

An Interview with Julian Escutia-Rodriguez

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 Julian Escutia-Rodriguez, Mexican Consulate of Las Vegas, Nevada, and was conducted on 5/16/22 by Magdalena Martinez and Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Cónsul Julián Escutia-Rodríguez

[00:00:00] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Okay, Cónsul, muchas gracias por citarse con nosotros y le podemos pedir permiso de nuevo grabarlo y usar su nombre en nuestra investigación.

[00:00:07] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Si, tienen mi permiso para grabar la entrevista y usar mi nombre en el report. Gracias.

[00:00:14] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Okay, entonces empiezo preguntas en inglés. Can you describe your position and your role in your organization?

[00:00:22] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, since September 2020, I am the Consul of Mexico in Las Vegas. We cover the whole state of Nevada. So I am the representative of Mexico in Nevada. And my main objective is to protect the interests of Mexican nationals here. Number two would be to promote Mexico as a destination for tourism and investment and trade.

[00:00:54] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Also to foster good relationships between our country and, and the state of Nevada at all levels. And, so what I have been saying since I arrived here is that the consulate is part of this community. The consulate is not like an island in the middle of Las Vegas. So we are part of this community.

[00:01:17] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** We want to help our nationals and anyone to be happier, thrive. be prosperous. So we do a bunch of things, in different areas that are open to everybody. So we not only issue passports and consular IDs and the like to Mexican nationals, those services are exclusive for Mexican nationals for obvious reasons.

[00:01:43] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** But we do a lot of things that we can discuss later that are open to everybody in this community. So that's the purpose of the consulate of Mexico here.

[00:01:54] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** That's a great answer. And I appreciate having experienced the consulate as part of the community. So thank you. the next question, how do you see your role in your organization during the pandemic specifically?

[00:02:06] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** So those same missions during the pandemic.

[00:02:09] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, I believe that the role of the consulate here, I would say that it was critical because I got here in the middle of the pandemic, September 2020. The

economy was partially open, businesses were partially open. We were operating at 50 percent capacity.

[00:02:32] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** A lot of issues with public health, with misinformation, with lack of information in Spanish. So, not only the consulate of Mexico in Las Vegas, but all consulates of Mexico, we have 50 in the U. S. were instrumental in getting information to the Mexican and the Latino community at large in Spanish.

[00:02:58] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So there were a lot of myths and really, to be honest, ridiculous information out there about COVID 19. and it continues. But I think that we have made a lot of progress in regards to COVID 19. vaccination rates and getting lower infections in our community. Unfortunately, the Latino community was the most affected by the COVID 19 pandemic and still is, not only in health, but also in employment and other issues that we will discuss.

[00:03:41] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** But I believe sincerely and humbly that the consulate was a key actor. In helping our communities get through or try to get through the pandemic. And obviously we didn't do it alone. We do it in partnership with for profits with local state government and many others that have an interest in having more secure and more healthy Mexican and Hispanic community in Nevada.

[00:04:16] **Magdalena Martinez:** May I ask a follow up question? Please. Could you tell me if your position is an elected or an appointed position?

[00:04:23] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** It is appointed. I am a career diplomat. Okay. So, yeah. The President of Mexico and the Minister of Foreign Affairs sent me here. Yeah. But I am not a politician. I'm a diplomat.

[00:04:39] **Magdalena Martinez:** Very helpful. And what were you doing prior to becoming a Mexican Consulate?

[00:04:43] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I was a chief of staff to the undersecretary for North America. And the last year that I was in Mexico, I was also director general for protection of Mexicans abroad. So I was in charge of consular protection worldwide.

[00:04:57] **Magdalena Martinez:** Very helpful.

[00:04:58] **Magdalena Martinez:** Now you talked about, talking about your office in terms of the, during the pandemic. And, can you give us a few examples or some of the things that you were able to do through. your office here during the peak of the pandemic?

[00:05:18] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yeah, for sure. So we have a health outreach program that is called Ventanilla de Salud.

[00:05:28] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Ventanilla de Salud is a program that we have run for almost 20 years in the consulates of Mexico. So every consulate of Mexico has a Ventanilla de Salud. Okay. And these Ventanillas are operated by local non profits. In this case, Reach is our partner. And, together with the local health authorities, we were able to establish vaccination sites and COVID 19 testing sites

[00:06:07] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** We distributed test kits with this real information, obviously in Spanish and another thing that I will brag about is that we were the first consulate of Mexico in the U. S. to have it here inside - a COVID 19 vaccine clinic. So we were the first one, we have been doing that since March, 2021

[00:06:36] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And it was important to do it because our community has trust in the consulate. They feel at ease here. They know that people will speak Spanish. They will, they will be patient. They will explain the situation. And so a lot of people are coming here to get the vaccine or the tests or other basic health services.

[00:07:03] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Another example is that. Gornos, Steve Sisolak, asked me to distribute the home tests, COVID 19 test, and so we got like 13, 000, and we are giving them away right now. Every person that comes here, they take away two, two boxes of the home tests, and so those are the kind of examples of the things that we do, in terms of health.

[00:07:35] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** But we also give other kinds of services for our community that we're experiencing or are experiencing unemployment and other issues, which is food distribution. So, since the beginning of the pandemic with the Culinary Academy, we were a site for food distribution. Also, with Three Square, they also come here and, but, and, but we, with Three Square, the relationship has evolved into a more formal one and we are a point of distribution every second Friday. So about, it has been about one year that every second Friday we have food distribution here at the consulate of Mexico.

[00:08:26] **Magdalena Martinez:** So that's interesting because had it not been for the crisis, perhaps that relationship would not have formalized, would you say?

[00:08:35] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes. It is always the case that crises bring opportunities and, and what I've seen here is that the density of not for profits, especially the ones that work with, with and for immigrants is very low. Yes. Yes. but, the few. are very strong, are very committed, and, and I think that the pandemic brought us even closer.

[00:09:03] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And so the partnerships are, are, are stronger now, for sure.

[00:09:10] **Magdalena Martinez:** So, health and food.

[00:09:13] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Health and food. And it is important to note that the consulates of Mexico have evolved with our community. And so in the 80s and 90s, we were issuing Passports and consular IDs in a massive way, because migration was really high from Mexico to the U.S. in the 2000s, it started, it did not stop, but it decreased significantly. And so, the immigrants from Mexico have been living here longer. About 70 percent of all Mexican immigrants in the U. S. have lived here over 10 years or over 15 years. So what you see or what we see here every day is mixed, what they call mixed status families, no?

[00:10:10] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes. So maybe father is undocumented, maybe mother is green card holder and two or three kids that are U. S. citizens. So, our mission is to inform each one of them. What are their rights and obligations? Very important. And what they have access to. So during the pandemic, we assisted people in many, many ways.

[00:10:38] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Because maybe the consulate, it is not a place where all things can be solved or all the questions can be answered. But we are certainly a good source of information to direct you to the right place. So there were many questions about housing, employment or unemployment, social benefits, health, services, education as well, access to technology, no, because kids were at home, using internet, wifi, whatever services to, to continue school.

[00:11:20] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Many questions about going back to Mexico, not only for tourism, but for visiting, family or, or going back permanently. Sadly, a lot of people died. A lot of Mexican nationals died because of COVID 19. And during the pandemic, people died of other, for other reasons. And there were questions about how to repatriate the remains.

[00:11:51] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Even the restrictions that there were, and I must say that it could be controversial, but Mexico was one of the few countries that remained open throughout the pandemic for everything. Tourism, trade. I mean, we were even open to help foreign nationals disembark cruise ships or, or, leave other countries.

[00:12:16] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, So there were a lot of questions about that. So the consulate is like a hub of information. And I'd like to say that the consulates of Mexico are integration centers. So we help empower our community and we help them better integrate their host, to their host society and economy.

[00:12:40] **Magdalena Martinez:** And I'll just do one follow up question. I'll give the floor back to you, Carmen. You had said earlier that people trust the Mexican consulate. And I'm wondering, to what degree or how trust has enabled you and your office to do a lot of these things that you've just described.

[00:13:00] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I think trust is the base, for everything that we do and that, that is why other institutions and organizations and governments come to us to do things together.

[00:13:14] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** because Almost everybody in this town and in this state knows that we take care of a lot of people here every day. That if I invite you to come here, you will have access to over 100 people every day to disseminate your message and your information. So, trust is very important.

[00:13:44] **Magdalena Martinez:** Thank you. You know, it just occurred to me as you looked at your phone. I think I'm going to record also just in case something goes wrong. That's a good idea. And, let's see here. Voice Memos, there we go. Okay. So, to use any of this. Okay, very good. Thank you, Carmen. I'll give the floor back to you.

[00:14:09] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Consul, I'm glad you mentioned the statistics about Mexican nationals. And you didn't refer to them as just Mexican nationals in Nevada. You were talking about all of us at large. so obviously that is the population that you are targeting. Given your mission, what other groups would you add to a list of those most vulnerable to the COVID 19 recession?

[00:14:36] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yeah, so some people don't know that we not only serve the Mexican community, but also the Mexican American community. So, roughly there are like 12 million Mexicans in the U. S., and there are like 35 million Mexican Americans in the U. S. Yes. So that's, that's the universe of our potential clients, let's say.

[00:15:04] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And in Nevada, there are like 250, 000 Mexicans and over half a million Mexican Americans. So we have 30 people here to take care of almost a million people. So it is a big challenge. And, but what I. say, in public. And, and what we do here every day is that our, the information that we disseminate and, and many of the things that we do are open to everybody.

[00:15:37] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Obviously we, most of the things that we do are in Spanish. No, we do it, we do them in Spanish. So if you understand Spanish and you want to log into one of our webinars about financial literacy or. about COVID 19 prevention tools or, our entrepreneur, women entrepreneurs program. I mean, if you speak Spanish, you are more than welcome.

[00:16:06] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So the Hispanic community at large was badly hit by the pandemic and are still suffering from the, from the pandemic. And, so whatever we do to help them, it's available. As I said, for anybody, I mean, the vaccine clinics that we do here, not only COVID 19, but influenza, hepatitis, and many other things.

[00:16:34] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** People from all origins come here, no? Africans, Afro Americans, U. S. citizens. I mean, we don't care about origin, sex, gender. We are open to everybody. The only exclusive things for Mexicans are the passports and the consulates and the like. Everything that we do is open to everybody. And, and in the neighborhood that we are located, there's a lot of need.

[00:17:07] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yeah. So. So we also take care of our neighbors.

[00:17:10] **Magdalena Martinez:** Yeah, I've experienced that myself. I used to live just on Las Vegas Boulevard. So you mentioned collaboration with Governor Sisolak earlier in terms of disseminating information and providing those test kits. So speaking to that relationship with not just the state government, what do you wish the different levels of government, you know, federal or local, would have done or could do differently to address the economic downturn that resulted?

[00:17:37] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So there's always the challenge of immigration status. We are aware and respectful of the rules and regulations of, of the different programs that relate to federal funding or other types of funds, but definitely we advocate for, not advocate, we promote that everybody has access to the need they help or they qualify for.

[00:18:07] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So one thing that I would suggest for the future is more information in Spanish, more outreach, more campaigns in Spanish, and we are here to help. And that's something that we did. But information empowers people, so information in their language is key. And, and I, I commend the governor and the different levels of government here in Nevada.

[00:18:37] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** They, they did a great effort and they did good.

[00:18:41] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Okay, thank you. the next question you answered, which was whether groups are in the community otherwise that you successfully engage with during the pandemic. So you, you listed, quite a few, including Mexican Americans and anybody else that came for health services.

[00:18:56] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Would you like to add anybody to that group of people that you would say you successfully engage with or something that you're particularly proud of?

[00:19:03] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So what, what I, what I did, when I came here was to reconnect with. Friends and allies and partners and, and, and organizations that do work for immigrants.

[00:19:18] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Mm-Hmm. . And that was kind of an on standby because of the pandemic. Know. So I, I have made a lot of effort to reengage with unions. Hmm. with a Catholic church. Mm-Hmm. . with organizations such as the center, L-G-B-T-Q community. So all of those, also Safe Nest, that we are very active in addressing domestic violence.

[00:19:52] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So all of those organizations that do help the underserved and undocumented and victims of anything. we have, I have made a personal effort to re engage with them.

[00:20:08] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** That was the perfect answer. Thank you. You identified those groups as well. I'll finish my section of general questions with the next, with the following.

[00:20:17] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** From your perspective, were there more effective policies or programs, be they local or federal, in place to deal with the COVID recession compared to the 2008 Great Recession?

[00:20:30] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I think that this time, so, in, in, in the recession, 2008 2009, I was, Consul for Community Affairs in Houston, Texas. And now the situation is so different.

[00:20:46] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** There is so much more support right now. The federal government made a huge effort to inject resources to the whole country. And, also state and local authorities. I saw a great difference. And, I also saw an interest in, in helping the most vulnerable in, in the, in the communities. So, so yeah, there is a huge difference this time and, and I'm, I'm

happy for that because if it wasn't for that, I mean, we would be in a, in a more dire situation right now.

[00:21:30] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Dr. Martinez, if I could just follow up. Yes, of course. Okay. You talked about your partnership with SafeNest and your active role in supporting solutions to domestic violence. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

[00:21:42] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yeah, so for many years we've had a specific fund, to support victims of domestic violence.

[00:21:52] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** we not only provide legal representation, but we also do these partnerships. With organizations such as Safe Nest, you know, for them to, what we call, to break the violence cycle. So what we try to tell the victims is that they are not alone, that there is a safety nest, net, below them and that we are part of it.

[00:22:22] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So we have, we have some resources, not only financial, but also legal and then. Partners that support them and the important thing is to, to avoid, bigger issues, no? So, so to break the cycle in, in a moment that is safe for, for the victims and, and children sometimes.

[00:22:48] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Okay. Thank you. I'll turn it over.

[00:22:50] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Sure.

[00:22:51] **Magdalena Martinez:** So, I'm going to transition into more questions focused more on the role of government, more macro, and, as an appointed individual, I assume that you keep tabs on federal state policy here and in Mexico. So in thinking about the last year or so, are there any big accomplishments or major wins that you think were achieved through federal or state policy, be it in Mexico, probably more federal policy as it relates to your role as Mexican consulate or here at the federal or local level.

[00:23:39] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So something that sometimes comes up in the media is that we have cut support to our migrants in the U.S. and that is not the case. We have the same or even more resources now than in the past to, to assist them. Okay. Before coming here, when we had all of these restrictions, for example, to repatriate the remains of deceased Mexicans, we did a lot of extraordinary things.

[00:24:20] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** allocation of resources, partnerships, et cetera, to bring those remains to Mexico. We even sent an airplane of the Air Force to repatriate over 200 arms

of deceased Mexicans. So, the mission of our consular network is to help our nationals, but we go beyond that. And, and, and we adapt to the situations and we do everything that we can to help them.

[00:24:53] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, I think that the highlight of these past years has been the work that we have done in this Consular Network. I mean, it's, it's quite remarkable and, and other countries and other people do recognize that, that the work that we do is, that goes beyond that. Well, beyond the, what is a traditional consulate work.

[00:25:21] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So I would highlight that as an accomplishment.

[00:25:25] **Magdalena Martinez:** And is this discretion or ability to adapt, has that always existed or was there, was there a new policy that, for instance, the Mexican government had to pass in order to enable Mexican consulates to respond more effectively to the COVID crisis?

[00:25:47] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I think that the basis for our work has been quite steady for 20, 30 years. Look, in 1990, we established a more formal institutionalized program of diaspora engagement. So that was called the Programa para las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior. And, and that was a, a, a unit in the, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[00:26:25] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And that unit coordinated with all agencies that had programs with the Mexican, within the Mexican government. And then in 2003, we boosted. into, institute, institute of Mexicans abroad. It is within the ministry of foreign affairs, but it has a specific mission of, of helping Mexicans all over the world and, and coordinating the, all the problems that different agencies have for migrants.

[00:27:07] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** That's, and then also we've done a lot of work to, to coordinate, the work for people that come back to Mexico. So I'm sure that you've heard that from 2010 to 2016 or less, there was like a net zero migration? right. Between Mexico and the us. So even more at some years, in some years more Mexicans were going back to Mexico.

[00:27:34] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, so we had to. Make changes, policy changes too, to help them better reintegrate to Mexico, in terms of workforce, capacities and, and their personal family belongings, and their money, and getting a job, transcripts, many, many things, many challenges that come from you going back to Mexico. So, and then.

[00:28:06] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** In the, in, in our consular network, I mean, we have, not only the statement, the mission that is in the laws and regulations, but, but we do have a commitment to help people. So I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003, and then the

Foreign Service in 2005, and, And everything that, that, that we were taught and that we were told is that we, that it is for us to, to be of service.

[00:28:44] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I mean, it's called foreign service, but not like the traditional vision of a diplomat that is in the UN or in Geneva. I mean, we do that as well, but 50 percent of our foreign service is in the U. S. And 50 percent of our services is doing work with immigrants. And our priority is the undocumented population.

[00:29:12] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** They have always been, they will always be. So that gives you, that 50 percent figure, that gives you an idea of all the importance of the work that we do at the consulate.

[00:29:25] **Magdalena Martinez:** Yes. And earlier you said that a perception among Mexican nationals was that resources were decreased, during the height of the pandemic.

[00:29:38] **Magdalena Martinez:** Would you say resources stayed the same or was it also an increase in resources? There was

[00:29:42] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** an increase, because we, as I said, we kind of boosted our partnerships. So sometimes you can't monetize the value, the real value of a partnership. But if you monetize the tons or pounds of food that we have distributed here with the help of our partners, I mean, it is a boost.

[00:30:13] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** It is an increase in the resources that we have available for our people. And, and quite honestly, the vaccines, those vaccines had a cost and, and our partners paid for that cost. In this case, the U. S. government.

[00:30:33] **Magdalena Martinez:** so there was a partnership, increase in partnership resources. What about from Mexico, were there any increase in resources from Mexico?

[00:30:41] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes, we increased the amount of money allocated for legal, legal assistance. We renewed our program by which we have retained attorneys, our PALIT program. So, we have more money to help people, in han trafficking, domestic violence, legal issues in general. Many, many of those are in the immigration area.

[00:31:16] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And then, for example, last Friday, we reopened our education resources center. Ventanilla de orientación educativa.

[00:31:29] **Magdalena Martinez:** Ventanilla de qué?

[00:31:30] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Orientación educativa. in partnership with the College of Southern Nevada. Okay. So they will have staff here every day, eight to nine, eight to five. helping people navigate the education system, directing them for, to programs, scholarships, et cetera.

[00:31:56] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So we, we not only continue business as usual, but we are allocating more money and more energy to do more for our people.

[00:32:11] **Magdalena Martinez:** In thinking about the economic recession, which, the health, the health, the COVID health COVID crisis, as you said, really impacted Latinos, Mexican nationals, Mexican Americans.

[00:32:27] **Magdalena Martinez:** And thinking about the economic recession, I think we can say the same, right, because our population is very service oriented, right? So in thinking about that, are there any policies that you think could have helped more or can help the future type of recessions like that, be it from Mexico or from the state or the U.S.?

[00:32:53] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes, I mean for. It is amazing how the information gap works, no? For example, I talk to people every day, no? The people that come here, I talk to them and I ask them, for example, Do you know that tomorrow we have a COVID 19 vaccine here? And they don't know sometimes. And they are, they don't know.

[00:33:24] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** inside the consulate where that COVID 19 vaccine clinic will take place. So, imagine the challenge that we have, with people that are afraid, undocumented, in the shadows, working, maybe with an abusive employer, et cetera, et cetera, not very well connected to information. To resources. So, I think that governments in general.

[00:34:00] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** We have to address that information gap. I mean, also misinformation, but information in general, it is, it is an issue. And sometimes it concerns me that those resources go unused. from many sources because people didn't know, didn't apply and yeah, so, so I think that specific issue is very important for all governments at all levels.

[00:34:38] **Magdalena Martinez:** So policies related to information dissemination.

[00:34:41] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yeah, so, yeah, so, and, and accessibility, no? So once people know about them, get the information they need, then they need to do something with that information. Sometimes, that materializes in an application form, or, or attending an event, or applying in person to another thing.

[00:35:06] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, so those, those, yeah, information accessibility is very important, I think.

[00:35:14] **Magdalena Martinez:** And let me dig a little deeper on that one, because I think that's a very common theme in terms of misinformation or gap of information. What could governments do to improve that? Are there specific policies? What, what do we, what, do you have any ideas?

[00:35:33] **Magdalena Martinez:** Have you seen anything that's worked well? We see that Twitter is the public forum for everyone. You know, that a lot of people receive their, their messaging and their information from social media. Can you think of specific policies that governments could consider to try to bridge that gap?

[00:35:53] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes.

[00:35:53] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Well, I believe that we need more and larger community networks. So the number of people that access Twitter and Facebook and Instagram is us and students and some others. People that have two jobs or three jobs, they don't have time to look at their phone. Sometimes they don't even watch TV or listen to the radio.

[00:36:23] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Sometimes they have the radio on in the background. So, it is complicated to get information from them. So, the way that we try, we have been trying to do it for many years, is building larger community networks. - and the power of word of mouth.

[00:36:45] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Word of mouth, exactly. And having those leaders disseminate the messages.

[00:36:52] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** They, I wouldn't say community leaders like the, their go-to person. Go-to person. Yeah.

[00:37:05] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** The go-to person. Go-to person. Mm-Hmm. .

[00:37:08] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So on a construction site. There's always a go to person, one or two, and, and in, and then Mexican immigrants have organized for many years by their place of origin, so hometown associations, oriundos.

[00:37:29] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So make sure that some of those leaders have good information. So that person can disseminate it. Let me, let me give you an example. So,

[00:37:42] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Some community leaders here in Las Vegas asked me for help for their children with special needs. And I said, yes, I will help you, obviously, and So I connected them with a specific organization called Azul Blue, that they do a lot of work with autism. And I have spoken about this with government officials and I have connected them to those services, etc.

[00:38:21] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** But one day, I was invited to tour the PBS building. And while I was touring that building, I was taken to a library that is dedicated to special needs people. So I immediately thought of my community leaders that asked me for help, and I called them and I said, Did you know that PBS has a special needs library?

[00:38:56] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And they didn't know. And look, these are families that they. Their kids were born here, right? So imagine that the doctors, the therapists, the schools, and everybody that has had contact with those children, didn't tell their parents that that library has been there for 10 years. I mean that, it is an example, an appalling example.

[00:39:31] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** of lack of information, of failure of institutions. I'm not blaming anyone. But it is, yeah, a big failure that these families do not know that that library, which is marvelous, is there for them for free. So I was happy. No, at least I, at some point somebody did it. I was happy to, and I took them and we had a session there and I'm taking another group in a couple of weeks and I will help them in everything I can because the resources are there, but people don't know.

[00:40:14] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So that is really a tragedy. Sometimes I've said in public that lack of information is another pandemic.

[00:40:23] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Dr. Martinez, if I could add an anecdote here, it's just kind of terrific. trabajar con un non profit llamado, Project Real, R E A L, which was legal education for students K through 12, and I joined this program right when DACA came out from the Obama administration. Nobody had any idea how DACA worked, what it was, the dangers, as people perceive them anyway. And as a 16 year old, I, Obviously, like many Mexican Americans my age at that time, have to support my parents, right? – in terms of information, application requirements, things like that. Language, language.

So I joined this program and we put together a skit where we, it was, it was a mixed status family, and we just put on a scenario for high school students so that they could conceptually understand what it meant for them to, you know, if somebody in their family qualified, what that means for them, for their parents, for example, they thought, are my parents going to get deported if I suddenly put my information in the system? And then what happens when the permit expires, et cetera, et cetera. So, This is an example of a success where a non profit

organization partnered with PBS because we actually performed this skit in front of cameras and recorded it at the PBS stations, which is why it reminded me.

[00:41:47] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** But if there's anything like that or any other organizations, nonprofits specifically, or perhaps higher education that can support the creation of networks like this, what do you think that would be for universities? What would you ask UNLV to do, for instance?

[00:42:04] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Well, I have spoken a lot about this with your president.

[00:42:11] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** He's a very intelligent person and a leader. To address the student as a whole, as a family. I mean, we need, for me, I need access to the parents. Not only the student, the parents. Because once you get information to the family unit - that will potentially change their lives. So, yeah, it is very important to target the students, but as a whole, as a family.

[00:42:46] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Especially in the Latino community, that sometimes parents, mom, dad, both, have very strong personalities and do take important decisions for the young people, even if they are adults. So, yeah.

[00:43:05] **Magdalena Martinez:** Very helpful. Thank you. I think that addressed the last question in terms of, earlier you said, with every crisis there's opportunities or there's things that come out.

[00:43:17] **Magdalena Martinez:** Anything else you'd like to say about that? You've talked about the different partnerships with nonprofit organizations, with various community stakeholders, that that's been an opportunity, if you will. Can you think of anything else that happened during the pandemic that you're most proud of in your ability to respond to the needs of the community?

[00:43:41] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Yes, something that I would highlight is that, that you see that this job and the work that we do is very, *Cómo se dice?* Este, que te retribuye, que...

[00:43:59] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** Taxing?

[00:44:02] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Oh, gratifying. Very gratifying. Both. To see, something that is very gratifying to see is that even a consular ID, birth certificate or a pamphlet can change people's lives.

[00:44:17] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, that engagement with people directly - that communication is, is really important. I mean, the pandemic took us, took away that from us. So the contact, the conversations and and the message that institutions like the Consulate of Mexico is open for everybody is important.

[00:44:48] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** So, and we emphasize that every day, every day. And we, we are very progressive. For example, we are now accepting applications of people, transgender people that want to change their name. So now I am able to provide any person that changes their name with a new birth certificate. So those kinds of things that people don't know, but once they are here, it's an eye opener.

[00:45:26] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I think that the opportunity that brought the pandemic is to have those conversations again. Okay.

[00:45:33] **Magdalena Martinez:** Yeah. Okay. And finally, how long is your appointment for?

[00:45:40] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** The average is like four years, but it varies. It can be six or two. I don't know.

[00:45:49] **Magdalena Martinez:** Okay. Are there any other individuals that you think we should talk to that can give us an insight into some of the challenges, opportunities of the economic recession, COVID economic recession.

[00:46:03] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** I would definitely suggest you talk to in particular, any of there are three brothers, three siblings. Rebecca, Luis, and Oscar. So they applied for a grant. And they got it. And, and they had two rounds. of applications and they gave away debit cards with up to five, I think, 500. So that was really interesting because their mission is health and public health.

[00:46:45] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** But given the pandemic, given the great need and that undocumented people did not have access to fair funding. They found a way to help them. Okay. And so, I can give you the contact information. In particular, I think Luis would be great to talk to.

[00:47:04] **Elia del Carmen Solano-Patricio:** That's Reach. R E A C H. Reach. Oh, Reach, that's the name of the organization.

[00:47:09] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** Luis Aceres. He, and, and he's also a very interesting guy because he's also an actor. So, he. Until very recently, he had a radio show. And so he does a lot

of things which are very important. and I think that the partners that that I mentioned Three Square, culinary academy, and Safe Nest - was the center. They are really good.

[00:47:54] **Julian Escutia-Rodriguez:** And then the usual suspects are like the Latin Chamber of Commerce.

[00:48:01] **Magdalena Martinez:** Do you have any questions for us? No.

[00:48:05] **Magdalena Martinez:** Okay. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you. I'll go ahead and stop the recording. Yes.