

Interview with
SANDRA KARLA GARCIA

August 25, 2023

**ESTAMOS AQUÍ / WE ARE HERE:
LATINO VOICES IN ST. GEORGE, UTAH
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

#2023-015

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2023.
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives
Utah Tech University Library
Holland Centennial Commons 330
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84770
(435) 634-2087.
specialcollections@utahtech.edu

This program has received funding from Utah
Humanities and Utah Division of State History.

Any views, findings, conclusions, or
recommendations expressed in this interview do not necessarily represent those
of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Utah Humanities, or
Utah Division of State History.



INDEX

advocate	13, 14
aunt	5, 7
birthday	11
brown kids	8
bullied	7
bullyin'	10
bullying	7
California	5, 6
Catholic church	11
changed	18
childhood	5, 6, 7, 8, 10
Christmas	11, 12
Cinco de Mayo	11
community	11, 14, 15, 16, 19
dancing	11
Day of the Dead	11
Día de Los Reyes	11
discrimination	14, 15
Dixie Downs	6, 7, 9
domestic violence	6, 12, 14, 15
DOVE Center	12, 14
Grass Valley [California]	5
husband	9, 11, 13, 19
Independence Day	11
kindergarten	6
Latino-Hispanic community	15
LDS church [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]	7
math class	8
Michoacán [Mexico]	5
microaggressions	17
mom	5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19
Morelia [Mexico]	5

over there [Mexico]	7, 11, 12, 19
posadas	11
prejudiced behavior	17
racist	8, 16, 17
religion	7, 10, 18
Santa Clara [Utah]	8
school	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19
second stepfather	6
sister	5, 7, 12
stepdad	6
Steve [2 nd stepfather]	7, 8
teacher	8, 9, 10, 18
traditions	11, 12
undocumented	5, 14, 15
white Americans	16
work	9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Young Women's	10

SANDRA KARLA GARCIA

Content Warning: Contains words/images that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful.

Sandra Karla Garcia was interviewed by Caitlinn Grimm on August 25, 2023 in St. George, Utah. She related her experiences coming to, and living and working in the St. George area. Cameron Nielsen also participated.

CG: Okay, hello, today is August 25, 2023. This is Caitlinn Grimm; Cameron Nielsen is here acting as the recorder. We're at Utah Tech University Library, and we are interviewing Sandra Garcia today.

Sandra, can you please state and spell your full name?

SG: Sandra Karla Garcia, S-A-N-D-R-A K-A-R-L-A G-A-R-C-I-A.

CG: Thank you, what languages do you speak?

SG: I speak fluent English and Spanish.

CG: And where were you born?

SG: I was born in Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico.

CG: Okay, now we'll just move on to our more open-ended questions.

SG: Okay.

CG: So can you tell me about your childhood and family?

SG: So, I came over here to the States when I was about six months' old. I actually came across the border undocumented, so I was given to — I think they're called coyotes. I was given to one of those to pass me over because — I don't know exactly why my mom couldn't come over with me. But I had an aunt, which is my mom's sister. She lived over here in California, and she was working in like the fruit farms. And so she just told my mom that we would have a better life over here, and my mom wanted to kinda get away from my biological father, so they gave me to this coyote. And I was supposed to arrive at a specific time, and I was several hours late. My aunt was, like, in total crisis and just crying and thinkin' I basically got taken, and my mom was also upset as well, but I think we got detained somehow somewhere, but we made it through. I don't know, like, all the specifics, that's just, kind of, what my aunt has told me and the little bit that my mom has told me. So that's how I made it over here, and we lived in California, Grass Valley, it's next to Sacramento, and it was really beautiful.

I don't remember a lot until I was almost like five. I do remember the — my first stepdad who I got told was my real dad, but he actually was my first stepdad. I do remember him being really great with me, but I don't remember the relationship between him and my mom being really great. So I do know that there was domestic violence, and so we were there with him since I was like — I think we lived on — actually in other little places, but it was so temporary, and I don't know all of everything specifically. I just remember being — ending up there in California.

I remember going to kindergarten. My mom was really worried because I didn't speak any English, I just knew Spanish up until then. And so my mom did — like several months before I needed to go into kindergarten, she just sat me in front of like Disney movies, English kid channels, books, music. I remember music was a really big thing for me. And so my mom just, kind of, just threw it at me a lot, and by the time I got into kindergarten, I could actually have a conversation in English, especially at that age, like kindergarten age. And so I went into kindergarten, I remember it being really, really great, I remember not even knowing what race was or anything like that. I felt like I was just like everyone there.

Anyways, I don't know how we then ended up to St. George, but I know it was when I was gonna go into first grade. We ended up here because things were rocky with that first stepdad and my mom, and we were gonna start over I think. And he had family here, and so he was like, "Let's go to St. George, Utah," and so we came over here. And I remember we lived on Dixie Downs where they're — no, it's no longer — they tore it all down, and there's homes. But back in the day, there were trailer houses over in Dixie Downs, and we lived right on the corner on the Dixie Downs street. And so I remember there being more domestic violence. I think what really did it towards the end was, I think he ended up strangling my mom, and so that kind of like was just — my mom's like, "I need to get away from here." And I think, at the time, my mom was going to get her — to get English classes here and her GED here, and she had met my dad who — that's who I think is my dad in my heart, and so, but he technically was my second stepfather. So she met him, and he was involved somehow in helping my mom get out of that situation. But my mom wanted to do everything on her own, she didn't wanna rely on him for everything, so she, like, accepted his support. I think we got into an apartment complex, like even down — I think it's down Dixie Drive, from his support. He told the landlord or something like, "Hey, I know this woman and her child, they need to get out of this situation, do you guys have any openings?" I'm not sure if my mom allowed him to help financially or anything because my mom was very determined to do everything on her own. And so we ended up leaving there, but mind you, I'm under the understanding that this person is my real dad, so I just remember feeling really confused and upset that, you know, my family was bein' destroyed through divorce and all of that, and I always wanted to be with my dad. And he had his issues, like I think at some point, I don't know when, maybe drugs and alcohol were involved. And if I don't remember everything completely, it's just due to childhood [laughs] trauma. I've been really, really good at — my memory, I have kind of spotty memory, so I just kind of — that's what I remember, how we ended up, like me and my mom on our own in that hotel — I mean the hotel — the apartment complex down by Dixie Drive.

So that's when I got into Dixie Downs Elementary, and that was the first time I ever realized that I was different. Back then, there wasn't that many children of color in that school. If I can remember correctly, I think it was like — in that entire elementary school, I feel it was less than maybe like ten kids. I just don't remember seeing a lot of people that looked like me with my skin complexion. So that's when I would get bullied for the color of my skin. Yeah, it was really hurtful 'cause I would be like, "What are you talking about, what do you mean we're different?" you know, and so. 'Cause there was a lot of white kids with blue eyes and blonde hair type of — and also, which I didn't know back then, but also like LDS [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], which I had no idea what that was 'cause I had been baptized Catholic, I guess. I don't remember any of that either when that happened, and so — yeah. So school was not really fun, there was a lot of bullying because of — because I was different.

When my mom got with my first — I mean with my dad, he was white, so that's — my mom's name is Zahandra Hutchings. And he was involved in the LDS church, so he opened up that whole door of like the LDS church to my mom, which made us go into it. And so I feel like I have a lot of religious trauma because I was forced into a religion that also I didn't feel like I belonged there either, so — And I can speak of that later at the next time. But, yeah, so that was my family, kind of like, the dynamic. I never had any cousins or I have a half-sister, but we don't see each other as half, but technically, we are because we have two different fathers. But she's ten years older than me, and she's always lived in Mexico, so we've pretty much — I've pretty much grown up as an only child, and so, and not really being around family.

The one thing that I'm super grateful, though, about family is that when I was, I think, about eight or nine years old, my mom started sending me to where I was born, where a lot of my family's at, including my sister and my aunt. She would send me over there every summer vacation, so that's where I actually got to be around people that looked like me, I got to speak Spanish, and got to know my culture. My mom always made my aunts over there enroll me in something, so I was either enrolled in guitar class or in dance class, specifically like Mexican dance class, and so I love that. And I got closer to my family over there because when I'm over here, it's really hard to have a relationship, especially back then, technology wasn't what it was like today. And so I'm really grateful for that because I feel like that really — it also really humbled me because the homes out here are very different than the homes out there. And so there were times out there that I had to, like, shower with a bucket. I had to heat some water, and that's the amount of water that I can only shower with. And so that really humbled me, and I really appreciated that because if I had to live that way today, I could live that way today. It doesn't bother me to not have like a comfortable shower and the regular pipes. Over there, the water sprinkles like this on you [gesturing] when you're trying to shower, so I'm like, okay, I have to shower somehow, or when you have to do it with a bucket. I'm really grateful that my mom let me go over there and spend time with my family.

But, yeah, that's kind of like where my childhood, my — and my family comes into play ultimately resulted in me being with my mom and then my dad, whose name is Steve, and

me. So even though really it was me and my mom for a long time, I remember I, kinda, just like — I missed the person that I thought was my real dad a lot, so I, kind of, pushed Steve away a lot 'cause, I'm like, "You're not really my dad, and I dunno what you're tryin' to do with my mom, but I'm not allowin' it" so — He was really great because he was never pushy about marriage or to try to make us live together really fast. He said, "Whenever you're ready" — to my mom like, "Whenever you're ready to get married and whenever your daughter feels comfortable." And so, finally, that ended up happening and that's where we have a house in Santa Clara because my mom got it through Habitat for Humanity. And so she wanted to get that house on her own, she didn't want anyone — like she didn't want my dad to help her get it. So my mom is really independent, and I think that's kind of, like, rubbed off on me. I'm extremely independent, I don't like anyone paying for my bills or my things. Even though I'm married, I like things very separate, like we can pay our major bills together, but everything else is very separate, and I think that also has to do with my job as well, so. But anyways, that's, kind of like, my childhood, the family. I think I started going into school, but I wanted to wait if you were gonna ask that —

CG: No, that's great.

SG: — question.

CG: Do you wanna tell us more about like middle school, high school time?

SG: Okay, so yeah, just school was absolutely horrible for me. It's actually deterred me to even pursue going to college or anything. I just felt like just I was never understood. And now, going to therapy for years now, I understand that I just had a lot of childhood trauma, and I just didn't learn the same way that kids would learn. So, middle school, math class, I had a really abusive teacher. She would call me out in front of everybody in the class and just be like, "Why do you not get this?" And I'm just like, "I don't know, I just don't understand," and so she'd get really mad at me. I remember it got so bad that my parents had to come, so Steve and my mom had to come to school and have a conversation with the principal about I would come home cryin' all the time, and I wouldn't — like I completely shut down in math class. After she would humiliate me in front of everybody, I was just like, I'm not gonna do this, like I'm not gonna try. I'm not learning the same way that other people are learning, so I — I'm just like, I just give up. Because if I tell her that, you know, I don't understand this, she would just call me out in front of everybody, and just be like, "Why don't you understand this?" but in the most rude way possible. So that's where it started where I would completely shut down during all my math classes for the future. It, kind of like, set this — set the tone for everything 'cause every time I would walk into math class, I'd be like well, I'm just gonna be made to feel like I'm stupid because I don't understand, so why even bother to try? And because the teachers — I dunno, I'm not tryin' to say that they are racist — but they treated the brown kids way different than they treated the white kids. [Emotional] And I wasn't the only one who thought that, so... I would see things being done to brown kids. Like, the way that they would respond to them would be very different than they would respond to the Caucasian kids, so... Yeah, so that I basically would constantly have to

make up work all the time because I'd practically just fail the entire class 'cause I just gave up, and — yeah.

So school was — and then when I got to high school, I had an even worse geometry teacher. And he actually got in my face and — because I didn't bring my math book, and I know why I didn't bring my math book, because, again, I'd basically given up. So I was like I'm not gonna do my work because if I'm just gonna be treated rudely or talked down to in a negative way, I'm just gonna sit here. And so he got really mad that I was just sitting there with no book, no nothin', and he got in my face and went [claps], "Go to the office" like that, like right in my face, and so I was like, "Oh, okay." And I tell you that I am not like a malicious person, that I have never felt like I wanted to slash someone's tires in my entire life. I just — because he did it in front of everyone and just created more humiliation for me. He wouldn't even come ask me like, "What was going—?" Now today, he was never curious enough to ask like, what's goin' on with this person, like why do they not even wanna try? He just automatically saw me [emotional] as like a bad Mexican kid, so — That was really difficult, and 'cause I knew. I'm like little did you know, all the extent of the trauma that I had lived and instead being curious, that a child isn't just bad, there has to be reasons why a child is acting this certain way; kids are not just bad to be bad. And I just felt like he was an awful teacher and that other middle school math teacher was an awful teacher and like — I don't know.

So I just remember hating school just completely and just checkin' out and ditching, and I had to like do Millcreek packets. And I can't retain any of that, like I can't do any math other than like super simple math, but I don't retain any of it, and I feel because of how much trauma. And I just remembered those two specifically 'cause it got so bad, but I had it with basically every math teacher. No one was ever curious enough to ask like, "Is there a reason why you don't understand this, do you learn differently, or how come you don't understand it this way? Should I explain it to you in this way?" No, never, it was always that I was the problem and that I was the issue, and so — And again, I know that my experience — other people that I've known over the years, they also can — people of color have also been like, "Yeah, my — this teacher wasn't really nice to me, and I always felt like picked on, I always felt like I was the problem kid," and so, yeah school is awful.

And my husband, he's, like, the complete opposite, school was his favorite place to be, so — I've actually told him to do this too, so he says he would love to 'cause he's Mexican and he's lived here. It's funny, he's lived here the exact same time, but we lived on different sides of St. George. So I lived on Dixie Downs, and he lived in Pine View area, but we came here at the same age of six, so it's funny. And we knew all the same people, and we've been in events together, but we never met until we were older, so it's kind of funny. But, yeah, he had the best school experience; I absolutely did not. So, yeah, I just didn't ever pursue anything other — like I never — it never even crossed my mind to go to college. I was like, if I made it out of high school by the skin of my teeth, I'm not gonna make it in college when I'm completely checked out. I checked out of school since middle school, so —

And then on top of it, a lot of bullyin' during school. Back then, I — me and my mom would go to the DI [Deseret Industries], and we would shop. My mom, you know, lived a very conservative, like we were more on the poor end of things, I guess you could say, so like I — and I don't mind that, I love thrift shopping. Even to this day, I will go through — to a thrift shop, it doesn't bother me, and I don't feel bad about it either, so — But in school, people would make you feel bad. And I remember getting in a fight with a girl in high school, of course, a white, blue-eyed, blond-haired girl, and she just basically told me to go back to my country and that I was a dirty Mexican and that, yeah, I was just dirty and my clothes were ugly and just like — I don't remember everything, but I remember she told me a lot of stuff. And those are the main things that I can remember that she told me, and that she was not the first person who told me that. Throughout all of grade school, I was told that. At some point, I was told to go back to my country, or if I ever spoke Spanish, I was told that "This is America, and you cannot speak another language other than English." So, yeah, just school was not a fun time for me at all, and I just couldn't wait to get out of it. And even to this day, I don't add anyone from school from, like, grade school. I think we had like those reunion things, and someone tried to add me into one of those, and I blocked them. And I was like, "No thanks, I don't wanna know about your guys' life, and I don't want you to know about my life." I don't want to have a relationship with any of those people.

And also with the religious and the school, when I got my — I was forced into the LDS religion. When we would have like Young Women's, all the blonde eyed, blue-eyed, rich girls would — if we had like a — I remember the activity was dodgeball in the church where the basketball nets are at. And I remember the lady that was over walked out for a minute and then the other — the girls that were there, they hurried and grabbed the dodgeballs and started throwing them at my head, and so — I think I was in middle school during the time, and so I just remember that, I just remember curling up in a ball and just takin' all the hits, so yeah. And then when she would — they would think she was coming back, then they did stop and just like didn't know why I was curled up in a ball. The lady was like, "What's wrong?" and I — because it's all them against me and because it was like a weekly thing — I think it was done like on Wednesdays or somethin' like that — I'm like, I'm not gonna out these girls and then they're gonna make my life even more a living hell every next week. And I don't even think I would really tell my mom in details of things of what I experienced. So, yeah, it was just — it was pretty traumatic and school was pretty traumatic. I think that's probably all, but, yeah, it was just a lot of bullyin', a lot of rude teachers. And that I was always the problem when later I come to find out, no, just had a lot of childhood trauma, and, yeah, I just wish someone, like a teacher or someone saw past that, you know?

CG: Mm-hmm.

SG: Yeah, that's school, and now with the next question is kind of what?

CG: Well first, I'm sorry, and thank you for sharing.

SG: Yeah. [Laughs]

CG: So maybe not religious, but do you have any favorite cultural traditions you grew up with?

SG: Yeah, so I really love my Mexican culture. So any time I was able to do my Mexican dancing, and I would do that at the Cinco de Mayo that the Catholic church would do every year. My mom would involve us in that, and we would have all the dresses and everything, and so I really loved that. Now that I see as an adult, I'm like we in Mexico don't necessarily really celebrate Cinco de Mayo. So it would be nice to have different things that we could do here during the actual independence of Mexico or something for the community instead of doing Cinco de Mayo, so – That's really all I ever remember cultural-wise with traditions here, is that I would always do that. I would always go and dance. And then it's funny because my husband, his family were super involved in the Catholic church back then. And they had a band, like a church band, so my husband knows a lot of instruments, and so he would play with them. And so he's like, "We would do those all the time, I'm sure, and I would watch those people dance. I swear, we probably were like in each other's — we were there with each other." And I was like, "Yeah, that's a trip because we just never ever met until we were adults," and so – He remembers those as well, so that was probably one of the funnest times, is when I was able to express that. But other than that safe, specific place, I didn't really ever feel safe to express, like, my culture, so – Especially speaking Spanish, I'd always get told to stop speaking Spanish, so –

CG: When you went to Mexico during your summers, did you get to do any fun like festivals or things with your family there?

SG: Oh yeah, so my birthday is in July, so I would be down there for July, and I don't remember any holidays, I just remember my birthday. So they would just do cultural things like flowers and lots of food, a lot of music. But, yeah, I don't remember any really — since it was the summer, I wouldn't really go to holidays. Now that I'm an adult, last year was my first year experiencing the Day of the Dead. I had never experienced that in Mexico. And then this year, I'm leaving in like two weeks to go experience Independence Day. I've never experienced Independence Day over there, so... Actually, when I would sometimes go during December, we would do like Christmas, like their Christmas. And it was really cool 'cause they would have something called posadas, which is like — it's basically surrounded by food and music, and you'd go to — you go to your neighborhood and you go around with music and food throughout the neighborhood. And there are specific types of food that are given durin' that time like ponche, tamales, pozole, just to name a couple, and that was really fun. I think they do have like Santa Claus, but they have something called El Día de Los Reyes, which is like the three kings. I think when that happened, I had already left to come home because I had to come back home for school, so I never really got to experience that. But I would experience like the twenty-fifth, which really for Mexican culture, we celebrate the twenty-fourth, so at night, all the way till midnight, and then in the morning would be like gifts from Santa. But really, it was just all about food, music, and bein' with your family during the twenty-fourth, so... But, yeah, that was really, really fun.

But when I wouldn't go over or when I would stay here for whatever reason, it would just be like the typical, just like traditions here. I don't think me and my mom really ever did any of our Mexican traditions. I dunno, it just feels kind of like dry when you do them here. [Laughter] Not to be mean or anything, they just — it doesn't feel — like when I go to Mexico, I just feel lively and I just feel so much energy, and I dunno. I don't celebrate any holidays here anymore, so I don't think — I don't remember the last time I celebrated like Christmas. And I mean like giving gifts is fine, but I mean like Christmas actual traditions and things like that, I don't remember the last time I did any of that here, so besides the gift stuff. But, yeah, it was really fun over there doing that durin' Christmas time, so –

CG: Can you tell us about your experience with Día de los Muertos?

SG: And I still feel like I need to educate myself more on it, but we went to where they just did like a parade of — they have skeletons, like people were like — my sister and her boyfriend went as like skeletons. They like painted their face and they got into outfits and everything, and everyone kept stoppin' us, and it was — there's just a lot of music and a lot of food. [Laughter] That's really what I — what all I remember. And then we were gonna go to — what do you call it — like graves area because that's where they end up putting the food for your passed loved ones, but I think it was just so packed. I just remember it being super, super packed where we were at, and I was like, "I dunno how we're gonna—" And it was kind of like wet and cold and so I was like, "I dunno if we're gonna be makin' it all the way over there maybe we should just stay here downtown where all the food was at," so – Yeah, it's just a lot of music, a lot of food. It was really fun, and it was really cool to see, especially all the skeletons, everybody was dressed up in skeletons and stuff, so, mm-hmm.

CG: Okay, switching gears a little bit, will you tell me about your work?

SG: So I work at the DOVE Center. I have worked there for over eight years now. I love it, I can never do anything, anything except helping people. And specifically, I worked at the shelter for a really long time. I worked there for three years and then I transferred over to our main building for about three years, I think, and — but I've actually been there ever since, but I've been in different positions. So I was in one position for three years and then I moved on to a different position. And so right now, I'm more like administrative office assistant instead of being so involved in client services, like helping clients directly.

CG: Real quick for the recording, can you tell us what the DOVE Center is?

SG: Oh, sorry, the DOVE Center, so we're a nonprofit organization that helps survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

CG: Thank you.

SG: And I think we've been here for a really long time. I think we've been open since '94, '93, if I can remember correctly. But, yeah, it's — helped so many people over the years, lots of people, so yeah. So right now, I'm more on the administrative side of things, but because there are not a lot of bilingual people that want to do this specific types of services, which is really, really hard for a lot of people, it's really triggering. And also, just due to like pay and things like that, they — it's really hard to find someone that is bilingual that wants to stay in there. So I still do Spanish advocacy, so any time a Spanish client walks in, calls, or gets referred by the police, if the other Spanish advocate that I'm — that's there, if she's unavailable, it automatically always defaults to me even though I've kind of tried to move away from client services. But I honestly feel like I will never 100 percent be removed from it because I have so much experience in it and because there's such a high turnover. Like me bein' there eight years is like unheard of. I think there's only a few other people, very few, I think maybe even less than five people that have been there either a couple of years longer than me, but everyone's pretty short. From what I've noticed, they can maybe last one to two, maybe three years, and then they're — kind of hit their burnout limit or they've chosen, "Yeah, social work is not for me, so I'm gonna go somewhere else." Or they want to either pursue school to be like a therapist or something, but they wanna be out of the nitty-gritty of social work, case management type of stuff, so —

But I love my job, and actually, that's where I learned everything that I know today of how — what happened to me growin' up. They have you do a forty-hour training, and that forty-hour training, when you start working there, was life changing for me. There were so many aha moments, and there is just like, I didn't know this, and, oh my gosh, and this happened. I remember each class, each presenter, I just kept having epiphanies and I'm, "Oh my gosh, I'm like this because of this," or, "Oh my gosh, this happened in front of me, and this affected me in this way." And it actually pushed me to pursue therapy on my own. I think my mom tried getting me into therapy a couple of times as a teenager, didn't really work because you have to want therapy for it to work, and I did not want it when I was a kid. So, yeah, I am so grateful for DOVE, and even though sometimes it's really hard, especially dependin' on who you work with sometimes or the type of things you end up seeing and hearing, or pay is sometimes is really hard but — and I know my husband and my mom will say that sometimes I'm really emotionally exhausted and I'm emotionally spent, and I don't really have anything to give to them when all day I've just heard crisis after crisis after crisis, and so my husband, kind of, wishes that I would get out of it. But it's really hard when you find somethin'. Like with school, school was miserable for me, and I didn't end up pursuing further education, so I always felt like what am I going to do? I always just did like retail or receptionist type of work, but nothin' was never ever fulfilling. So when this landed on my lap, and I started learning and I started becomin' an advocate, and I finally realized what I was made to be here for. And all my clients telling me how much I've helped them. Especially, like my Spanish clients, to hear the change that I've made in their life and not just their life, their kids', it's just like nothing's ever gonna fulfill that type of work in my heart. I know that we have to make money and live, but I don't wanna just make money to make money and be miserable in retail or in food industries. Not saying anything bad about those things, but I want to do something good with my time when I'm here. So my husband doesn't

quite understand that, and I tell him. I was like, “You just don’t get it.” Especially, when there’s so much discrimination and there’s so lack of help for the Spanish-speaking community with these certain topics, they have to have a voice, they have to have someone there that’s like, “No, that’s not the process, you’re being told incorrect information, this is the process, this is your rights. It doesn’t matter if you’re undocumented, you still have rights, these are who you go to,” and get them connected to therapy, which we right now have an amazing therapist. Her name is Alma, she’s from Mexico, and she has helped so many people. So me and her have been like a team of helping people out. I get them in the [???inner???] crisis and then I refer them to her and then weeks and months go by. And I’ve had clients that have been seeing her for a couple of years, and they’re just completely different people. Their aura about them, they just look happy, and they just always tell me and Alma how grateful they are that they have those services and that they had us there. So it’s really hard to up and leave that when there’s not a lot of people that are in that position to do that work.

So, yeah, I love my job so much, and no matter how hard it is, no matter how some days, I’m just like I have to quit ’cause my mental health is not doing very good, but every time I think that, a Spanish client or someone comes in, and I help them. ... I almost feel like it’s the universe, like I know this is really hard, but you’ve done so — you’ve gone through so many hard things, and you’re here for this reason specifically, so yeah. I think I’ll always be a victim advocate.

Oh, and while working there, I get trainings. We have to make certain amount of hours every year for trainings either webinars or Zoom or through like DOVE Center, and we get trainings by clinicians. I read lots of books referring to my job because they also like — they can provide that for you there, like you can always borrow books from them. I’m tryin’ to think what else I was gonna say about work. I think I was gonna say something else, but I think I totally lost it. But, yeah, I love it.

I used to do both areas, too. There’s something that’s called RSA HART team, so that’s called the hospital response advocate. And so whenever there’s been like a sexual assault at the emergency department, you would go there and you would be their support. So I did that for a long time. I already said I worked at the shelter for a really long time. I did life skills, so I would provide presenters to come to the shelter and help give life skills to the clients. Sometimes it would be like mindfulness, sometimes it would be like resume building, things like that. So I did that for a while, and then I did LAP coordinator for a while, which is Lethality Assessment Protocol. So that’s just a protocol where when there’s a domestic violence goin’ on, the police have to go through a questionnaire with that person. And if they answer yes to, I think, either the first three or four of the bottom questions, they are screened in high risk for intimate partner violence or intimate partner homicide, so it’s a pretty, pretty serious thing. So I was over all of that at one point. I’ve been the onboarding trainer there. I still have little segments of that that I do. I’m at the main office, I’m the one that trains new staff when they — when they’re specifically at my office, I train them for that. But if they’re going to the shelter, there are places over at Erin’s House, our transitional housing, then I don’t need to give them that training since that’s not where they’re gonna be mainly residing. But, yeah, I don’t know what else to

say about work other than I love what I do, so – [Laughter] It's what I was meant to do, so yeah.

CG: That's great, thank you. You've talked about this a little bit, but what has been your experience with the broader St. George community?

SG: So basically just no — not like Hispanic people, correct, or just anybody in general?

CG: Just anybody in general, maybe not necessarily work or school related but —

SG: I dunno. I don't feel like they're very accepting of different, either if that's LGBTQ or people of color or people of different backgrounds and or religious backgrounds. I always feel like you're always gonna be an outcast or an outsider, that's how it's always felt to me. I just have really different, I guess, you could say, liberal views on things. Around from what I've personally experienced, it's very super religious and very conservative and very Republican types of views, so I dunno. I don't really feel like I've ever really belonged, so —

CG: Mm-hmm.

SG: — unfortunately. And I'm not saying people aren't nice, but you can feel vibes, and you can tell when someone's just being nice to you just to be nice and courteous and to keep up a façade, or when someone's genuinely nice to you and is accepting of you and who you are, so yeah.

CG: What are your thoughts on the Latino-Hispanic community in the area?

SG: I just feel there's a lot of discrimination still to this day. Again, I know lots of Spanish-speaking clients that I've had that they're undocumented or they don't speak English. And they go to places to seek services, and they're just met with, "I don't speak Spanish, so sorry, I dunno, I dunno what you want us to do. It's like, go bring someone who speaks English and come back," Which, now, I know they can't do that, especially if they're federally funded, they need to provide someone that speaks Spanish. But since it's a lot of hard work to go and find an interpreter or to go — or it's costly, I feel like they're just met with "Can't help, sorry, you don't speak the language." So that's just what I've constantly seen. But with the Hispanic community, they're so resilient. They're literally just coming from really bad situations from their country, which I feel like a lot of people here who have never experienced that will never understand what it feels like to just come from your land that you love, your country that you love. But it's just not a good place for you, and all you want is just to feel safe and to get an education and to just be stable and be happy. And that's what I see with my Latino community. And instead, they're just met with, "Go back to your country" or "Don't speak Spanish here" or "None of us speak Spanish, so none of us can help you with anything that you need." And it's really, really detrimental when you do that to like a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. They won't seek help ever again when they're met like that. [Emotional] And so I've had lots of clients over the years tell me that, that they had no idea that we were there

and that we spoke Spanish and that they did have rights and they could've left earlier. Like, "Oh well, when I tried to seek help from the police, they didn't have anyone that spoke Spanish on shift." And so they kinda just took this other person's experience and took whatever they told them that it was and didn't come and tell — didn't get my end of the story or anything, so yeah. I just know that they're so resilient and they're not here to do anything bad, especially a lot of the Hispanic community that I've been involved with, they just want a better life, so yeah.

CG: Do you have anything else you'd like to add about your relationship with white Americans?

SG: I always have a fear; I feel like I can't always 100 percent trust white Americans, and I know that I'm not the only one who feels that way. I know several people who have told me, "Yeah, they're — like when they're really nice, they're great and everything, but you always just have this doubt lingering in the back." Like, if something were to happen, will they really be here for you and really be a good friend or be a good person, or would they just think of themselves and then throw you basically under the bus? So I feel like I'm very hypervigilant with white people that I have in my life. I have to actually see that they are for the Latino community or for LGBT community. Like, if they're out there with us, whenever there's things goin' around in St. George, where did they stand, you know?

CG: Mm-hmm.

SG: And so the few that I do have in my life, I do trust, but I know I do keep a lot of them at arm's length. I don't trust a lot of them, and I don't mean that to be mean, it's just what I've personally experienced with my — in my life. So I wish it could be a lot different. I wish you — we could just all feel super safe. But then, also, some of 'em think they aren't racist, but then they have — they make microaggression comments and things like that. And they think just because they don't call you a wetback or tell you to go back to your country, that that doesn't make them racist. But when they're like, "Oh, don't you love tacos, isn't that your thing?" And I was just like, "Uh, okay, yeah, maybe there is truth behind that. I do love tacos, a lot of people love tacos, but for you to have to blatantly make a comment like that towards me."

Or even during work relations, and I'm not necessarily talkin' about my current work or anything, just like work, I just feel like I've been thrown under the bus by white people at work when either they were my supervisor or something. And instead of having your employee's back like, "Oh well, I told them about that, and so —" And instead they're like, "Nope, she's in trouble, she didn't do somethin', I dunno, I'll wipe my hands clean of it because—" that. Or also when it comes to pay, I've — since I've been more on the administrative side, I can sometimes see certain things that just, kind of, makes me question. I dunno, it just — I feel like I want to have really good relationships but the patterns and the history just make me a little weary, and so I have to really — again, have to really see who they truly are and see what they talk about. And I guess it's 'cause I'm thinkin' of a couple of particular — like a couple of my white friends that are really close

to me. And I know they're very vocal on like, "This is not okay, you don't do this to people of color, or you do —" and they're vocal about it, like they put themselves out there. "You don't do this to LGBTQ people, like drag queens are amazing, and they're safe and things." I see them actively bein' like that, and so it makes me feel really safe around those particular people, and so — But when it comes to a lot of other people and, especially, if you're ever on — I completely deleted my Facebook because I'm like I can't be on St. George News or Word of Mouth because I just get really angry and then I start arguing with people. And there's no point in arguing with people 'cause they're just — they just think in this one way and nothing that I say is gonna change anything different. But, yeah I guess I could just say I just hold them at arm's length until I can really see who they truly are. If they just see me as just a regular person instead of like this brown, Hispanic girl, just see me just as who I am and not anything else, so —

CG: You've talked about this next question a lot, so if you want to elaborate more, cool, if you want to move on, also great. So maybe not have you, but what was it like to experience racist or prejudiced behavior here?

SG: Yeah, it hurt. I mean, like I said earlier, it just feels like you — and don't — I don't belong here, I shouldn't be here. Even though I know that with my work and stuff, I do feel like there's a reason why I'm here and when I help my people. But, yeah, I just don't feel like I belong here, so I feel like I should just go back to Mexico because I'm — that's what I was told for my entire school life. Like, from when I was in first grade, every year, I have — I can't remember all the specifics, but that I know that every school year, I had some racist comment towards me either by the students or either durin' church or either by teachers treating me differently, so yeah. It just hurts because I feel like I'm not this bad person that they have in their mind that Hispanic and Latino people — like what even that old president, past president said that Mexican people are just rapists, murderers, whatever, drug addicts, and he made it so just out in the open for everybody to hear. I'm not that. Like, I work for a nonprofit. I don't make a lot of money. I just help people, that's all. And my mom is on the same end; she just helps people and their families. To feel like you're this awful, awful set of people, that you should leave, sucks, it sucks growing up and feeling like that, so —

And I know a lot of people don't [emotional] — it makes them really uncomfortable because when I've called out microaggressions or things that have made me feel a certain way, I get told, "Oh, that's just how she is, like don't take it personal," or "That's not how that experience was" when that person wasn't even there, when it was just me and that one person had the interaction and that person just knows them through fundraising of a lot of money 'cause they had a lot of money. And it's like okay, well, you can't take away how that made me feel and how they spoke to me and how I felt like I was treated like the help. So I think that even hurts worse, when other white people, they are uncomfortable by what you experience and then they gaslight you into thinking like that that's not how it was. I honestly cannot stand that statement when you tell someone, "That's not how it was, that's — you're takin' it wrong, you're misunderstanding. That person is just moody and that's just how they are." And it's like, no, I've been moody and I don't make someone feel like they feel like they're — someone's bein' racist towards

them. There's a difference, and I'm not gonna have someone that's never experienced the form of racism that I have tell me that that's not how it was just because it's uncomfortable for them to hear because they know the person or something or because the person gives a lot of money, so – I think even more that hurts when people invalidate your experiences, so –

CG: Thank you.

SG: Mm-hmm.

CG: How has the area changed since you've been here or since you were a child?

SG: It's just bigger, it was like super small when I was here, so it's gotten really huge. The traffic has gotten nuts, [laughter] the way that people drive is crazy. [Laughter] There's way more Hispanic people I've noticed. And I went and I did a presentation for the English classes over at Southwest Adult High School. They have English classes over there, and the teacher told me that every week, there's like a set of brand-new, Hispanic/Latino students, like that they're just arriving here, like a whole group. So that's nice, so I do see a lot more Hispanic people than I've ever seen here, which is nice, but then again it comes with its own problems when people seek help. Or I saw someone selling fruit, and I just — when I still had Facebook, I remember someone was making a comment about like, “Are they even legal, why are they selling fruit? And they need to go get a business license, and they need to go get food handlers,” and I just remember telling the person like, “You are so ridiculous. Okay, so what about all the rich white kids in my neighborhood that are outside with lemonade and cookie stands? It's the same thing.” And they're like, “That's not the same thing.” I'm like, “Yeah, you say you want everything done legal, so why don't you go and tell them to go get a food handler's permit and a business license?” And so anyways, I'm just seein' more — I think I also saw someone selling flowers, this Hispanic guy selling flowers as well, and we — I think — yeah, I think we did buy — ended up buying flowers from him. And I never used to see that in the past, so that's, kind of, why I'm bringin' it up 'cause I never used to see things like that in the past. And so, yeah, it's just nice to have more people that look like you or that also speak your language bein' around, so. And I do notice that a lot more people that are not like LDS are comin' around, so yeah. So I like that as well, just a little bit more diverse and not so harsh with what they believe in. Like, “This is what — this is the right and if you're not in this, then get out,” so – Which I did get out, so I — [laughter] I did get out. I got my — what are they called — your records? I got my records removed and everything, so, yeah, so that. Because in general, just religion in general, I don't agree with any of it, so I'm just good myself, by myself, so not be associated with anything, so – But, yeah, that's kind of what the change I've seen here, it's just really big, lots of traffic and — but more Latino and more Hispanic people coming, so –

CG: Before we ask our last question, was there anything else you wanted to talk about or elaborate on that we've talked about?

SG: Just that we are really hard people, the Latino and Hispanic community. We're really hard working people, and a lot of us just — yeah, I kinda said it earlier, just want a better life. Like don't want to live in fear due to whatever is goin' on in their countries, like the government or literally living in violence, like gang violence. A lot of us regular people, we're not — trying to be involved in any of that. I remember when I tell people, "Oh, I'm gonna go visit my family in Mexico," and they're like, "Oh my gosh, aren't you nervous or worried?" And I'm like, "No, 'cause things could happen anywhere; there's school shootings and mass shootings here all the time, so — I don't hang out with any gang people or anything when I go over there, I'm just with my family, so, and nothing ever happens to us, so..." Yeah, just basically that, I hope in the future people are just a lot more open and hopefully made me — I dunno. I just wish we could just eliminate racism altogether. It would take a lot of trauma away from a lot of people, maybe the future people, so they don't have to experience those things. 'Cause I always think if I would've gotten treated differently and my whole school history would've been different, where — what would I be doing? Like, maybe I would have been more inclined to go to college and to do something, you know? But that, those years and that experience just completely ruined it for me that I won't ever put myself in a school type of environment. I've talked about with my therapist and with several people and I know everyone says, "Oh, universities and college, it's so different now and teachers don't really care, you just gotta — you just show up when you show up, it's really your loss 'cause you're the one that's paying." And I'm like, "Yeah, but I just feel like I'm just so — I just checked out so long ago," and especially with the cost and things like that, I'm just — I don't have it in me to do it. Maybe in ten years, maybe, 'cause I do know there's people that go back to school at forty and maybe, I don't know. But, yeah, I just feel like that those experiences growin' up, kind of, just ruined it for me. So I hope that that gets better for — I don't have children, and I don't — I do not want to have children. So I hope for in the future, for the people that do have their kids goin' to school, I do hope it's different for them, especially if they're mixed or just people of color, kids of color. I hope there's people out there that just don't treat them differently and are more accepting I guess. I guess that's what I would just want is more acceptance within the community, so. And I dunno, [laughter] that's what I would love to see. But, yeah, that's what I know about me and my community, just really hard working people that want to just do good in this world. That's what I've gotten anyway for myself, for my husband, my mom, and my friends that are Latino and Hispanic, yeah.

CG: Did you have any questions, Cameron?

CN: No.

CG: Okay, I think we've covered everything, so thank you and we will stop the recording.

SG: Okay, awesome.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]