean we had almost 25 groups here in Clark County that we were all coordinating with to make sure everybody was getting the information. At the same time, we were coordinating with those same organizations, in-person, city, and Reno, Nevada, and Northern Nevada Indivisible. We were reaching out to a couple of the community colleges and groups up at Great Basin College. And so, just making sure that everybody had the same information and the same messaging, that worked very well.

Magdalena Martinez [31:16]

Okay.

Sondra Cosgrove [31:18]

But then, the other thing would be food distribution. So if someone had access to food – so that maybe every grocery store was doing some donations – it was very easy to do a text chain or to jump on Zoom and say, "The food is going to be *here*. We need three people that have big cars to come and load up. And then we're going to send you out to the community centers, and we're going to start doing email blasts."

Magdalena Martinez [31:38]

Okay.

Sondra Cosgrove [31:39]

And so that's tended to be a really good coordinative collaboration.

Magdalena Martinez [31:43]

Mm-hmm. Okay, very helpful. Now, you started to, again, touch on some of this. From your perspective, what are some lessons learned? As you said, it's not if, but when, the next crisis hits. What are some lessons learned that we can apply to the future?

Sondra Cosgrove [32:00]

So we need to stop saying things are back to normal, or when things get back to normal.

Magdalena Martinez [32:02]

Mm-hmm.

Sondra Cosgrove [32:04]

As a historian, I don't know when that is. I mean things change all the time. And for one person, what's normal could not be normal for another person.

Magdalena Martinez [32:10]

Mm-hmm.

Sondra Cosgrove [32:12]

We need to take what we acquired during the pandemic that worked and continue doing it. So, for instance, at CSN, they're trying to say, "Oh, we're going to do all of our meetings in person." Well, we still have people who are vulnerable, that can't be out of their homes. We have students that are working like three and four jobs, that you know, can't just leave their kids.

Magdalena Martinez [32:29]

Mm-hmm.

Sondra Cosgrove [32:31]

So we need to figure out how we, maybe, pull some things from the way we used to do it, that we want to keep, and then marry them up to the new ways that we do it right now and hybrid things, and give people more options. I work with a disability community, and we're looking at integrated employment. And if you're somebody that was homebound, and just mostly interfacing with the world through your computer, and all of a sudden, everybody's now doing a job from their computer. The disability community said, "Well, wait a minute. I'm at home. I have a computer. Why can't I do that job?"

Magdalena Martinez [33:00]

Right.

Sondra Cosgrove [33:02]

And so I know, from their perspective, they want to make sure that we keep remote work when we can. That we allow people to do more things from their home computers. That we think about jobs in ways that are more accommodating for people with disabilities.

Magdalena Martinez [33:13]

Okay.

Sondra Cosgrove [33:15]

So we just need to have a mindset that things can be done differently and that it's probably a good thing if we do them differently.

Magdalena Martinez [33:26]

Sondra, my last question is, are you hopeful, and if so, for what?

Sondra Cosgrove [33:32]

Well, I'm a historian, so I have to be hopeful. Because if you're a historian and you're not hopeful, then you just cry and drink beer all the time. But I'm hopeful that human beings are obviously resilient. We've been on the planet for a long time. The United States' history is of people working together for the common good and to make sure that things get fixed. And I see a lot of people, individually, trying to help. So before, you had to find an organization. You'd have to say, "Well, I'm going to work with this organization because I don't know who to talk to or what the resources are." It's a whole lot easier now. I mean, I could do a screenshare right now, we can go on Facebook Events, and just see who's having Zoom meetings. Because a lot of times they're open, and I just show up and go "Hey, what are you guys doing?" And they're like "Oh, welcome. Here's what we're doing."

Magdalena Martinez [34:20]

Mm-hmm.

Sondra Cosgrove [34:22]

So it's really easy for individuals to say, "I have a couple of extra hours. Who's doing what? Maybe I can just chip in."

Magdalena Martinez [34:30]

Mm-hmm.

Sondra Cosgrove [34:31]

I don't think people used to do that as much. And so, I'm very hopeful, but is it that more individuals are going to be empowered to just do things as individuals? That we don't have to be tied to a party, an organization, or something in order to be able to do good.

Magdalena Martinez [34:43]

Yeah. Okay, thank you so much, Sondra. Do you have any closing comments or questions, Carmen?

Carmen Solano-Patricio [34:52]

No. I was just wondering if you had read "Global Crisis" by Geoffrey Parker.

Sondra Cosgrove [34:58]

Nods. (affirmative)

Carmen Solano-Patricio [34:59]

Okay. I'm hopeful because of that book. If I hadn't read that book early on, I would have been really depressed.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:04]

Well, you know, and my students will sometimes – like when we were going through the people

being angry about wearing masks. And I would have students come into class, and they were worried and upset, and I'm like "Hold on." And so, I would google through Google Images and mask protests, and everything popped up from 1919 when people were protesting masks in the Spanish Flu. I'm like "It's the same. We'll get over it. It will be fine."

Carmen Solano-Patricio [35:25]

Yeah, exactly. And we got through that.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:29]

We got through it, right?

Carmen Solano-Patricio [35:30]

Yeah.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:31]

We got through it, and we'll do it again.

Carmen Solano-Patricio [35:32]

Yeah. Thank you so much, Sondra. This has been really insightful.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:35]

Thank you.

Magdalena Martinez [35:37]

All right, Sondra. I appreciate you. Thank you so much. We will follow up once we have your transcript available.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:43]

Okay, yay! All right.

Magdalena Martinez [35:44]

Have a great day.

Sondra Cosgrove [35:45]

And I'm super excited to see what Carmen's research leads to – yay!

Carmen Solano-Patricio [35:48]

I'm excited too. Thank you.

End of audio: 35:52