Q1: Today is November 5, 2005. It is 11:26 am. We are in room 2510 of the Daley Center Cook County Court building where we're interviewing Judge Patricia Mendoza about her legal career, her background, how she became a judge in the Cook County system. Thank you, Judge Mendoza, for agreeing to talking with us today. The first thing we'd like to do is ask you a little bit about your background and upbringing, how your early experiences influenced your decision to enter the legal profession. Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like growing up in the Back of the Yards neighborhood in the 1960s?

A: Well, it's a working-class neighborhood. They have -- it was a changing neighborhood, changing over from Polish-Lithuanian to Mexican. You know, it was lower middle class. And there's not a lot -- I don't know. You know, it's what I knew, so I couldn't really compare it to anything else at the time.

Q1: Mm-hmm. Did your parents -- had they lived there for a long time, or...?

A: We actually moved there when I was 11. They had a bridal shop business that they opened up there. They had had a business previously, and I don't know the name of the neighborhood. It was like 55th and the Garfield, Halsted area. That neighborhood had undergone a lot of race riots.

I vague -- I distinctly remember, you know, the riots because the store was on the dividing line -- at that time Halsted was the dividing line -- between black and white. And the store was actually on the black side, and we lived -- the house was, you know, like two blocks down on the white side. And so the store was literally caught in the crossfire and was damaged twice.

Q1: Your parents' store.

A: Right. Because there was bottle-throwing, rock-throwing. You know, at the time, you know, I was a little kid. It didn't -- I'm not sure that I unders-- you know, on a certain level you know what's going on, but I didn't understand. It's only now, looking back, that I realized that I really got to see firsthand, um, you know, the conflict in the, in the racial divide in the city. Because we were literally on the racial divide. And my parents were kind of really oblivious to it because -- or I should say they didn't understand it at all, because, you know, a lot of their customers were black, a lot of their customers were white, and they just really didn't understand -- they were neither group, so they didn't understand it at all, they just sort of, you know, suffered the consequences of it. But the second time, the store ended up going up in flames, and so they started a new business. That's when

they moved, we moved. So we moved in like 1971 to the Back of the Yards area.

Q1: How did your family get into the bridal business? Was it --

A: My father had always had a knack for -- when they came to the United States, they started out as -- well, I shouldn't say that. When my father first came, he came on the Bracero Program, but when they -- my mother -- they finally got married and they met up together, they started in housekeeping at a hospital. But my dad always had an interest in design. And somehow, I don't know how, he hooked up with the flower shop which was out of the Bismarck, which is now the Allegro. But somehow he ended up there, and he would work for them and do flowers. And they actually encouraged him to start his own business. So they started in flowers, and that was my dad's angle, and then my mother -- you know, they expanded to add bridal stuff, and so it ended up being bridal and flower shop.

Q2: What was the Bracero Program? I'm sorry.

A: Oh, farm worker.

Q2: Farm? OK.

A: When they brought in workers from Mexico to work in the fields.

Q1: When did your parents immigrate?

A: Well, again, I'm fuzzy on when my dad first came. I know he came through the Bracero Program, but I'm not sure if it was the forties or early fifties. My mom and he married in 1957, and shortly thereafter, she joined him here.

Q1: Did your father come straight to Chicago, or did he immigrate somewhere else and then --

A: You know, I -- these are all the questions that I wish I would have asked. I don't know. I know he was here, he was in the stockyards, but I don't think there's a lot of farm work here, so I don't think he started out here. But I never really asked.

Q1: So what year did he -- around what year did he immigrate, then, to Chicago?

A: I would imagine it was sometime before 1957 because he was already here when he married my mom.

Q1: OK. And how did they meet?

A: That's a -- that's -- you know, I don't know if this is legend or truth at this point, although they keep telling the same story. But I don't know if it's morphed into, you know, now everybody believes it to be true. But he was a lot older than my mom -- he was 14 years older than her -- and they were kind of distant third cousins or something like that. And I guess there'd always been this understanding that she was going to marry him, among the

families and among him. She had, I think -- the story goes -- this part is true, I know -- that on the day of her wedding, my grandfather had to -- she had locked herself in her room. She didn't want to married. And he knocked on the door and told her she needed to come out and live up to her obliga-- or, to her commitment, which I've always said, "It wasn't *your* commitment, it was *his* commitment." But -- so it was -- and if you look at the wedding pictures, it's kind of sad because she really does not look happy. So that's -- so they always knew -- from the time she was born she knew him, because he was, you know, sort of part of the distant family, and there was always, like I said, this understanding that they were going to get married.

Q1: Did they ever talk about some of the hardest obstacles that they had in Chicago, starting their own business and...?

A: Oh, yeah. Well, there were a lot. At first, they didn't know English, so that was hard. They started out -- it's interesting. When they -- when my mom came to meet him, they actually started out in Back of the Yards, and then when they got this job at the hospital, they moved to the Garfield area, and then they moved back to Back of the Yards. But Back of the Yards already had a small Hispanic population -- not like Pilsen or Little Village -- but that's sort of where my dad ended up and where they started

out. But -- so to live in that neighborhood, they didn't necessarily need to know English. But there were so many things that they didn't know about. You know, they didn't know, you know, a lot of the language and they didn't know a lot of traditions. And I remember my mother tells these stories about the first winter, where she had never experienced winter, and she never wore pants, and so she said it was cold, and so she took some of my father's long underwear and put it on and got on the bus, and she just remembers people laughing at her. So again, those are just her memories that have never really been erased because it was very humiliating for her, because it just had never dawned on her to buy a pair of pants. Women wore pants here, but she'd never worn pants, and so it never occurred to her to do that. She just sort of looked at what my dad did to keep warm, and that's what she did. The language was a big thing for her -- well, for both of them, I guess. She didn't know how to drive. Well, neither one of them knew how to drive. My mother is the more adventurous -- well, that's not true. (laughs) In certain things, she was the more adventurous one. She's the one who went out and learned how to drive. My dad was always afraid to drive. I guess he'd been in an accident once with somebody, and so he was apprehensive. So she's the one who learned how to

drive. He's the one who's more willing to take a risk because he's the one who wanted to start a business and she was more about how -- what if it doesn't work, or whatever. So on that sense, he was more adventurous, but she was the one who really held it together as far as, you know, saving money and making sure that, you know, bills were paid and that they didn't go overboard on expenses and things like that. You know, the other thing that sticks in my mind, which is kind of related, I guess, to why I ultimately ended up in the law, is because they didn't know the language, or even if they did, they, you know, weren't sophisticated in the law, they were taken advantage of. A landlord, who did speak Spanish, and who I still -- is still around -- ended up charging them $25 more in rent -- maybe it wasn't $25, now that I think about it, but that's what the story's morphed into -- but he ended up charging them more rent because my aunt would visit and she was heavy, and he was saying there was wear and tear on the stairs. So, you know, just those kinds of things that they were taken advantage of because they didn't know any better. And so they ended up, you know, pulling out the money.

Q1: Did they rent, then?

A: Yeah. Oh, yeah. When they started out, they rented, and then when they got -- I was little, but maybe I was like in second grade -- they were already working at the hospital, and the hospital owned a bunch of property that they were trying to unload, and so they bought this house at a really reasonable price. You know, I don't know the price, but they were able to buy it cash, so it had to be a reasonable price. And then they fixed it up. And it's still in my mind, and maybe it's just my child's mind, but I still always tell my husband about it, and I'm like, Oh, if we could have a house like that! Because it had like a basement and an attic and all of these what I called at the time as a little kid secret passages, like back stairs and all of this. It was just -- you know, a big, full por-- front porch and back porch, and a huge yard. So, you know, maybe it's my child's mind that has turned it into this thing that maybe it really never was, but I just thought, you know, that was like the best house that -- because, again, the changing neighborhood and ultimately the stuff that happened, you know, we had to leave.

Q1: So they bought a house in the Back of the Yards neighborhood?

A: No, this was in the Garfield, like 55th Garfield --

Q2: I have a question (inaudible). You -- they didn't speak very good English. Were you often like an intermediary --

A: Yeah.

Q2: -- between them and the outside world?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q2: I don't know if -- maybe how -- an example of that or...did you...?

A: Yeah, all the time. I mean, I think I was -- I tell -- another sort of childhood memory is being -- my mom was really big on education. My dad only had a second-grade education, but my mom had a college -- she was a teacher. She went through college and actually taught in Mexico. So that was the other huge discrepancy between them, not that she ever, ever alluded to that as that being a source of their problems, but I would imagine that it probably was. But it is. She was always big on education, so from the time I was little, she was determined that I was going to -- you know, it was sort of ingrained in me that I was going to get an education, go to college, become something, and then get married, but it wasn't going to happen before I'd gotten all this education. So through her limited English and her limited ability, she figured out how to put me in nursery school. And the bus would come and pick me up. It was Mother Goose Nursery School. And I didn't -- I

understood English, I guess, but I didn't speak it, because -- I guess I learned English from TV, but I didn't really speak English, and there was nobody to teach me English at home, so when I went to nursery school, I didn't speak English. And the kids were mean, as kids are, because I didn't speak, and I was always getting beat up. And one time -- you know, not badly, but, you know, kids would pick on me. But I always knew that I couldn't tell them. I was, like, protecting them, even as, like, a -- how old would I have been? -- three-year-old. I remember -- a very distinct memory is that I couldn't tell them what happened, really, because I -- one time I got a bloody nose because they hit me. And I had this Thumbelina doll with a little white dress, and I used the dress to, you know, clean myself up. And so they asked what happened, and I wouldn't tell them, because in my mind I was protecting them because I knew that they couldn't defend me, that I would put them in the situation of having to talk to somebody, and I knew that they couldn't. And that just sort of sticks in my mind, is how did I know that? And at that age, that I didn't want to -- them feel embarrassed or helpless. So yes. And because of that -- I mean, not that my kids would be in this situation -- but I think I've gone overboard and I try never to put my kids in a position of responsibility.

Well, now my son's 15, so I do. But when they were little, when he's still little, when he was little, I just refused to do it, because it's a huge burden. And not that they put me there -- I sort of put myself there because I knew it -- but I just think that there are certain things that little kids shouldn't be exposed to because you kind of grow up, you know, before you should. You know, you're at a different place, and you should just be a kid. And that's been my sort of biggest beef when I'm -- sometimes, as a lawyer, even before a lawyer, if I saw a kid -- you know, parents trying to communicate through their kids, if I could offer my services, you know, not in a nosy way, but just, you know, ask them if they need help so that the kids aren't put in that position. Because I don't think -- you know, there are some things that go on in the court that the kids really shouldn't necessarily be dragged into, and there they are, you know, saying, "Well, my mother said my father beat her." You know, (laughs) I just think, you know, that kind of stuff shouldn't happen.

Q2: Do you have brothers or sisters, or --

A: No, I'm an only child.

Q2: Only child. So a lot of the responsibility fell to you?

A: Yeah. (laughs) That was the other... They were -- obviously my dad was a lot older, so I think I was born --

I was trying to do the math the other day. It all gets kind of fuzzy. But she was 30, so he was almost 50. She was 30 when I was born, and if he was 14 years older, he was 48. So, you know, I was sort of the culmination of both of their dreams because they learned to coexist. And now, since my dad's been dead, he's become a saint. And he was a really good dad, but again, there were -- you know, it wasn't the marriage that my mother would have picked, so I was sort of the center, you know, that everything revolved around me. And, you know, I mean, poor me, right? (laughs) There are worse things in life. But on the other hand, again, I was always conscious of that, and it was a huge responsibility, because I didn't want to disappoint them, because I kind of knew that this was it. You know, if I was out of the picture -- you know, they would talk about -- I was sort of the thing they both -- the common goal. You know, and they didn't really have any -- and the store became a common goal for them. But they didn't have these -- it's not like they would ever go out alone or they'd have any interest in going off anywhere. If it didn't involve me or the store, it, you know, didn't happen. So that was also -- you know, not that, you know -- it was great. They -- you know, I was loved. I mean, I never doubted that I was loved or -- and my mom still lives

with us. It's kind of funny. I'm still spoiled in that way. But, you know, it's hard sometimes, I think. If you -- you know, again, if you're aware that you're the center of their life, it's a huge responsibility.

Q1: How did -- can you talk more about how you navigated sort of the ethnic traditions, maybe, or talk a little bit about the ethnic traditions growing up and how you navigated that in sort of the outside world.

A: (laughs) Well, I always joked that that's -- did I navigate it? I joked that I always thought I was an immigrant until -- I mean, I didn't really. But I always felt -- my parents -- my mother -- one of my mother's favorite -- my favorite quotes of my mother's is when I would try to introduce some idea like, you know, going to a sleepover, something as innocent as that, you just -- Mexicans -- I don't think Latinos in general have sleepovers. They don't even understand the concept of you wanting to sleep at somebody else's house. And so that was like she just didn't buy it. I could never do it. They just didn't understand it. And, you know, so things like that or, you know, going out and staying out 'til, you know, midnight, that was just something they couldn't understand. And whenever I would try to introduce something like that, she would say, "I don't know where you

get these American ideas." It's like, "Well, I live here." (laughter) I was born here; I live here. So they would always ship me off to Mexico every summer. And we have a very big extended family out there. You had cousins. When my husband went to meet them, just like his eyes were, like, rolling in his head, because he's like, "Who are all these people?" Because everybody was telling him, since he's now married to me, "I'm your cousin so-and-so." And his family is very close-knit, and he kept going, "They're not my cousins. They're not my cousins." But we have a very big family. So they would ship me out there. So I would spend my summers out there. You know, I would spend my time with my parents and their adult friends. You know, only children tend to do that a lot. They're with adults a lot. So I really felt like -- I didn't feel comfortable in the American world. You know, in grammar school, it wasn't so bad, because most of the -- half the kids, if not more, in my class were Hispanic. So, you know, similar traditions, similar things, so there wasn't a big, um -- it didn't feel uncomfortable. High school felt a little bit uncomfortable. College felt extremely uncomfortable. Law school was the worst. I almost dropped out of law school because I totally felt alienated. I was I think the only Hispanic in my section. There was another girl, woman,

[Annalisa?], who I actually named my daughter after, but Anna was more -- she was half-Hispanic, half-Italian, I think had been raised in Rockford, so all -- you know, not at all the same background. So she was -- she maneuvered that group very well. She could -- and I just couldn't. I felt really isolated and, you know, it was very uncomfortable for me. And it tell the story of walking through Lincoln Park -- I went to DePaul undergrad, and I would take classes at the north campus, and walking around that area -- where I now live, strangely enough. And I would walk by, and I actually felt like people knew I didn't belong. I specifically remember having that feeling. And yet I met my -- and then I met my husband in college, and his dream was to live there. And I was just like, "But, but we don't belong. What do you mean?" So it took me a really -- now I'm comfortable in my own skin and I'm comfortable wherever, but I -- but it took a really long time. I think it was after I was married to him, because he was so different, that -- and watching my son. My son is totally comfortable already. He's been comfortable in his own skin, and he's very social, and he's just so confident that I have no idea where he came from. (laughter) So I'm really proud of that. I don't know where it came from, but I'm really proud, because I

thought, Oh, wow. If I could be like that now. I don't know how he's pulled it off. But, you know, it's a diff-- it's difficult if you had parents like I did. Well, it's mostly my mother. My mother was a dominant force in the family. And she was determined that I was going to be Mexican. You know, we were just living here. And for a long time, in her mind it was like -- it was -- we were passing through. We were eventually going to go back. So she wanted to make sure that I kept up with the traditions and, you know, I had the big cotillion, and, you know, I would go to Mexico every summer. And her rule was English from the door out, Spanish, door in. You know, you couldn't ever speak to her in English. She was just very -- wanted to maintain those traditions. And it was -- you know, it gets harder. It gets harder to explain to your friends why you can't do certain things. They just don't get it.

Q2: Did you go to private schools or public schools?

A: Yeah, Catholic school.

Q2: Catholic school?

A: They were poor, but they worked really hard. They even would walk to work to save the bus fare, which at that time I think was like 10 or 20 cents. But they were determined to save every cent so that I wouldn't suffer. So they were

determined that I was going to go to Catholic school, because in my mom's mind, it was better than public school. You know, and there was no way that she wasn't going to have the best that she could provide from her daughter. So that's what it was. And I joked when my son was looking at schools -- he was actually at the Chicago Public Schools at the time, and I got an offer that I could get him into a magnet school. And I kind of just chuckled and thought, My mother would be horrified. She'd offer to pay the -- "Is it the money? I'll pay." (laughs)

Q1: So was religion a strong factor in your background or (inaudible)?

A: Yeah. My real name, my full name -- which I've never used -- my full name is Patricia of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mendoza. So I never use it. I just put "none." It's too hard to explain. But yes, my father was very devout Cath-- well, they're both very devout Catholics, and my father is very devout to the Virgin Mary, and he was convinced -- and I don't mean to be skeptical, because I too -- but he was convinced that, you know, there -- that everything good in this life was attributed to her, and so that was my given name. So I've never -- so yes. (laughs)

Q1: And as far as school, the elementary school that you went to, what was the name of that school?

A: Well, I started out at Visitation, which was in the Garfield area, through sixth grade, and then in sixth grade I went to Holy Cross in Back of the Yards.

Q1: OK. Can we just go back a little bit and talk about your parents' experience owning their own store and really how that happened, how they were able to sort of make that happen and where it was established and how they could -- negotiated that, working as husband and wife.

A: Yeah. You know, I don't even -- I think every -- they would say, and I think so, they are really strong believers or...in the good nature of people. Throughout their experience here -- my mom talks about people that she met at the hospital that they worked at who actually -- you know, the woman, [Ms. Gaffeny?] or something, who helped her find the nursery school for me. Then there were people, and I can't say who, but people within that same group who helped them find the store, you know, on Halsted, and then [very?] people who worked at the flower shop downtown at the Bismarck Hotel who hooked them up with the wholesalers for flowers, and he told them where they needed to go. And at first we didn't have a car, so I do remember taking the bus -- the place is still there, one of them, Vans Flowers, right on Randolph -- and I remember taking the bus with my mom, and we'd lug these -- and it's a big

box of flowers. It's about, you know, this big. And lugging it on another -- you know, as you look back, you know, it's all the transportation we had. Lugging the box with the flowers, you know, the two of us. You know, getting on the bus, loading our box of flowers, and then, you know, getting off on Halsted and dropping it off. But it was really, you know, the goodness of people, people who are willing to share their expertise and help them instead of, you know, fearing competition, who were -- you know, who helped them set up shop.

Q1: Were those other Latinos or were those just neighbors within the community?

A: No. We've been -- it's been -- it's been everybody. You know, it was other Latinos in certain respects, but it was also not, you know. It was just kind people. And that's -- you know, that's why I think my parents -- you know, I didn't know prejudice. They didn't know -- you know, they didn't know a lot, but they never really had any notions or bad notions about people, because they had help from every -- you know, from different groups. And so they've had, you know, overall a very positive experience, and they found that, you know, there were always good people willing to help.

Q1: You mentioned a little bit about the race riots that occurred in the neighborhood. How did they process that, you know, with their business, and just that amount of escalated violence in the community?

A: You know -- you know, I think I'm going to go home and talk to my mom about that and ask her. I never really asked her, but I don't remember them -- it was just one of those -- something that they just accepted as -- they didn't question it. They didn't question the reason for it. They didn't question... They just sort of accepted that this was happening. You know, they didn't question the bigger global issues. You know, they certainly didn't -- I know they've never sat around and pondered, you know, as I do with my husband and my older son, you know, "Why did these things happen? How do you feel about it? What do you think?" I just think that when you're -- and I realize that that's the luxury that I have that they didn't have. When you're thinking about survival, you really can't think about the why or how could it be different. You just got to think about, What do we need to -- what's the next step? What do we need to do. You know, not -- so they didn't think about, Why is this happening, they just sort of said, This is happening. It's no longer safe. We need to figure out where we're going to go next.

Q1: Did they -- can you talk a little bit -- do you remember the riots? Can you talk a little -- what -- is it the housing riots or...?

A: It was just race riots. It was around 1967. You know, it was actually -- I can't remember if it was before or after Martin Luther King -- because I also actually remember very specifically the day Martin Luther King was killed, because I remember being let out of school early and walking out, and there was like a sea of parents waiting for their kids, and I just -- it made an impression on me, just because there were so many people, and there was all of this activity. So it was around that time. I don't know if that was before or after, but it was around that same time. And they would just -- it was -- it happened in the -- it would happen around the summers when it was hot, you know, and people would just -- stuff would start being yelled across the way. You know, literally Halsted was the dividing line. And then the next thing you know, rocks were thrown, bottles were thrown, things got out of control. You know, you'd wake up the next day and there'd be a lot of shattered glass, a lot of broken windows. You know, I was only seven at the time, so it's -- again, at that point, I didn't understand what was going on, I just know that it was going on, and I was (inaudible) my

parents. It wasn't something that we discussed. I just sort of remember, like I said, being in the middle of it. And I do remember my parents not understanding it, because they would have these discussions, you know, about African-Americans, like, "But they're nice people; they're good people. They're our customers." They just couldn't understand what the animosity was.

Q1: Was there a large police presence, do you remember?

A: Yeah. Well, I mean, yeah. (laughs) Once it broke out.

Q1: I mean, did that sort of affect -- did that -- you know, did they talk about that as far as sort of something that scared them, as far as having that state presence there or...?

A: No, if anything, I mean, I think that would --

Q1: (inaudible) secure.

A: -- would safe -- that made them feel safer.

Q1: OK. Can you talk a little bit about your -- you talked a lot about your mother as far as, I don't know if you would say an influence in your life. Were there other women, role models, in your early -- your background, your early experience, that made an impression on you as far as your legal career or helping you to sort of foster specific goals and things in your later life that you can talk about?

A: Yeah. Well, the other one that comes to mind, probably the other most dominant force in my life after my mother is a woman who's now a judge, Consuelo Bedoya.

Q1: Could you spell her name?

A: C-O-N-S-U-E-L-O. Consuelo Bedoya. B-E-D-O-Y-A. She was a lawyer. I was maybe a freshman in college, and my mom, you know, had this storefront... I'm trying to think. She had some landlord-tenant problem. So I think -- well, we had -- on top of the storefront there were some apartments, and so she was having some landlord-tenant problems, and we needed a lawyer. And I don't know -- I can't recall exactly how she hooked up with Consuelo Bedoya. But Consuelo became our lawyer, and then they became friends. And Consuelo would come over to the house and, you know, socialize. And one day she asked me, she said, "Well, what do you -- you know, are you working right now? Do you want to...?" and offered me a job, basically, in her office downtown. And that was a turning point for me. I'd never worked -- I had worked. I started working when I was 16, I should add much over my parents' objection, because why should I work? They'd worked all this time so that I didn't have to work. But I got a job at a doctor's, eye doctor's -- my eye doctor's office when I was 16. But I'd never worked outside of the neighborhood. So this was my

first experience working downtown in an office, and it was really -- you know, I just remember the -- I still remember the first store that I bought something at downtown. (laughs) It's gone now, but I remember. My first credit card was from that store, and just, you know, felt like I'd arrived. I was going downtown; I had a job in an office building. But at the time, when I started college -- I have a knack for languages, so I was a language major, and I'd created this curriculum of international business. At the time, believe it or not, there wasn't an international business curriculum. Now, you know, it is, but at the time, there was no -- there was nothing in place. And so, through a counselor, we created a program. So I was in the liberal arts program, because there they were very liberal about what you could take. If I'd been in the commerce program, which was all business stuff, they wouldn't have allowed me to take any languages. So I was in liberal arts, but I took all the business courses. So I created this curriculum, and I was going to, you know, travel and see the world, and, you know, cut business deals. But then I started working for Consuelo, and then I decided that I -- I went on an international business trip, and I realized that I loved traveling but I really didn't care about business. I was just kind of bored and just thought, why

are these people obsessing about this? It's so unimportant in the scheme of things. And I decided I wanted to be a social worker. Sort of reflecting back, I think, on everything that my parents had gone through, and I wanted to do something to alleviate some of the problems that my community had faced. And so I just thought, you know, Business is not for me. I'm going to go into social work. And Consuelo was like, "No, you're crazy. You want to be a lawyer." And I'm like, No, I don't. I was very shy. If you looked at me, I would blush. I was just very shy. I didn't -- couldn't imagine standing up and doing an oral argument, or, you know, talking to a jury. And Consuelo, like my mother -- I realized that strong women have a strong influence on me. Consuelo's a very strong woman and had quite a temper. I love her dearly, but she had quite a temper. And I just thought, I could never be you. It was just -- there's just no way. And she said, "No, you need to be a lawyer." She said, "As a social worker, you can only do so much. You can identify the problem, but you can't fix the problem. As a lawyer, you can fix the problem. And I totally was unconvinced. But she literally got a law school application for me. She'd gone to DePaul, so she got the law school application, put it in front of me, and literally made me fill it out. Wouldn't let me

leave 'til I filled it out. So I remember having kind of this, "Fine, I'll fill it out. They'll reject me and then you can all get over it." Because by then, my mom and she was conspiring. My mom was thrilled at the idea that she could have a lawyer daughter. So, you know, I applied to one law school. That's how naïve I was and how not committed to that I was, because, you know, who applies to one law school? But I was like, I'm going to apply, they'll reject me, you can all get over it, because I'm going to grad school to be a social worker. You people are crazy. But I got accepted. And so then I was kind of like, Well, fine, I'll try it out. No big deal. I need some time to figure out what I really want to do, but I didn't -- I wasn't really committed at all to the process. And I think that's part of what -- why my first year of law school was such -- I was in such turmoil, because I was surrounded by people who probably wanted to be a lawyer since they got out of diapers. You know, very confident people who knew everything, you know, or appeared to know everything and were very confident. And there I am thinking, I don't know if this is what I want to do. I don't understand what they're talking about. You know, and that's what happens. If you're not committed to your goal, then it's very easy to be shaken. And so I had a very

first year, or first semester, I should say, because I was not a happy camper. I wasn't sure that that's where I should be. I sort of felt isolated. Nobody else that looked like me or seemed to have my insecurities. And I was actually ready to drop out before the first year of exams, and I owe the fact that I am a lawyer to this professor, Professor Blackman, who was my constitutional law professor, and by all accounts -- I should go off the record for this, but oh well -- by all accounts, nobody really liked him. He's very -- a very, very strange individual. You know, he just -- he didn't have good interpersonal relationships. It's not like anybody ever said, "I want to go out to drinks with him." You know, he's just a very strange bird. But he was the person -- they'd assigned counselors to all of us or people who we had to report to, so in order to drop out, I needed to get his signature on the form that I could be allowed to drop out. And I remember going to see him. And yes, I was in his class, but I'm sure he had no idea who I was, because it was a class of 300 or something. So I know he didn't know who I was. But I went, and I said, you know, "I'm in your con law class. Besides that, you've been appointed my advisor, and I want to drop out." And it would have been very easy for him to just sign that form and say, "Well,

good luck you. OK." But he didn't. He actually said, "Why do you want to drop out?" I said, "Well, because I'm going to fail." He said, "How do you know you're going to fail?" I said, "Trust me, (laughs) I know." I said, "I just -- I don't understand anything. I'm totally blown away. Everybody seems to know what they're doing. I don't. I never really wanted to do this anyway." And he said, "Well, you know what? I don't think you're giving yourself a chance." He said, "Why don't you give yourself a chance, take the exams, and let's say the worst thing happens and you fail -- although I don't think you're going to fail." And in retrospect, how would he know? He didn't even know me. But he said, "I don't think you're going to fail. But even if you do, it doesn't mean you're a failure, it just means you were meant to do something else. But give yourself a chance." So I didn't drop out, and I didn't fail. So -- and I never said thank you to him because he's, again, you know, not... But a few years ago, DePaul -- I can't remember what year, but a few years ago. Maybe in 2000 or 2002. DePaul gives out alumni awards every year, so it's my turn, finally, so they gave me (laughs) this award. And it would -- I didn't even know you were supposed to speak. I thought you were just supposed to go up and say thanks. But people started

speaking, and I thought, Oh, God, now what? But I saw him in the audience. So actually had the opportunity to say -- it blew him away, because I said, "Well, I actually owe getting this award to someone who's in this room and doesn't even know it, Professor Blackman," and he's like, Who's she? (laughs) But I related the story. Because if he hadn't have made me stay in, I never would have, you know, succeeded, or, you know, been doing what I've been happily doing for so many years.

Q1: So what would you say was the turning point, then, when you were in law school?

A: Well, one, discovering that I didn't fail, (laughs) that I actually did OK. And secondly, I discovered legal services. There was, you know, the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago, which actually works, you know, with -- provides legal services to people who can't afford attorneys. And I again couldn't tell you exactly how I found out about them, but I did, and so starting in my -- actually, that first semester -- I got a job at legal services, and sort of the rest is history. It was, you know -- I've never -- it's like I found my home. I found exactly where I wanted to be. And I was in the Pilsen office. So there I am, in, you know, the community that I wanted to serve, serving people who are experiencing the

same kinds of things that my parents had experienced, and actually being able to help them. You know, and seeing the results and seeing the gratitude. One of my memories that sticks in my mind, and it's sort of what keeps me grounded, is this memory of this -- and I was only a law student, so this happened a very long time ago. But I'd helped this woman with a landlord-tenant problem. And it was something -- they wanted to evict her because her son was kind of a problem. So it wasn't anything she did. But he'd visit and he'd be a troublemaker. And we were able to work it out, so she got to stay in her apartment. It was no big deal. You know, we didn't even go to court. It was, you know, something that we were able to resolve just by talking to the landlord and mostly pleading her situation. You know, she was an old woman. And she came by afterwards, a few weeks afterwards, and she had this little orange in her hand. And she came in and asked to see me. I thought, Well, maybe she has another problem. She came in, she sat down. She was sort of just chit-chatting. And I'm chit-chatting back, but I'm thinking, Well, I wonder what her problem is. How do I ask her why she's here without sounding rude? You know, what do you want today? And she's just bouncing this orange back and forth. And then she finally, like, sort of ended the conversation, and

she said, "Well, OK. I just wanted to come by and say hello," and then she just left the orange on my desk and she left. And that was her way of saying thank you. And I was just really moved by that, because it was such an insignificant little thing that I did in the scheme of things. You know, very few lawyers would be proud of this thing that didn't even go to court, and it got resolved. But it really -- I was really touched. And I was touched that it meant enough for her to come back and give the little that she could give.

Q1: Very heartfelt.

A: Yeah, yeah. And that's all I ever wanted to do. You know, some -- I've ended up in other places, which we'll probably get to, but that is my -- legal services is my most rewarding experience, because there were problems that I had experi-- a lot of which I or my family had experienced personally, and so it felt really good to be able to help and to be able to resolve them.

Q1: How long did you work there for?

A: Well, I worked there all through law school, more or less. I mean, I got -- I realized that I had to maybe test some other things, but I always come back. And then I worked in legal services once I graduated for -- 'til '88. I graduated in -- no, that's not true. 'Til '92. I

graduated in ’84. And the only reason I left was because there were budget cuts and they closed two of our offices. And one of the offices they closed was the 18th Street office, which by then I’d become the supervisor of. So it was one of those cut off your nose to spite your face. I took it so personally that they closed the office because it was really closing a door to my community, and I felt these people are not going to get on a bus and go downtown, I know, that I quit out of anger. Which I don’t recommend. (laughs) It’s one of those life lessons. But I guess it all worked out, because I probably wouldn’t have ended up here if I hadn’t gone through the things that I have done, you know, had the jobs that I subsequently had. But it was my most rewarding experience. And if anything, I feel like now, where I’m at -- I just started my judicial career, but I’m in traffic court, and I feel like I’m seeing the same people that I started out serving, and I feel like I’m back in the same place, on the other side, which is even better, because now I get to not plead the case but actually decide the case. So I’m very happy.

Q1: Did -- for your work with the legal services, that corresponded with the election of Mayor Washington. Did you feel like that really changed the nature of the city, and you can tell me a little bit about that?

A: You know, it's funny that you should mention that, because I stayed up watching council wars. I was so inspired by all of that or invigo-- I don't know what. But I would stay up, I remember, stay up and watching all this play out, and really feeling like I wanted to get involved. Like, this was such a turning point. Yeah. I mean, that had an impact on my life because I think that too confirmed that this is where I needed to be, that I wanted to be some element of change, that I would never be content -- although I should have figured this out early -- but I'm never content just to be a cog in the wheel. I always feel like I have to be a joiner. Like, even in our church. It's not enough to go to church. They have all these different -- our church is very active and has a lot of stuff, and I always feel like, OK. I look at the bulletin every time we go, OK, I'll do that, I'll do that. And my husband's like, what is your problem? And I said, "You know me. I have to be a joiner. I have to be part of a movement or part of change. I can't just..." I had to feel like I belong or like I'm part of something. So that for me was sort of -- that was happening around the time that I had just graduated from law school, and it really sort of confirmed that I wanted to be an activist.

Q2: Were you politically active, or were you...?

A: No. I mean, I was sort of taught politically -- no. Never. Again, it's all about what you're exposed to. Like, yesterday somebody said -- oh, yeah. A colleague of mine, who also became a judge with me, he said -- he was talking about his life history. And I guess he's first generation. He's Jewish. His dad came from somewhere, but (inaudible). But anyway, just talking about the immigrant experience and how -- I'm sure he said, "I'm sure you grew up believing that you could be anything, just like me." And I'm like, "Uh, no." (laughs) There were certain things -- it just wasn't even in my world that I would ever be a lawyer, or much less a judge. So, you know, it's all about your experience. So in my house, we didn't talk politics. Nobody ever questioned why things happened. So no, I wasn't political at all. This was sort of watching this thing play out and the unfairness of it. And again, sort of the thing that I think has been a constant in my life, and maybe it was because of what I saw with respect to the race riots, I've always been aware of racial stuff, of racial tensions, and I've always wanted to be a part of changing that or, you know, turning that around. In high school, I actually joined the African-American club. It's kind of funny because you see the picture, and it's all African-Americans and me. (laughs) And I didn't do it -- I

did it because they were my friends, but I think it was a way to, like, bridge the -- you know, to try to do my part to bridge the gap. So that is one thing. And maybe it was that and it's unconscious, because I can't say I ever said because of what I saw when I was seven years old I'm determined to change that. But maybe that's what it is. Because in that sense, I was active in high school and trying to, you know, bring groups together. That's sort of been a constant if you look at everything I've done. It's always been about -- you know, I'm now the chair of the Alliance of Latinos and Jews. I'm the Latina part. So I've always been part of, like, these group -- organizations that try to bring groups together and try to bridge racial or ethnic divides. But as far as politically active in a diff-- in the sense that you're saying, no, it never even occurred to me. The first exposure to something on that level is watching the council wars, watching what was happening with Harold Washington and the unfairness of it all. And so again, I guess I was coming at it from the racial -- that aspect.

Q1: Could you talk a little bit more about that time period and Mayor Washington's elections. And did you find that inspiring? His platform. And just talk a little bit about how it affected the city, maybe, or at least your

participation with the legal services. Did it change? Sort of the context.

A: Again, I watched it, and I was inspired by it, and I sort of felt, like I said, that I wanted to be some element of change. But again, I was still so naïve as to the bigger picture, what was going on. It's only in retrospect that I looked at stuff. Because I ended up being at MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund, and we did redistricting. And so then reading back on the transcripts of that period, which is around the time that the first Latino aldermen were elected and all of that stuff, I look at it and I realize how monumental that was. At the time, I wasn't really focused on, you know, the bigger impact of the community, it was going to have on the city. It was again for me, just I couldn't believe that there was such racism and it was so blatant. You know, that -- it's not like I was naïve and that people weren't racist, but that they were so comfortable in their own skin that they would openly, you know, say things that were so racist and feel OK about it.

Q1: Can you talk a little bit more about the legal assistance foundation?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q1: What were the biggest challenges, like the reoccurring themes you saw when you worked there, and how did you not become really jaded by that?

A: You know, I -- that's a question my husband always asks, (laughs) because he couldn't -- you know, I'd tell him the stories, and he just would -- after a certain point, he's like, "I don't want to hear it." You know, it just -- I don't know how I didn't become jaded, but I think because I always -- it made me happy to -- or it made it worth it when you'd see the outcome, you know, if it was a good outcome. And the reality is that a lot of times you were able to get good outcomes for people, either because -- you know, maybe -- a lot of times it was procedural stuff. A lot of times you'd just wear down the other side. Because the bottom line, these people don't have money. So the reoccurring themes were either it was landlord-tenant stuff, where at a minimum -- at worst -- and most of the time if they didn't have money they were going to have to move. But if they had me advocating for them, then they didn't have to move next week; I could buy them maybe a month. Because the reality is that, you know, I would explain to the landlord, "Well, you could get your judgment, but your five-day notice is defective, so you're going to have to start over, and then you're going to have

to re-file, and then that's going to take a while, and then once you even get the order, the judge is going to give you two days, but then you got to place it with the sheriff, and that's going to take another..." So the reality is that -- you learn all these things as lawyers, so it was game-playing. It was pointing out, look, this is going to take you two months anyway. So instead of having to pay the court costs and having to drag it out, we'll enter into an agreement right now. This person will move in two months. But they don't pay them rent. So meanwhile, these people can be saving their money to find something else. So, you know, those -- or, the other -- you know, landlord-tenant were very common themes. Or collection cases. People buy a car, and most of the time they buy a used car, it breaks down, they stop paying. They don't realize that once they buy the car, the paper is sold to a third party that isn't responsible for the car. And so they stop paying. They don't realize that the dealership could care less, because they've gotten their money because they've sold the paper, and that they have no recourse. So. But there is. There's always a recourse, because they never give all the notices the way they're supposed to, and so again, there was a technical way to get them out of the contract. So, you know, that -- there were ways to save

people that if they didn't have us, they would be stuck with a huge judgment for a car they no longer -- well, they have, but is not functional. So, you know, it's the outcomes that made me feel better. That people kept experiencing these made me outraged, but that I was able to help them. You know, there was a lot of satisfaction in that. Battered women -- that was another big topic that was probably the least rewarding, because there is the battered women syndrome, and people -- you know, for psychological reasons, women stay in these bad relationships and they choose not to go forward. And that was a little disheartening. But I learned a lot. You know, I learned to understand. You know, you have so many people who will say, well, why don't these women just get out? And to understand and to be able to argue, it's not that simple. You know, there are all of these, you know, mental chains that keep them here. And, you know, but every once in a while, when the woman would actually finally have enough and move on, that's -- that was rewarding. You know, Social Security, disability, that was easy, that was great. You got the money. You were able to, you know, get their check. So I just found it all in all a very positive and rewarding experience. And like I said, if they hadn't closed the office, I'd still be there.

You know, I had no aspirations of being a judge, or I had no grand plan about -- you know, no five-year, ten-year plan. My plan was to serve the community that I wanted to serve, and I was there. So I would have no reason to leave if I hadn't been forced to leave.

Q1: Why did they close the office?

A: It was budget cuts. It was 1992, the Reagan years, and there were huge cuts to legal services. And the board needed to make some decisions, and, you know, they chose to -- for whatever reasons, they chose to close the two offices I had worked at, actually. I started out in the uptown office, and then when I became a supervisor, I was at the 18th Street office, and they closed both of those. And I was too personally involved to view it rationally or to understand mana-- I was management, because I was a supervisor, but I didn't understand, and I actually led the rally against the closing, which could have gotten me fired, but I didn't care. You know, like I said, it was personal to me.

Q1: Can you talk a little bit about how you led the rally?

A: Well, I (inaudible) community groups. You know, we showed up. I spoke out against it, which was like -- and again, it's not even like I consciously said, I'm going to defy my supervisor. I was speaking from sort of a moral position

in my heart. It didn't even occur to me that this was, like, really bad protocol, you know, that I'm management and here I am going up against the super-- you know, the management, the executive director. But I just felt like it was something that I had to do. I had to speak out. And, you know, I led this -- you know, organized community groups, held the meetings, had them show up to the, to the -- they had like an open -- I can't even think of what you call them -- where they have people come and talk, give their reasons, as if they were going to listen. And I realized when I showed up -- I was so disheartened because half the board members weren't there. And it was at that point that I realized -- again, I'm really -- I was really naïve -- I realized the decision had already been made. You know, because they weren't even there. So there were all these people giving testimonials about what -- how it would hurt the community, but they weren't there to listen. So that's -- I realized that it was over before it was over. And then when they made the decision, they made it at the board meeting, and I trooped all the community groups in. And one of them was even this child daycare center, [Hogar del Niño?], that brought all these little kids in. So the room was packed with people from the community just to hear the decision, to try to maybe guilt

them into making some other decision. But of course they didn't. But that was -- again, it wasn't like a conscious thing that I said, I am going to lead this, it was just something that came from within. It wasn't like it -- and it happened. And it really didn't even dawn on me what I did until one of my former supervisors from when I was a law student -- and remember, I told you I was very shy and quiet -- wrote me a letter and said that he'd never been so proud, because he really had underestimated me; he had not realized what I was made of. And I was like, what's he talking about? (laughs) Because, again, I hadn't done it with any -- it was just something that I did because I felt I had to do, but I didn't really realize that it was anything, you know, extraordinary or anything. But I guess given what he'd seen when I was a law student, I wouldn't even speak. You know, I was afraid to offer an opinion for fear that I'd be wrong, and yet here I am going up against management. You know.

Q1: So what did you do, then, after they closed the --

A: Eighteenth Street office?

Q1: -- foundation?

A: Well, at first they transferred me to co-supervise the northwest office, which is the office on Division, Milwaukee, and Ashland, which was the other Hispanic -- you

know, office that served the Hispanic community. But that office already had a supervisor, so I kind of felt like I was -- you know, it was uncomfortable because it was like I was on his turf. You know, you don't need two supervisors. So it felt really strange. And again, I could have made it work, but I was -- I was angry because they'd closed the office. And so a friend of mine who was working at the ACLU called me and said, "They've got an opening. Do you want to apply?" And I didn't really think about what the ACLU was, what they stood for. I just went and applied, and they hired me. And I quit, and oh, I felt so good telling Sheldon that I quit. And it was the stupidest decision of my life, (laughs) because the ACLU was not for me. Three weeks into the job I realized I'd made a horrible mistake, and I also realized it would be really embarrassing to quit right away, so I was stuck.

Q1: Why was it a mistake?

A: Because it was so different. In legal services, I was -- it was direct service. I was serving the people I wanted to serve, I was -- it was direct problem-solving. The ACLU is more -- you deal with issues, not people. It's not about people, it's about issues. Moreover, it's about generally issues that are controversial and are very necessary to our democracy but not issues that I personally

wanted to fight for. You know, I was working on hate speech, but defense of hate speech, so, you know, I'm -- you know, I was thinking, Why am I doing this? You know. I understand it intellectually and I understand the need to defend everybody's right to free speech, but life's too short for me to be doing it. (laughs) It felt wrong. Sort of the aha moment, real aha moment, came to me when I was debating someone on TV about the rights of child molesters to privacy. Because at that time they were contemplating the passage of Megan's Law, which ultimately did pass, where, you know, you need to know -- the law was that neighbors need to know if a child molester has moved into their neighborhood. And of course the ACLU was against that for privacy reasons. My son was three at the time. I was debating this person, I was saying all the right things or the things I was supposed to say, and up here there was this little voice going, what are you talking about? You know? Get out. Get out now! (laughs) It just felt so wrong. And I think -- I watched the interview on TV, and it was really funny, because --

(whispered interruption)

A: You know, you see these things coming out of my mouth, but the expression on my face was like, don't believe it. (laughter) I realized -- I was like, Oh, God, I've got to

get out. But I was still in the dilemma of you can't quit after a month. I just quit the last job. What am I going to do? So it was a really, really miserable year. But I got lucky because I was litigating a case against the Chicago public schools, and the second -- the first assistant of the law department of the Chicago public schools saw me at an event one day and asked me, "So how's it working for Harvey?" who was the executive director of the ACLU. And it was not, not an easy person to work for, and even a worse person to litigate against, which is why this guy was asking. And of course I said, "Well, it's fine," (laughs) you know. Again, not very convincing. And he said, "Oh, because I was wondering if you were happy," and he said, "because, you know, we have openings at the board." And I remember being able -- instead of sort of jumping up and down and hugging him, I just said, "Oh, you know, I might be interested, because I'm not getting enough trial experience," which is what my out was. And so I went and interviewed and they hired me. You know, it was so silly, because it was like the minute they offered me the job I was like, you know, think about it: yes! But I always tell this guy, [Mike Hernandez?], that he was -- afterwards I told him how unhappy I was and I told him he was my savior because I couldn't have quit, but it was a

lot nicer to say, Well, I was recruited away. I was so good, they recruited me away. (laughter) But...

Q1: What year was that?

A: Nineteen ninety... I left the ACLU in ninety... four? Yeah. And I was at the board -- yeah, and I went to the board.

Q2: You mentioned a Sheldon when you left legal -- I was just wondering the last name.

A: Sheldon [Rudman?].

Q2: OK.

A: Who's still there. He's a (inaudible). He's held that place together.

Q1: So then you went to work as an assistant attorney for the Chicago Board of Education?

A: Mm-hmm.

Q1: And can you tell us a little bit about that experience? You were more involved in litigation, you said?

A: Yeah, and it was a one-time -- if you look at sort of my history -- if somebody were just looking at the résumé they'd say, OK, one of these is not like the other; one of these doesn't fit. (inaudible). Yeah. Because there I was defending a government entity as opposed to fighting a government entity. But again, I wasn't really thinking, I was just thinking, this is my way out. But it worked out

well, because the reason they hired me was they needed somebody to do their First Amendment cases, and because I'd been at the ACLU, that was sort of my, you know, forte. But it was defending -- in this case, it was whistleblower teachers, and we were -- who, who, who like, you know, complained about something at the Board of Ed, got fired, and now they were suing the Board for wrongful discharge. So I was still in the wrong place because I was defending the alleged bad actor, but what I found is that sometimes these teachers needed to be fired. So I didn't feel guilty about what I was doing at all. I actually felt like it was a good thing. You know, I felt like -- I got to see the other side, and I realized government is not always bad, you know. There are some people that really -- you know, there are some bad actors on the other side. And so it was a very rewarding experience. I did their First Amendment stuff, you know, got federal court trial experience, handled cases, their cases with the EEOC. I also got to handle local school council issues, and that was another thing that I had not done, so it was interesting. That was -- the local school council stuff had just started. That was when that movement started, and they had introduced them, so it was interesting to see how that worked or didn't work. So I loved my experience there. I thought it

was very rewarding and very interesting, and very challenging.

Q1: What were the biggest challenges that you faced or that you thought that public education system in Chicago faced at that time?

A: Well, the same ones they still do. Shortage of money, you know. It's money -- it's not enough resources, too many children who come unprepared, you know, who have life situations at home that the schools are not equipped to handle. And, you know, it's -- I do recognize that a lot of times teachers had their hands full. There are too many kids in the classroom for them to deal effectively with all the students. You have too many students in different places or with a lot of different problems, so it's a little overwhelming. And then add to that the students who don't speak English. You know, the bilingual program, which I think is just a mess. I don't think there's a good handle on that, and how to integrate children into the system and into the English language. So I think there's a lot of challenges. I really am so impressed with the teacher -- there were some teachers that I was very -- you know, the other thing is there are some teachers that just are really bad, that have become so jaded or burnt out that they're just horrible, and they should be taken out. But

there are a lot of teachers who are so dedicated and who give so much of themselves that I'm just -- I just became so impressed. And so it's both sides. You have the really bad teachers, and then you have the teachers who just give so much, but they're going to get burnt out if they don't get the help that they need. And unfortunately I don't see that that's changed at all.

Q1: How long did you work, then, as assistant attorney?

A: Only a year, because then my dream job -- after -- the Legal Assistance Foundation opened up the -- being executive dir-- or regional counsel of the Mexican-American legal Defense and Educational Fund. That is a civil rights organization. It's sort of like the Hispanic NAACP. When I -- I should backtrack. When I was a law student, I told you most of my law student years I worked for legal assistance. And there was one quarter that I worked for MALDEF, the Mexican-American legal Defense Fund. And I remember having conversation with the regional counsel at that time, [Ray Romero?], one of those "What do you want to do when you grow up?" conversations. And just to be a smart aleck I said to him -- well, partly -- I said, "Well, first I want to be supervisor at the 18th Street office of legal assistance, and then once I get a little experience under my belt, I want your job." And that was the smart-

aleck remark. Because the first thing, I knew I wanted. I knew I wanted to go back to LAF and be the supervisor. And the other part was just, you know, sort of I just threw that in. But I remember that he said, "Well, first of all you'd have to drive Alan Alop out of LAF with a Mack truck. Alan Alop was a supervisor at the time of 18th Street, and he'd been there forever.

Q1: Can you spell his name? I'm sorry.

A: Alan? Alan Alop, A-L-O-P. He's still at LAF, incidentally, but he heads up their consumer division. But he had -- he was a supervisor when I was there, he'd been the supervisor before me, he was still the supervisor, and Ray Romero was like, "You'd have to drive him out of there with a Mack truck. He's not going anywhere." So it was funny when he left and the position opened up, which is when I applied for it. I do remember calling Ray and going, "I didn't have to use a truck! He left all on his own!" But so there it is. Then the second remark had just been sort of some gratuitous thing that I threw in, but the position opened up, and somebody called me and said, you know, this is open. Why don't you...? It was actually Judge Ruben Castillo, federal court judge, Ruben Castillo, who had been the regional counsel at one time. And he called me and said, "You know, the position is open now.

Why don't you apply?" And I thought, I don't know. You know, I was sort of sitting on the fence about it. But then I -- I felt like, I'm loving this experience at the Board, I would love to get more trial work, you know, and I was on the fence. And Judge Castillo said, "Look, if you want the job, you've got to go for it now because it's not going to be there when you're ready. You're either ready now or you're just going to have to kiss it goodbye because you don't know when it's going to open up again." So I reluctantly applied. Because I was really enjoying the Board of Ed stuff, but I realized that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So I applied, and I got it, and I was there for eight years.

Q1: And when did you start, 1995?

A: Nineteen ninety -- November 1995.

Q1: Can you tell us just a little bit about that experience? You're a regional counsel. What did that entail? Like, what region?

A: Oh, everything. (laughs) My husband would joke that I would bring MALDEF to bed for the first six months because it was so overwhelming. The region was the Midwest region, which actually, like, kept getting bigger and bigger, because there's only five regional offices, so if a problem happened in some other place, like Georgia, I'd be dealing

with that even though that's not the Midwest. So it -- you know, the region was pretty much the Midwest, you know, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan -- what else is around there? There were five or six. Whatever. I can't even think. But it was pretty big as it is, and, you know, we're a pretty -- we were a pretty small office. There were eight of us. So to handle all of those issues. So it's a national office, so it was also learning what the issues were affecting the Latino community nationally. It was quite overwhelming. Because, again, I had a very myopic -- I knew what was happening with the community on 18th Street, or, you know, maybe the Mexican community in Chicago, but I wasn't really paying atten-- in fact, my favorite story. I'm so naïve. The first day that I start on the job at MALDEF, I'm getting ready for work and I, you know, put on like a pair of pants and a top because I didn't -- I figure I'm going to be showing up, unpacking boxes, learning how to use the copy machine, no biggie. I'm not going to get -- you know, put on a suit for that. And I'm watching *Good Morning, America* in the background, and they talk about this case that had just been decided in California regarding Prop 187, which was -- and I will tell you now, at the time it didn't really register, but it was, you know, Federal case decided, you know, today, you know,

denying -- or overturning the case that denied benefits to immigrant-- or, illegal immigrants or something. And I said to my husband, "Oh, isn't that interesting." Didn't even faze me. I get to work. No sooner do I get to work, the phones are ringing off the hook with reporters wanting opinions on this decision, because apparently MALDEF California had been a part of this case, and so it was a huge victory for the office. And I had no idea. It hadn't even -- I'm lucky that I knew what they were talking about, only because -- but it was in passing -- "Oh, isn't that interesting?" So I, I, I, I tell people that I learned right on the spot -- you know, it was like, you know, jumping right in -- how to handle reporters. I said, "You know, that's a very interesting question. I'm on the line with another reporter. Let me finish with him, and I'll call you right back." And then I started scrambling. Somebody get me something. And the California office didn't open for two hours because they were behind us. So for two hours I was basically putting reporters off, telling them I was already talking to someone else but I would get back to them as soon as I could, and I'm trying to pull briefs. And I didn't have the most hotshot support staff, so they were not being very helpful trying to find... I'm like, "We have to have something. We have to

have something that tells us..." So what I ended up doing was reading what the *Tribune* said and trying to put together a little sound bite from that and hope that I didn't say anything that would get me fired before I'd even started. So that was my first. But that was how naïve I was with respect to what this job really entailed. And I learned the first day on the job. So then I learned to, like -- for eight years -- and I'm not joking -- I stopped reading anything that wasn't work-related, anything that didn't have to do with Hispanic issues or, you know, legal, national, constitutional issues. I stopped cooking. I had all of these interests that I'd forgotten that I even had. I'm still trying -- like, I'm still sort of stumbling back into things going, Oh yeah, I used to do that. But literally I lost everything else that I was. I completely was sucked into the job. And I loved it, but the last two years were really pretty tough for me because I realized I was so burnt out and I wanted out so bad because I'd lost myself. You know, I mean, my husband was not kidding. At the beginning I'd bring MALDEF to bed because I'd bring things to read. I'd fall asleep, you know, covered in paper because I just needed to be on top of things. And then after a while that got easier because, you know, I wasn't -- I was on top of it, and it's easier just to gain

a little knowledge. But there were still events. Because the other thing we did was fundraise. You know, I had to keep the place afloat. So I was at events almost every night. You know, it was just overwhelming, and I just felt like my family was suffering, I was suffering. You know, it's just really intense. I loved the experience, but I realized maybe six years into the job that it was time to get out. And I hadn't -- again, hadn't had an exit plan, so it took me a while to figure out, Now what?

Q1: Can you just tell us a little bit about the history, maybe, of MALDEF, and...?

A: Yeah. It started in 1968, in Texas, actually. There were a couple of lawyers out of Texas who were sick and tired of seeing all of the injustices that the Hispanic -- the Mexican people in Texas were facing. Because it's less -- you know, we know a little bit, I guess, about what African-Americans have faced, but there were a lot of the same struggles in the Southwest for Hispanics. You know, beaches or pools that Hispanics couldn't go to, cemeteries they couldn't be buried in, things like that. It's not as public or as, as -- you know, they don't really teach it in schools -- but it was happening. And, you know, juries that -- where they'd just -- you know, a Hispanic man was on trial and they would just automatically, you know,

exclude all the Hispanics. So this group of lawyers finally had had enough, and they actually went and talked to the head of the NAACP at the time, Jack Greenberg, who actually took them to Ford Foundation to introduce them, tell them that they wanted to start a similar type of program like the NAACP. And they got their first seed money from Ford, but it was actually through the help -- excuse me -- of the NAACP. And so they started in Texas, and then, you know, the story's a little bit fuzzy about how then they ended up in California, but then the national office moved to California, and then they started opening regional offices. And in 1980, the regional office was opened here in Chicago. It started as a satellite office for just the census work. MALDEF in the beginning has been involved in census stuff and trying to have a hand in redistricting. And so in 1980, or I guess a little before 1980, they opened up an office here just to deal with census, encouraging people to regi-- to answer the census, to be counted. And then after that project, attorneys here lobbied MALDEF to stay and to open up a regional office here. And so it opened up here in 1980.

Q1: Where does funding come from?

A: Well, that's -- foundations. Ford Foundation and Carnegie are two of the biggest, but a lot of private donors,

corporations, individuals. And that was a big piece. Every year, I had to host a dinner. And I'm proud to say that my last dinner before I left was the biggest -- it was -- -grossing dinner for MALDEF ever. But it took eight years of networking. You know, I learned a lot about fundraising, and I was good at it, but, you know, I felt like it took time away from the lawyering. But I learned that you can't just go up to somebody and say, "Hi, you're a Rockefeller. Can I have money?" You have to, you know, nurture that relationship and start out with just building a friendship and remembering their kids' names and, you know, remembering the vacation that they mentioned, and how did it go? And then if things -- if you do it well, then you don't even have to do the ask. They'll just offer, you know, because they'll, you know, become familiar with your work. But it was -- yeah, I'd learned a lot, but it was really 24/7 job. It was really, really overwhelming.

Q1: Can you talk a little bit about one of those significant cases that you worked on with MALDEF?

A: Oh, that was easy. The -- I worked on the Gratz case, the affirmative action case that went to the Supreme Court. That is -- have a case where my name's on the opinion. (laughs) Even though we lost. We represented Gratz, and another group represented Grutter, which is the law school

case, which is the school that won. But ultimately the principle applies to both, and so we consider it a win. But it was just an amazing experience because I got to work with all of these great civil rights lawyers from around the country. You know, Ted Shaw from the NAACP. Oh, God, I'm forgetting the guy's name from the ACLU. But just guys who at the time had more than, like, 25, 30 years of experience. And we brought -- put together a coalition of students, because we intervened in the cases on behalf of students who would want to go to the University of Michigan but if the program were overturned would be denied the opportunity. And so it was just amazing. It was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. And, you know, it's just -- it -- that was sort of the culmination of everything. Because, you know, we got to work in a lot of fun cases, but that one is just so important and so meaningful. It was a nice -- and it was resolved -- yeah, it was my last dinner. So it was -- our dinner -- it was decided on August first, and our dinner was on August second, so it was like, you know... And then, you know, you raise all this money, we get a positive opinion. I'm like, OK, I can go now.

Q2: What year was that?

A: Oh, God, what was that, two y-- 1984? I mean, nineteen -- I mean, 2004, sorry. Two thousand four.

Q1: Did you want to take a break?

A: I'm fine.

Q1: OK. Did you want to talk a little bit about your experience with the Building Blocks for Youth program that you worked on? Is that through MALDEF?

A: Is that me? That's not me.

Q1: (inaudible) juvenile court system? The juvenile court system?

A: No.

Q1: OK.

A: [Not me?]. (laughs)

Q1: OK, sorry. (pause) Can you talk a little bit about your experience as a woman in the legal profession?

A: You know, it's funny. When I started -- I mean, I can't really say that I've really encountered any kind of the problems that I've heard some of the other, my other colleagues that came before me, that they've experienced. The only thing I remember is when I first started in legal services, I remember this one attorney not wanting to deal with me. You know, we came to settlement and he called my supervisor to offer -- when he finally capitulated, when I finally wore him down, he sort of didn't want to give me

the satisfaction of saying, OK. He called my supervisor. And much to my supervisor's credit, he said, "You have to deal with her. I'm not getting involved." And so he had to -- but for the most part I didn't -- I think it was more youth than gender for me. You know, at first it's like, you know, you look too young so they think you're inexperienced or not that knowledgeable, or... So I didn't see too much. I can't say that I felt like my gender -- or my ethnicity. You know, I'd be lying if I said that I felt like either of those really affected. I think initially it was just more my youth, that they thought, you know, I was inexperienced, and so then maybe they could take advantage of something. Yeah. I can't really say that it's been much of a -- I've encountered many problems.

Q1: OK. Then what did you do after MALDEF? Did you --

A: Oh. Again, I had said that even, you know, two years ago -- or, two years before I actually left, I sort of realized that it was time to go but I had no plan. And Consuelo Bedoya, who had convinced me to go to law school, called me one day. She actually came over, like, right after Thanksgiving, like that Friday after Thanksgiving. I can't remember what year, but maybe in 2000, around 2000 or 2001, came over and had dinner. And she had a plan. And again, she'd put her head together with my mom and she said, "You

know, you've done this do-gooder thing long enough." She said, "You need to be a judge." And again, it had never even occurred to me. I'm like, No. I don't want to be a judge. And I think it was just again because, yeah, now I knew she was a judge, but I didn't just see that... I just thought, you know, I'm just so out of that network I wouldn't even know how to go about it. It's just not something that I -- you know, I know a lot of people who want to be judges. Most people who want to be judges, it really is something that they've probably known if not from the time they were little, from the time they went to law school, and they've been laying a path. You know, everything they have done has been toward that goal. And I hadn't been working toward that. And I just -- it just seemed so overwhelming to me, and I was like, Yeah, I don't think so. You know, and there was an opening. At that point there was an associate class, and she was trying to get me to apply, and I'm like, I don't think so. So I didn't apply for that one. But then I realized this stuff at MALDEF just started really weighing on me. I was just really, really ready to go. And so I have to admit that I applied more because it seemed like something to do, you know, a way out. It wasn't like I was working toward a goal; it's like I was running away from something. So I

was trying to get out of something, and so I thought, OK, OK, I'll apply. So the next time there was an opening, I applied. And it was going through that -- and the first time I went through it, I didn't make it. But going through that -- as I went through that process, I realized that it was something I wanted to do. And it was as I went through the court -- because you have -- for an associate process, you have to campaign and basically ask judges to vote for you. And so you'd have to catch them as catch can. So a lot of times I'd be waiting for them while they were on the bench, and I'd see people, and I'd see certain things. I'd see some judges -- not a lot -- but I'd see some judges being disrespectful to litigants or not really hearing what they were saying, or stupid things like if I talk -- they don't speak English, but if I talk to them louder and yell at them, they might get it. You know, things like that (laughs) that would really offend me. And I thought, Well, why not me? You know, there was part of me, I think, that felt like I wasn't worthy or I didn't have what it took or, you know, it took -- but then as I saw this and I saw people, I thought, I could be better than that. If nothing else, I could treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve. And that's a big step. So I really think everything happens for a reason,

and I really think there was some divine intervention on me not making it the first time, because it helped me solidify that yes, I was doing this for the right reasons and not just to get away from a job that was no longer something I wanted to do. So the second time I was working toward a goal as opposed to running away from something. But I got ahead of myself, because your question was what did I do after MALDEF. But so Consuelo had had this discussion with me and told me to apply to be a judge, and I didn't, but I knew I needed something, and I just was like floundering, applying at anything that passed across my desk. And I was really, really getting desperate because I was really unhappy, and I was really even contemplating just -- oh, no, in fact -- in fact, one day I'd had enough. After -- when the Grat-- right before the Gratz case got decided, in January of that year, I -- in January of 2004 -- I was told by the national office when the Supreme Court took cert on the case that because I had so much to do, they were going to relieve me of that case and they were going to take it over to the national office. And I just snapped. (laughs) And I'm like, "What?" Because so many peo-- you know, you don't get many opportunities to be on a Supreme Court case, and when they told me that, I just snapped. And I wrote an email where I resigned. And I meant to save it, and, you

know, think about it, because I do know you don't want to do anything in the heat of the moment, except that I hit send instead of save. (laughter) And then I went (makes startled noise). And I thought, I just quit, and I don't have anything in the pipeline. Uh-oh. So I called my husband and I said -- you know, I thought, Oh, God. You know. And usually I like to run it by him before I quit. But he was very supportive. He knew how miserable I was, and he was really outraged at what they had done. He said, "You just -- don't you dare call them and tell them you didn't mean it." He said, "You just -- we'll work it out. Don't worry about it." So they were like so surprised, and they're like, "Why would you do this?" I said, "You know, I've worked on this case for, like, five years now, and now you take it away from me? You know that this is everybody's dream, and I don't understand." And I said, "You know, you're not trying to relieve me, you're trying to take the glory. I understand, you know, but this is just not right. But it doesn't matter, because I'm leaving." And, you know, they're like, "Are you sure you don't want to change my mind?" And of course I'm thinking, No, I want to change my mind. So then I decided to be magnanimous. I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I know that I'm leaving you in the lurch, so I'll stay 'til the

summer, 'til like June first." Mostly to give myself time, but I figured, well, worst-case scenario, I have income (inaudible) and then I'd get the summer off with my kids, you know. But I was giving myself time, but I made it seem like I was doing something for them. But then, strangely enough, they let me stay on the case. So I got to work on Gratz, but I quit. But then I really was scrambling because I thought, now what? And that very next Sunday I went to church. And Lisa Madigan goes to our church. And I knew who she was from TV, but I didn't really know her. But that Sunday, she walked up to me and said -- and she had just won the election -- and she said, "I wanted to talk to you about coming to work for me." And I'm looking at my husband like, she knows who I am. I think she knows who I am. Why does she want me to work for her? So it all worked out, because she hired me to head up her Civil Rights Bureau. The only downside was I didn't get the summer off, but oh well. (laughs) So I worked with her for a year. And she knew -- I did -- I was really honest with her because I figured, I'm going to see this woman in church fairly often, and I couldn't just take the job and not be honest with her. And so I said, "You know, I'd be honored to take the job, but, you know, I've got my name in for judge and I don't know" -- or had I just lost? I had

just lost the first time. So I said, "You know, I just didn't make it this time, but I hear there's going to be openings again soon, and I don't want to lie to you, I want to put in again." And she said, "Not a problem." She said, "If you can just give me six months" -- and we knew that it was going to take more than that -- "to get the bureau up and running," she said, "that'll be more than fine." She's wise beyond her years because, of course, the process took 18 months, not 6 months, so she got 18 months out of me. But that's what I did before -- after MALDEF. I headed up her Civil Rights Bureau.

Q1: And when did you apply for the judgeship?

A: We'd have to go 18 months back from -- it was September of two thousand... Yeah, that would be about right. What year are we in? September 2005? God, I don't even know. Maybe it was September 2003. Because it took 18 months. So September 2003, 2004 would be a year. I think it was -- I don't even know. But I think it was two thousand -- whatever. It was -- go back 18 months from June of this year, which is when I got sworn in.

Q1: So what's the process to apply for a judgeship?

A: Well, there's three different ways to become a judge. You're either elected -- which is not the way I went -- you know, you get on the ballot and you're elected. You're

appointed by the Supreme Court to a vacancy. Let's say an elected judge dies mid-term, then they'll appoint you -- or retires midterm -- they'll appoint you to that vacancy, but then you'd have to run for that opening when the time came. Or there's the associate judge process, which is what I'm in. And that process -- there are associate judges, which is the third way to become a judge, where the elected judges vote for you. But that process, when there or five or more associate judge openings, the chief judge announces that there are associate judge openings and then you apply. And like now there's another set of openings. Two hundred and sixty-some people applied. So there's always over 200 people that apply. And then I don't know why or how they -- they wait for a while, and then they set up a committee. Oh, all the bar associations screen the candidates, and so that takes time. They have time for the bar associations to interview everybody and screen everybody and rate them. And then the elected -- the chief judge sets up a committee that interviews all of the candidates, and then they come up with what's called a short list, which is twice as many candidates as there are spots. So when I initially replied, there were five openings. By the time they actually got everything together, there were 20 openings. That was good, because the more openings, the more --

better chances. So then there were 40 of us in the short list.

Q1: And how did you find that process?

A: You know, a lot of people -- even the first time when I was sort of going through it for the wrong reasons, I didn't -- if you like people -- and, you know, plus, MALDEF had given me a lot of experience networking and, you know, idle, you know, little small talk. So I didn't find -- a lot of people say it's so humiliating and it's so... But I don't think so. I mean, most of the judges -- 99% of the judges are very kind and very -- whether they mean it or not, you know, everybody tells you they're going to vote for you. But they're very kind. I mean, maybe I encountered 1% that were having a bad day and they'd be a little, you know, not-nice. But even then, you know, nobody was downright evil. You know, sometimes just some people were gruff or not very polite. But I enjoyed it. And actually, like, the first time I went through it, after I didn't make it, I sent out a letter of thank you to all the judges, and in the letter I said -- and I really meant it -- I said, "It wasn't the outcome I was working toward, but it wasn't a bad outcome because I met a lot of really nice people and I made 24 new friends." Because the first time around, there were 24 of us on the short list. There were only 12

openings. And -- or 23 new friends. So, you know, you make -- I found the process with the other candidates, strangely enough, not competit-- like, not backstabbing competitive. Like, I didn't feel that anybody was out to hurt anybody else. We kind of all knew it's out of our hands. So, for example, if I was on this floor and I'd just seen Judge Henry and he'd been someone that I -- you know, there were certain judges that you knew were hard to catch, and if I knew he was one of those, then I'd go, "If you haven't seen Judge Henry, he's in there right now. You might want to go get him." So there was -- you know, people were helping each other, because -- I didn't feel any of that backstabbing or anybody was trying to lead you astray. And so we really did bond. And the 12 people that made it felt really bad for the 12 of us that didn't, and they were there for the next time we went through. And the 12 of us that didn't make it sort of had each other to, like, commiserate with. So I -- all in all, I found it to, you know, be -- it's a stressful process, but I didn't find it a bad process. And like I said, I can now brag that I know every full circuit judge in the system. And I'll bet you most full circuit judges can't say that because they haven't had to meet each other, but those of us who have gone through these associate process, we've had to meet

everybody, and so we know everybody. And, you know, I made some good friends the first time that helped me the second time. And, you know, the second time, those relationships are just solidified. So, you know. It was a stressful process because you have to do it in two weeks, and there is the stress of, you know, got to see somebody, got to see. But I got -- I didn't think it was a bad process.

Q1: We haven't talked very much about sort of your personal life. You mentioned you were married and that you had kids. How did you -- you've done so much. How did you manage (inaudible)?

A: Well, I have a secret weapon. (laughs) My mom and my aunt. They live with -- well, they live in an apartment downstairs from us. But they moved in about -- when we'd just adopted my daughter, so they moved in eight years ago. And that is just -- you know, it takes off so many worries because if I couldn't make it home -- we never really -- my husband and I are spoiled. We never really think, when somebody says, "Do you want to go somewhere?" we never think, Hm, what about the kids? We're like, "OK." And then we just go home and go, "We're not going to be home 'til late. Can you watch the kids?" So we're really spoiled in that way. You know, my mom picks up the kids -- or my son's older now, but she picks up my daughter from

school and, you know, she cooks, she cleans. Like, we're so spoiled. So I don't know how -- I recognize that we're so lucky because we never have that worry that so many of our friends have of, you know, having to figure out what they're going to do, you know, for daycare or what they're going to do if they can't get -- you know, if they have to work late and the kids have a lesson or something. You know, that just makes it a lot easier. And also, to a lot of the things that I was involved in, I would take the kids to, because I want them to be involved. So I know when I was on the board of [Hogar del Niño?], this daycare center, [Philip?] used to call -- my son used to call them "our" meetings. "Do we have a meeting this month?" Because, you know, I would always take him with. So to a certain degree, I -- and Monday I have a meeting -- the Alliance of Latinos and Jews has a meeting at the Mexican Fine Arts (inaudible) Museum. And I already told them, and they both want to go. So, you know, there's part of that. I try to get them involved. I try to get them involved in things that I think would be interesting for them, too, and I try to get them involved. So it's a little bit of everything. I drag them along to certain things and make them think they're fun, and then I have my mom if they can't go.

Q1: It’s almost one o’clock. So we have lots of follow-up questions, I think --

Q2: Yeah.

Q1: -- things that we haven’t covered. So -- but you’d be willing to meet with us again, and we can...?

A: Sure, sure.

Q1: OK.

A: We just have to set a time, like I said, because unfortunately I’m not going to be here that weekend.

Q1: Sure. Well, thank you so much.

A: Oh, thank you.

Q1: That’s two hours. That’s really good.

END OF FILE

Q: It is November 14th, on Monday at 3:24 p.m. and we are in room 400 of the Dairy Center with Judge Patricia Mendoza for a follow up interview. Judge Mendoza, first of all I apologize for the questions. They might be slightly disjointed just because --

A: Sure.

Q: -- it's a follow up to the first interview that we had. But on the first interview you mentioned you spent your summers in Mexico growing up here in Chicago. Can you tell us where in Mexico you spent your summers and about that experience a little bit. The first interview you talked about how you sort of traversed the worlds of Mexico and America in your home with your parents who were first generation. So could you talk a little bit about that experience in Mexico and if it's -- if you felt it strengthened your connection with your ethnic background?

A: Uh-huh. Oh, well definitely. Because as I think I mentioned in my first interview, I actually always felt like an immigrant or like an outsider. Like I didn't really belong here. And I think that was – my mom's prime emphasis on being Mexican. And then spending my summers out there. I sort of felt a greater connection to the values that the Mexican family or my Mexican family embraced, then what were generally the values that were

embraced here in the states. The idea of leaving home when you're 18, it's just not done in the Mexican culture. And so that was one thing. Or just sort of different dating. Dating outside the – dating someone who wasn't Mexican, those kinds of things. But you asked where. It's a very little town in Mexico called Santa Ana Mia [Metrocan?].

So it was -- it's funny because I was talking to my husband about it because my son wants to go back because I've managed to suck him into the same things that I would. He's very proud of his culture of he wants to spend the summer out there. And I'm telling my husband, "no he doesn't. It's going to be so boring." I said, "maybe two weeks, but he'll be bored in three weeks." Because I know there isn't a whole lot to do.

I used to joke that it was you would go and you would sit in front and watch the cows go by because it's a very small town. And now, of course, it's a little bit more developed. But there wasn't a movie theatre that you could go to. There weren't places that you would think young people would go to, like discos or restaurants, nothing. It was just a very small town. So it was basically just

hanging out at my grandmother's house watching the cows go by.

Q: Did your grandmother have a lot of traditions that you learned by spending the summers with her that --

A: My grandmother was a very tough woman and she wasn't very warm and fuzzy. So I actually don't have any -- I was out there, but I don't have any fond memories. Or maybe that sounds negative. I don't have any real memories of any real relationship with her. It was weird because I'd spend the summers out there with her but she's just this authority figure. There wasn't any interaction, any discussion, any kind of talk.

But in Mexico, or there, all the family sort of interacts. And so while I was there I learned all the traditional things that a young Mexican girl would learn. Like needlepoint, crocheting, knitting, and watched a lot of Mexican soap operas. There was a lot.

Q: Now did your mother -- was that your mother's mother?

A: Yeah.

Q: And was it sort of -- did your parents sort of want you to go there specifically to learn traditions and some of that background? Is that --

A: Not exactly. Well, yes and no. It was bigger than that. The real reason that I started being sent out there as I recall, was because we moved from 55th and Garfield area to the Back of the Yards area when I was in 7th grade. And I was always a good student. And this was kind of a tough neighborhood. Not at tough as it is now, but a tough neighborhood.

And so the girls who didn't really value school or value doing well in school, really resented the fact that I kind of parachuted in and all of a sudden I was doing really well and I was teacher's pet or whatever you would call it, in their eyes. And so I started getting harassed. So there was -- my mother came upon me one day when I was ready to be clobbered. It was the only time in my teenage life that I was grateful to see my mother show up. Because somebody must have run and told her but she showed up right as I was about to get beat up by a group of girls. And so it was -- that sort of was what made her think to send me away.

Q: And what were the issues with the girls that --

A: Just that. I was -- education is as not uncommon in lower income neighborhoods is not valued. It's being cool and street smart and -- there were already girl gangs at that

point. And I believe these girls were in a gang and I certainly wanted. I loved school and I was involved in the church. I was sort of like the biggest nerd. So I think they just -- I was an easy target.

Q: Did she have any support network or anything as -- other than your mother's, other friends or strategies that --

A: Not really. I had other nerdy friends. There were three of us who hung out who didn't really fit in that group. But they weren't picked on but they had been in the neighborhood all their lives and they all had older siblings. I didn't. So they had older siblings who would kind of look after them. Brothers who kind of -- I think it was sort of this understanding that they were to be left alone. And I didn't have that kind of protection I think. So, yeah.

Q: We didn't talk about where you went to high school, I don't think.

A: OK. I went to Maria High School. It's on 67th and California.

END OF PART ONE

Q: Can you talk a little bit about your experience in law school at Depaul. We didn't really -- we touched on that a little bit. But we didn't go into specifics. Like how did

you find the experience? Is that it was difficult at first because you weren't necessarily committed to it. You wanted to go into social work.

A: Correct.

Q: So could you talk about how you navigated that a little more?

A: Well at some point -- the first semester obviously was tough and I wanted to drop out. And then after I didn't flunk, I thought, "oh, maybe this isn't so bad." And then I discovered legal services so then I had a goal. I knew what I wanted to do when I graduated so that made it easier.

But I was really very shy. And I still didn't know how I was going to pull it off once I finished because I still couldn't see myself doing an argument or talking to a jury or doing anything like that. But I knew what I wanted. I knew where I wanted to be. And so I figured I'd figure it out as I got along. But I never really felt like -- I never really -- sort of the same way that I never really felt like I was part of the -- I was American or really felt like I belonged. I didn't feel like I belonged in law school.

I had two good friends who I hung out with that were in my section that I'd study with. And then there was the Latino Law Student Association which provided a lot of support because they actually brought in -- Depaul actually had at one point, had the largest number of Hispanic alums. They were the -- that's where Judge Justice Cerda went to law school. And he was the first Hispanic judge and the first -- I mean the first Hispanic to be a lawyer and then the first Hispanic judge.

And there were a whole -- and then Virginia Martinez who was the first woman to become a lawyer in Illinois -- Hispanic woman to become a lawyer in Illinois also went to Depaul. And they were very committed to providing a support network. And actually Depaul at that time had an African American Dean whose name escapes me now. I think it was Griffin but I could be wrong. But he was also committed to having a broader, diverse student group. And they actually allowed the Latino students to be part of what was called the applicant counseling committee so that we could counsel applicants in how to fill out their applications.

And then through their studies and even if they got under a 2.0 in their first semester so they'd be on probation, or they'd be, I think, I guess they were out. You could petition to keep them in for another year. And the students actually had a huge role in that. So that was huge. That doesn't exist anymore, but there was just an incredible support network. And so I did find support through that organization and through the alum who I still feel very close too. I saw a couple of them on Thursday and just thinking if it wasn't for them, just seeing them and seeing that they had made it, and hearing their stories and their support, I don't know that I would have made it.

But I never really felt like an insider. And I never really felt like I belonged and I'm nobody. Now I meet people and they're like, "you were in my section?" And I know them because I was very conscious of everybody who was there. But they didn't know me because I had just sort of always pulled back, sat in the back, tried to hide, didn't want my presence known. So it's really interesting. There's a gentleman whose son is in my daughter's third grade class. And they went on a field trip on Friday. And apparently he must have been a parent. And my daughter came home and said, "do you know that you went to school

with Max Webber's father?" And I laughed, I said, "yes, I knew." And I told my husband. But Max Webber's dad didn't know until way later because I was so quiet, he never realized.

Q: So how did you decide upon civil rights? That's sort of a really more actively strong --

A: Well, let's slow down. That didn't just happen overnight. Again, I started out in legal services which is very direct service. And was very, it was a comfortable fit for me because I was dealing with people who were experiencing problems very much like the problems my parents had experienced and I was being a voice for them. And so that felt like social work. So it didn't feel like, it didn't really feel like lawyering. I didn't really feel like I was -- it wasn't threatening to me and it wasn't uncomfortable and it was a known. It was, "oh, I've faced this problem and now I know the solution so I can help." So that was easy. And I sort of fell into civil rights because when the 18th street office closed, I was angry about it. I took it too personally. Because it was more than just a job. It really affected every -- my marriage suffered. Because my husband didn't get it. It's like, "it's a job, you'll get a new one." And I was like, "what are you talking about?" He didn't understand the passion

and the commitment that I had to the community. He just didn't get it. It's a job, you get a new job. Why -- he couldn't understand the emotional toll that it was taking on me.

So when they closed the office, I just couldn't stay. I was so angry at the decision. And my friend was working at the ACLU and she said, "Oh, they've got this position." And so I sort of fell into it. And as I think I mentioned last time, it was a lesson to me that you should never do something in reaction to something else because I hated it. Because they were dealing with the kinds of issues that I understood until actually the personally active side, "I don't want to defend hate rights." "I don't want to defend child molesters." "I don't care."

But it gave me the background that I needed to then get the Moldoff job. I couldn't have gone, or it wouldn't have been easy -- well, yeah, I don't know if I -- but it, I wouldn't have been successful at Moldoff had I not had that intermediate stuff of the ACLU. Because the ACLU, all they did was impact work. And so I got to understand how you do a constitutional analysis. And I got to understand how you develop impact cases. And how different it is from doing

direct service. And so that by the time I got to Moldoff -- then I had to get up to speed on all the issues that were affecting the Latino community nationally. But I understood how to put a big case together and what was required.

And so, again, it's sort of like the -- the intermediate stuff was an accident, but Moldoff was something I always wanted to do. But I had never really put together that I should probably do something like the ACLU first. It just kind of happened.

Q: But did you have that commitment toward civil rights as a law student?

A: No. I don't think -- I think if you would have asked me in law school what civil rights was, I'm not sure that I would have known or understood really. And again I didn't approach -- I approached a -- my -- I fell into the ACLU. So I didn't even consciously think, "oh, we're going to be doing civil rights and that is this." But with Moldoff again because it was advocating for the Latino community and being a voice on a national level, that really intrigued me. Because again that was -- my commitment was to the community. My commitment wasn't necessarily to civil rights. But obviously that's the logical area of the

law where I could do the most good. But it was really sort of what's driven me through everything except the ACLU, which was an accident.

And then the Board of Ed which was an escape from the ACLU. The two big chunks of my life, legal services and Moldoff were about my commitment to my community in trying to do something to address the problems that were faced in the community. In legal services it was on a very direct, individual, small level. And then at Moldoff, it was on a big scale. It was a huge impact level.

Q: I had one question about Moldoff that we had talked about, a little bit about the redistricting you had mentioned and how that correlated with the first Latino aldermen that were elected in Chicago. Can you talk specifically about that project and the areas and how that -- the history of the redistricting?

A: Well I should because I just wrote a paper -- I wrote a chapter of a book on it. So I did all this research but now my mind is fuzzy. Because I wasn't there obviously for the first redistricting because that was in -- that would have been the '80's redistricting when the first alderman came about. And so I wasn't around for that. I just did the research but now again, I can't even remember. Except

to say that that's -- you've got -- we got our first alderman and our first legislatures out of that process.

Q: Do you remember what communities specifically that you focused on? What neighborhoods in Chicago?

A: Well it would have been -- what would they come out of? Well interestingly it was both Pilsen Little Village area on the south side. And then sort of the near north, the Humble Park area on the north side. So you had the Mexican alderman and the Puerto Rico alderman. I'm trying to remember -- well, Luis Gutierrez started there, Congressman Gutierrez started out as an alderman. Chuy Garcia, Jesus Garcia. So Jesus Garcia was from the Mexican Pilsen Little Village area and then Ms. Gutierrez was from the Humble Park area.

Q: Were there issues with that alliance? The Mexican/American area and then the Puerto Rican area? How would that alliance come together?

A: Well, there were -- people tried to create it. Those who would oppose the map, the drawing of the map -- and it was more the argument for the congressional map which ultimately gave Ms. Gutierrez's congressional seat. That district encompasses both those areas. The -- captures all the Hispanics on the south side and -- well not all, but the big communities of Hispanics on the north and south

side. South are predominantly Mexican, north side are predominantly Puerto Rican.

And there were arguments made with communities who were very dissimilar. Which it's true on a certain level, but the argument against that is -- but objectively or -- is it -- yeah, objectively. To the outside person, they don't make the distinction. You're speaking Spanish, you're dark skinned, the discrimination happens. They don't distinguish between the Puerto Ricans and the Mexicans. Now the Puerto Ricans and the Mexicans do. There's a lot -- and the Colombians and the Cubans. Everybody has their own pride and their own ethnicity. But that's subjective. But objectively people -- they experience the same kinds of discrimination. The same kinds of lack of education. The same kind of lack of job opportunities. And so that was a counter argument. And that's what brought the communities together is that we may be very different in the music that we listen to or the dialect that we speak, but at the end of the day we share these very common problems. Lack of fundamental education. Lack of job opportunities. Lack of affordable housing. Those were all things that brought the communities together.

Q: OK. I have one more question about the Moldoff. Your Moldoff experience with the [Gratz?] case. You talked a little bit about that in the first interview, but can you talk a little bit about your personal experience going from legal services. Your road to the Supreme Court, and how you processed that personally.

A: Well I don't even -- I have to -- I look at the opinion occasionally. Just a, "oh, there's my name, it's really not a dream." It is so far removed from anything. Because again in law school, I didn't even think I belonged there. So I -- and then legal services is comfortable. But never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I'd be doing anything even closely, remotely touching the Supreme Court.

And I remember a friend of mine, one of my two study partners from law school once said that -- and she was just sort of talking abstractly. It wasn't like we were talking about doing civil rights. And she said -- she was talking about constitutional lines -- or Supreme Court, yeah, Supreme Court. And she said, "that would be a lot of pressure because you wouldn't want to make that law. You wouldn't want to be responsible for making that law." And I kind of remember thinking, "yeah, you're right." But it didn't really sink it because -- but she's right.

Because I did have an experience in one of the redistricting cases where that actually happened. Where it was the '90's redistricting. And it didn't get argued, we didn't really go to trial until '96 and it was the [Ward Mathen?] the Hispanic -- the African Americans won their challenge. We all litigated together but we had separate challenges. And they won their challenge and we lost our challenge. And how was it that the African American's didn't win everything they wanted -- they won part of it but they didn't win something else.

And so they wanted to appeal and they said, "why don't you guys appeal too?" And we thought about it because we knew we didn't have that strong of a case. But I kind of, at the end of the day, came out with, "OK, no harm no foul. We appeal worst case -- worst thing that happens, the denial below gets affirmed, no big deal." But we actually ended up -- I ended up making it (inaudible) because it wasn't me. But it ended up becoming worse because on appeal Judge Posner said that not only were we not entitled to the districts that we were now asking for. But that we weren't even entitled to the districts we had gotten in the prior redistricting because the standard, the people who

should count redistricting purposes are those of citizen voting age population. Where we had just always argued voting age population. And there's a huge difference because a large number of Hispanics are not citizens so that was -- and in other states the standard of citizenship below the age of the population. But in Illinois and in other states it had been just voting age.

So basically he added upon to Illinois law that was citizen now for the next redistricting, which we had to face in 2000, it was citizen voting age population that counted only. So I remember feeling really horrible because I didn't foresee that. Nobody did and I guess I should -- because usually judges don't take up issues that aren't on appeal. He sort of like -- that came out of left field. But what am I going to do, appeal to the Supreme Court that I go, "he shouldn't have said that." So then I was sure -- clear we weren't going to appeal to the Supreme Court and have it be the law of the land.

But that was one -- that's where my friend Laura's point was really driven home. That a decision like that can really -- when you're dealing in such high stakes law and it's not individual but it's class based, it can really

have an impact that can really affect many people. And I know that one -- at the ACLU and at Moldoff, the one thing that I learned early is that a lot of times civil rights lawyers who are seasoned and experienced really spend a lot of time trying to discourage people who aren't from filing lawsuits. Because a lot of times people who don't -- attorneys who don't have the experience just want to file the lawsuit for whatever reason. Sometimes it's a pure motive, sometimes it's not a pure motive.

But they don't see that ultimately it's going to have a bigger impact that's going to impact -- change the landscape forever and you don't want to do that. So sometimes when you hear that people don't appeal certain cases, it's for very strategic reasons. Given the makeup of the Supreme court on a given day, would you bring this case or not? What do you think they're going to rule? And if you think they're going to rule against you, then why would you do that and make it the law of the land, so.

Q: What do you think the historical significance of the Gratz case? Is for affirmative action?

A: Well, yeah. I think that it's a recognition that the playing field isn't level and for all of the decisions that had come up prior to that you didn't -- those nine people

who probably have not had to have any of those experiences -- although I think Clarence Thomas did put somewhere in his mind -- well, actually the women. The women got it. I think that they understood considering -- Both Sandra Day O'Connor and Ginsberg have both talked about how they couldn't get a job. They were top in their class and they couldn't get a job when they got out of law school. They could get a secretarial job, they couldn't get a job. So they know that it was a reality then. And I think no matter how far they've come, they can see that it's still, there's still a ways to go, so.

Q: Can you see that in your own personal experience with law school and --

A: Well I see a lot, yeah. Well, I think there's more opportunities -- well, let me back up. I think there's still a lot of discrimination, I think it's a lot more subtle. I -- it's -- the one thing I saw at Moldoff is in places like Illinois and California and New York and all the big cities with respect to Latino's and African Americans, the discrimination is pretty subtle. Nobody is really dumb enough to come out and make racist statements for the most part.

But what I saw in some of the southern states where Hispanics were moving in for the first time, like Atlanta and North Carolina, South, Carolina, Kentucky, was that there was some really weight in discrimination where people would say things that they would never in a million years in this day and age say about African Americans. But they would say it about Hispanics because it didn't -- they didn't put them -- didn't even put them in the same category and didn't even realize that it would considered discrimination.

And so I saw that the more that people advocate for their rights and that they fight for their rights, those who might have negative feelings, at least learn enough to not be so obvious about it. I used to joke that it was easier to litigate a case in Georgia because they were so blatant. You didn't have to look for the inference it was just there. So it made filing and winning cases a lot easier but it was really pretty ugly. It's still kind of really offended me and shocked me that people in this day and age could be so blatant with their discrimination, but it happens. But you asked me, do I see it.

I think professionally I think it's more subtle and it's harder to see and people mask discrimination in a lot of ways so that it's not -- nobody's going to say you didn't get a job because -- or you didn't get promoted because you're a woman or whatever. They come up with some other thing. Somebody told me the other day their boss, the only woman in top management got let go because her soft skills needed work. What does that even mean? She wasn't warm and fuzzy enough? So people find other reasons. But I have no doubt from what I see now on the bench and what I saw through my work, that discrimination is alive and well. And that the lower you go in the ranks, the more obvious it becomes. Because again, more educated people are going to be more subtle about what they do and how they express their feelings. Whereas, where you go down the ranks, the less educated people are and the more squeezed they're feeling. If they really -- if someone really feels like -- but for that Latino/African American I'd have a job. And they too have to put food on the table and a roof over their head. It's a lot more blatant.

Q: How do you think it's changed, though? Because what you're describing was a lot of what it sounds like it was in the 1960's with the civil rights act.

A: It's funny that you should ask that. This weekend we watched -- my son wanted to know -- my son and my daughter wanted to know what Westside Story was all about. And so we rented it and it was really depressed, because I was like, "oh my god, this could be written now." It's because the things that were being said, and the feelings that were being expressed, it was -- it's no different. And it really depressed me because I'm like, "OK you might change the ethnic groups, but it's still there." So, I don't know. Except that I think that to a certain degree it's become more of a class issue than a race issue. Or, yeah.

I think that that's more the dividing line these days is class. So you have the poor people on the one end who are sort of fighting among themselves. And the people who are doing better thinking they don't want anything to do with those people because they're uneducated and they what -- and it's Hispanics -- I really can't be the voice of African American's. But I see with Hispanics this wanting to paint this division between us and them. Because now we've made it and they're making us look bad because they're driving around without insurance and they don't have driver's license. Never mind that they can't get a driver's license and they can't get insurance.

But it's still this, "they make us look bad because then people don't like them. And so the fact that we have -- might have the same last names make people think we're like them. And so everybody -- what people call the Clarence Thomas syndrome. If I say I'm not like them, then I won't be like them. So I really do think it's more of a class issue these days.

Q: How are you teaching your children to deal with these issues? Like discrimination and everything. How are you guys supposed to -- your experience as a child and then today?

A: Well it's interesting that you -- I spend a lot of time doing that. And that is actually a bone of contention with my husband and I. We have very different -- we were raised very differently and we have had very different experiences. So he is kind of like, "why are you teaching them that? Why are you even talking about that?" And thank god, I have a very socially conscious son. He loves -- we have a lot of very deep discussions. And we've had them for a really long time. I can't say that I've really started having them with my daughter. But I think it's important because I -- we are giving them a different -- a

different -- they're in a different place. They're growing up in the neighborhood I didn't think I belonged in.

My son doesn't think he doesn't belong anywhere. He's perfectly comfortable everywhere that he is. But I want him to understand that not everybody has had it that easy. And that in fact one generation ago, I didn't have it that easy. But actually I had it easier than many others being an only child and all of this. I don't want him to lose that because I don't want him to get to the point where he can't understand the "why's." The why somebody would drive around without insurance or panhandle or whatever. I don't want him to just reject people out of hand and the boot strap mentality drives me crazy so I don't want him to just have that, "if only these people would pick themselves up by their boot straps they'd be fine.

So one thing, for example, I've always been involved in the community [inaudible] and stuff and I've always taken them with me. So they've always been exposed to the issues. And even just when I was at the daycare filled with playing with the kids from the daycare who were from a different economic group, he didn't know that he was playing with them. So he wasn't -- there was none of that, "oh my god,

I don't want you to be with those kids." Like poverty's contagious or something. And now he's actually tutoring at St. Procopius a couple of days after school. Because again I want him to understand -- but it was his choice. You can't make them do what they don't want to do.

But when he was looking in service opportunities, I said, "there's a good one. Because you're going to see the generation your mom came from. You're going to see what the struggles were and understand again." So that's it. And I talk to them, I talk to him about even what I see in the court room now, which I think is just a clear example of what still happens every day racial profiling. I've got people -- I'm in the -- well I'm everywhere. But in the suspended license courtroom I look up and 99.9% of the people looking back at me are African American males. Or maybe 90% and the other 10% are just not -- really nine percent are Hispanic and then the other one percent is white, kind of fell in there. And I'm sitting there like, "I don't belong here." You just see that when they step up there. So freaked out. Like clearly I don't belong here, it was a mistake.

But you're not going to tell me that 99.9% of the people who drive badly in Illinois or in Cook County, they're all black. That's not -- considering they're still not the majority of the population that's hard to believe. Something else is going on. What's going on? Well, my take on it and I don't think I'm wrong is, profiling. If the people that are always getting stopped or most of the time people getting stopped are primarily African American, then of course they're going to show up in the court rooms more often. And of course they're going to get tickets for things like busted headlights or back windshields. Cars that can't pass emissions test, noisy mufflers. Because they're poor. So those are the kinds of cars that they can afford. And they can't afford to replace the windshield. If they can see through it, they're going to keep driving with it. That's just the bottom line.

But if you forget the -- and this is what every day I come home with some story with my son and I tell him why. I say, "today I had somebody come in my court room who's not Hispanic. Because Hispanics can't get licenses if they're undocumented. But I said, "I had an African American gentleman who never had a license." And I'll say, "well is

there a reason you can't get a license?" And they're embarrassed.

But it's things like they can't pass the written test, it's a literacy issue, they need glasses and they can't afford them." Now admittedly they probably shouldn't be driving if they can't see, and they can't see so badly that they can't pass the test, but the point is they can't afford glasses. So there are economic reasons why people can't do these things. They're not all scofflaw's and they're not all bad people. They're poor. Bottom line. They're poor and they're targeted and so they get all these tickets.

Whenever I see tickets that are a first ticket is driving with obstruction, something dangling from your windshield. I'm like, "give me a break. That's an excuse to stop these people and look for something else." Because I asked a cop once, I said, "well my mom has a rosary hanging from her window, would that be a reason to stop her? And he actually said, "well yeah, but I'd never stop her." So it's a pretext. And the people who are always getting protection -- well most of the time -- getting pretexturally stopped happen to be minority.

Q: So what do you think the (inaudible) rules? I mean what can we do as a society or what's -- it just seems so bleak as far as this conversation about. Poverty and civil rights, what can we do?

A: And I guess -- and that was the thing, that's where my husband and I have this like divide. Because -- and actually it's because he has such a big heart, it's true. I tell him the worst thing you can tell him is he's a nice guy because he'll go "no, no, no." But he is. But because of that he can't -- he gets so caught up in the sadness of it that he can't take it. And for some reason when I'm lucky and that I don't get caught up in the sadness, if I can make a difference in one person's life, every day -- I love this job because I make a difference in more than one person's life mostly every day. Positive difference because I can -- I try to be fair and I try to get the state to dismiss the BS charges or come down on the fines or work out a solution that will help this person instead of putting them deeper. I just feel like, "well that's one more person than if I weren't here."

And I can't really get caught up in the -- get so overwhelmed with the sadness of the bigger problem because then you just burn out and you can't go on. I used to -- I

had a colleague at LAF who did [Laylor Technic law?] We all did it, but he was the expert. And I remember at one point saying, "how do you do it?" And he said, "well, at the end of the day I go home. And even if I lose (inaudible) I still have a roof over my head." And it sounded so horrible. But he'd been doing it 25 years. And he said, "if I didn't have that attitude and if at the end of the day I didn't say, well I did what I could for that person and my family's still OK" than I couldn't do it.

And I think that's the mentality that you have to have. You have to be one of those people that see's the glass as half full and not half empty because if you don't it's going to really eat you up. And there's days when -- there were days at LAF or Moldoff or -- things just, the unfairness of it all just really would get to me but I could shake it off. But you can't let it get you down and you can't quit. Because then that's one less person who's going to be trying to make a difference.

And I am truly a believer that education is the way out. So just trying to -- I try to work with kids too because I think that's the goal. I have one kid that I'm mentoring, that I mentored sort of by accident. I was on the Crystal

Rae Board and they had kids -- they'd -- I don't know if you're familiar with the Crystal Rae Motto but one day we had the kids work at a place downtown to give them exposure to -- because like me -- I kept telling my son I said, "I have more in common with the Crystal Ray kids than I do with you." Not in a bad way but I said, "my life experience is more like those kids. They'd never been downtown. They've never been in an office building. They don't know office etiquette. They don't know how to hail a cab."

My son's been hailing cabs since he was -- or trying to hail a cab since he was in third. "Let's take a cab." So that program gives the kids one day a work they work downtown in an office setting. And one of the kids was working at Moldoff and just in talking to him it became clear to me that he was really, really bright. And Crystal Ray is -- targets at risk kids. And it is a college prep but at a different level. These kids aren't going to Harvard. And I felt like this kid really had potential. And I got him into Jones because I still have contact with the Board of Ed. And now he spent the summer at Harvard this summer. And we're meeting on Wednesday so he can tell

me all about it. And he's sending me these -- and he still talks to me which I think is amazing.

Because here I am and I'm like old -- yeah, I am -- of course, I'm old enough to be his mother, he's only two years older than my son. And he still sends me emails and I feel like -- and my son's knows, he's like, "how's Oscar?" Because that to me is the best feeling in the world. I save all his emails because whenever I'm feeling down I look and I'm like, "OK, no matter what else happens, I've done good by one person at least." And he's -- he's worried about whether he's going to get -- if he's going to make it into Harvard or he's going to have to settle for Northwestern." I'm like, "dude, I said if that's your problem, that's not a problem." But --

Q: It sounds very fulfilling.

A: Yeah. No I -- and it's just, I always tell people it's not like that hokey saying that's it's better to give then to receive. Now being an only child I'm like, "no, I like receiving." But there is something about -- that's very rewarding for me. If you see somebody really happy -- because my son and I were talking about winning this lottery now that it's at three hundred and something -- we're like, "should we buy a ticket?"

And it was really funny because we decided we shouldn't because we were afraid what if we won. Instead of thinking, "what if we won?" we were like -- we both agreed that that would really change our lives and that we like our lives just the way they are. And I said, "god that's a really good thing and I'm glad he feels that way." But I said, "yeah, because all I'd want to do with it is give it away." Help kids like Oscar. But there'd be too many family pressures to buy somebody a sports car, that I would be really -- so we said, "no, we're not going to buy a ticket. We'll just save the dollar."

Q: You talked about the -- raising your son with the ethnic differences and I don't know -- being more, very open and anything. Do you think there's going to be any difference raising your daughter? I know you said she's younger, but do you think there's going to be any difference between the gender, or --

Q: Well I have to see her personality -- not because of her gender. It's would be personality. I have to see where she's going to shake out. But actually -- let me back up as I think through the answer to this. She's adopted. She's adopted from Mexico. She's actually Mexican as we were joking. She's really the only true Mexican in this

house -- well, except for my mom. So she's actually perfectly fluent in Spanish and my son understands it and now he's in high school and hopefully will be perfectly fluent at some point. But we tried, but my mom wasn't living with us and whatever. But with Annalisa we really made it a point to only speak to her in Spanish when she was little. Because I thought if some point she wants to meet her birth mother, I want her to be able to communicate. I don't want her -- I don't want there to be that impediment.

And so she's perfectly fluent. And so as I think about it, it's even more important for her, I think, to understand there -- but through the grace of god. Her mother gave her up because -- it wasn't an easy decision. Her mother gave her up because she had gotten pregnant -- I don't know if it was rape. I suppose it wasn't rape in the way that we think of it. It wasn't like a forced thing, but it was the owner of the house so I don't know how much real consent there -- I think she felt like what else could she do. She ended up getting pregnant and then she not only had to leave the place of employment because she was pregnant and they would be asking who the father was.

So -- but she also realized she had already had a daughter who at the time was nine and she had herself. And she said she didn't want her life -- she already had one daughter that was going to suffer her life. And she didn't want another daughter to suffer that life. So actually as I think about it, Annalisa's knows she's adopted. And I did the little book for her and she knows what her birth mother's name and what her birth mother looks like. Obviously I haven't gotten into the "why's." All I told her in her little book is that she wanted a family to take care of her and love her very much. And, of course, she's at the age where she's not asking the difficult questions of why.

But at some point she is. And that -- I'm not going to hold back. I'm going to tell her why and tell her how much her birth mother loved her to be able to recognize that the life that she had was not a good life. And that she wanted so much better for her. So actually, I think, yeah, I'm going to be even more -- it's going to be even more important for her to understand that. Because there would be nothing worse than if she grew up being one of those people who just rejected everything -- the other people

that come after us because -- but for a very brave decision by her mother she would have been in the same boat.

Q: You mentioned you named her after your friend from college. Why did you choose that name?

A: We always liked it. I remember my husband and I were already dating in law school and we would always -- Anna's a very nice, very lovely person and so we liked her. But I know every time we talked about her it would be like Annalisa. Even though her name is Anna, last name Lisa, everybody called her Annalisa because it went together. And I remember at some point, I guess we were more serious, we said, "oh, if we ever have a daughter, we'll name her Annalisa. And we almost forgot because of course we had a boy. And it was sort of -- we had already named Annalisa, my daughter, Angelia. And then we said, "wait a minute, we said Annalisa." So we had to go back and redo all the paperwork.

Q: You've talked a lot about your husband throughout the interviews. And how -- what a supportive, in a supportive role. Can you talk a little bit about how you met and how long you've been married and how you balanced your career and marriage?

A: Oh sure. We met, actually, it's a funny story. We met through a friend. My best friend in college was a woman

named Annie -- OK, now I forgot her name because she's married now. Gomez, sorry. Annie Gomez. And she went to high school with this girl Abby. And Abby was dating my husband. And Annie, although she was friends with Abby, decided -- had -- realized or come to the conclusion that they did not -- they were not a good couple. They were always fighting or whatever, according to Annie. I didn't know him. And she would just tell me about him and tell me how she thought we'd be a good couple. So she actually introduced us. So she, not a very good friend to the other friend. But she introduced us. And then he transferred to Depaul coincidentally right around the same time. But she already had it planned.

Q: So how long have you been married?

A: It's 20, it was 20 years in June. That was just why we're going -- we're finally going away in -- this weekend to celebrate that it's 20 years. And we dated for five. I made a promise to my mother that I wouldn't get married until I graduated from law school. So I graduated in '84, so we got married in '85.

Q: Is he aware to you? How to you balance the marriage and law career and --

A: Well it's -- I actually find -- I know people are -- some people are -- we'll joke, "how can you live with a lawyer?"

But I've always thought it very helpful. Because if there's an idea that I'm not sure is really going to work or I'm trying to work through a concept -- he incidentally loves constitutional law. He didn't go into constitutional law but he's the one who downloads (inaudible) cases the minute that it comes down and analyzes them. And I joke that I'm not -- I operate on a need to know basis. I don't care if they decide the case. If it's not something I'm working on, I don't really care.

But he will download the cases. So he's actually more aware of the bigger picture than I am. And so if I was trying to work through something it was good to have him because there's no judgment. There isn't even a co-worker who may think, "well." And plus I was in a management role so I couldn't really go to the people that I was supervising and be unsure because then it puts you in a weird position. Then the people that you're supervising "well, she doesn't really know, why is she in charge." So it was good -- it's good to have him to bounce ideas off of. And by the same token I think, he's not trying to break into teaching and he wrote an article on some obscure tax issue and I was his editor because I thought I was a

perfect editor because I knew nothing about the subject area.

So if something didn't make sense, I could say, "well, what do you mean by this? Or do you mean this?" Or, so it was really -- he said it was very helpful to have me -- because I -- if you know the area sometimes you might know what people mean. It's not clear but you know what they mean so it's hard to catch. But I had no idea what he was talking about, so. But that's been the easy part. I never thought that being two lawyers is a problem. In manage -- juggling or -- managing the career and everything we have this secret weapon which is my mom. That makes it very easy. She takes care of all of us and if we are running late or she picks up the kids, stays with the kids, feeds the kids. So it's someone -- and in fact, just that's another thing with Hispanic families. A lot of us have what we call "the secret weapon." Everybody's got a mother, a father, an aunt, an uncle in the back pocket that we can just pull on. In fact, it was a funny story.

My husband and I joked for a long time that we're going to move to Florida when we're old and get jobs at Disney World. Because we love Disney World. And we always joke

that we'd get a job -- we'd move to Orlando because that way the kids would visit because obviously we'd -- they'd have a place when they have kids. Sort of an allure of Disney World would get them to come and visit. That was always like our running joke. And when we were in Florida this year -- because we go every year, sometimes twice a year -- I said something in front of my son, well in front of both the kids about "so when we move here" and my son said, "what do you mean, you're moving here." I said, "oh yeah, you know the plan. We're going to move here and that way you guys will visit." He goes, "well, wait a minute. Who's going to take care of my kids?" And I thought that was so funny because that's been the model that he sees. And I was, "oh." I said, "well I just didn't want to be an imposition but I think dad would be OK with us staying behind." I said, "but I think you better run it by your wife first." I said, "we're available, but check with your wife and let us know if that's what you want."

But that was really funny to me. Because here I was already creating a life for my husband and myself when the kids got older because it was kind of -- it is kind of a burden -- although we're very blessed to have my mother there but I always felt like a lot of pressure -- I always

knew that the expectation was there that I needed to be there for her and take care of her and -- it's like having a second child. We have a lot of help but on a certain level it's like having a second child. It gets dicey sometimes. Early in the marriage it was very dicey. Now we have the kids and so my husband sees the great advantages, but it wasn't always so easy. And my mother didn't make it easy because in her world parents lived with their kids. And actually my uncle, her youngest brother, is the one who is the reason we moved away. Now my mom lives with us but when we first got married, we lived right next door to my mom because that was the expectation. And my husband was not happy about it.

And my dad was still alive and I remember my uncle pulling me aside when he came to visit one summer. And he and my mom are really close so I will always, always value this -- I'm so grateful to him. Because basically he betrayed her by saying the following to me. He pulled me aside and he said, "you need to move." He said, "you need to move. Because if your father dies -- if you don't move before your father dies, you're never going anywhere. You need to move." Now this is because he still lived with my

grandmother until the day she died and I think it created problems for him.

In that case, it was his mother but I know that my aunt lives in Mexico where it's more expected, but it created marital problems on occasion, I imagine, between him and his wife and he felt like he was in the middle. His wife wanted one thing, his mother wanted another, what's he going to do? And I was so touched that knowing how close he was to my mother and how much he loved her, but recognizing what it was creating for me. He's the one who encouraged me to look for a home away.

And then we did. And then -- and I realize that it's easier -- what people should do, my advice to people who -- anybody who's in my situation. Young people now if they feel like they have to live with their parents, is move away first and then you can move them with you. Because you've established your independence. But you can't get married and live with your parents. It was -- it could have been a disaster. Because my mother wasn't giving up control and Arthur was asserting control. And I was trying to appease everybody.

Q: Are there things like that have come up with first and second generation in specific regard to gender? And how have you navigated that?

A: Well there's a thing like you said -- well I don't know if I said this but I knew when I -- my mother always encouraged me to go to college. But it was always understood that I was going to live at home when I went to college because girls don't move away and go to college. You only move away to live with your husband. Although in my case I didn't move away. But you don't leave your home until you move into your husband's home. But you do not go away to college. And so that was something that was -- and I didn't put up a lot of fuss. I have to admit I didn't really -- it was sort of just something I was always raised with so I didn't even like think to fight that requirement. But that was one thing. The funny thing my mother always says about my husband which is kind of comical is that she's always raving about him. She just loves him to pieces because "he lets me do whatever I want," is how she puts it. And my husband always chuckles and says, "like I could stop you."

But in her world it's like I come -- and I joke that most people get married and they lose married, at some families.

I got married and I gained freedom because suddenly I could go out with my friends, I didn't -- there wasn't a time when I had to be home. I just -- I could say "I'm going out with someone, I'm going to be home at one." And he'd be like, "OK." That would never fly with my mother so I was like, "I beat freedom."

So she was right. To a certain degree -- it sounds funny that obviously to say that here I am at 45 and he lets me do what I want, but I know what she means. Because Hispanic men can be -- they can make your life miserable. Not just Hispanic men, but I mean that macho -- if it was a traditional macho role it would be hard to -- I'd feel like my wings haven't been clipped at all. And hers were. She wanted to be a teacher when she came here and my dad wouldn't let her. Because I think then she would have surpassed him and that was not acceptable, so.

Q: Have you experienced that in any of the other organizations or community involvement, that machismo within the Latino community?

A: Well I see it all the time. I was on the board of [Mujeres (inaudible) Accion] which is a domestic violence organization. And so I certainly saw -- and then when I was at LAF I represented battered women all the time. And

sometimes they were battered for -- basically a lot of times the battering came when they somehow surpassed their husband in some perceived way. That the men just felt insecure. There's a lot of insecurities. And so the women have to play the meek and mild role and not earn more money, not have male friends, not go out with girl friends, just be there at their beck and call. Even with my own mother in law -- I just told my kids this story -- or was it my nephew. My nephew lives with my mother in law.

And she hurt herself the other day and she said, "oh, (inaudible) and Mikey's even doing his own laundry." And I thought, "duh, he's 24. Shouldn't he be doing his own laundry?" But it made me laugh because I said, "oh yeah, that's right." When my husband and I were dating she worked the night shift. And he didn't want to burden her so he was washing his own shirts and drying them on the -- was washing them by hand and drying them on the radiator or something. And she got really made because I wasn't washing his shirts. And I was -- and he told me that and I'm like, "are you kidding me? My mother would shoot me if I washed your shirts. I don't even do my own laundry, why would I do yours?" But in her mind it was like that's what a good, loving woman does for her man. And the other thing

that she said, the reason I kept my last name, I don't know if this has come up. It's a bad reason, it's not a good reason. It's not because it's my name and no. It was to spite her.

She made a remark again when we were dating, a friend of mine was getting married and at the dinner table one day I happened to mention -- we were just dating -- and I said, "oh yeah, I'm just trying to figure out whether she's going to take Joe's name or keep her own." And my mother in law just sort of -- she's cooking, she turns around and she goes, "no woman that marries my son is going to keep her own last name." And I immediately mental note to self, "should I ever marry this man, I'm keeping my last name." So it's -- it's a horrible reason. I'm glad I did it. I am now glad I did it. There are good reasons to do it. I'm glad I did it. But it wasn't the right reason. At the time that I did it, it wasn't for the right reasons. I'm glad I did it because I'm an only child and it honors my father.

Because it's his last name, the name would have died out there. But that was any -- it was just because I thought "what?" But there -- it's -- oh, the other thing she said,

and this is funny because she's younger than my mom and she was raised here. But she has very traditional ideas. When my son was born, the first thing she said was, "all right. Now you've had -- " sort of like, I can't remember exactly what she said but the message was, "you've had the man child now it's OK. Whatever you have after this is fine. But, you've had the male. And even in the family, she always calls him my number one son, which he's like, "Oh it's just because I'm the oldest." But the rest of us are like, his siblings and I are like, "No it's because you're the number one son." There's something about that male child. My sister in law does everything for her but she's just "Lori" he's the number one son.

Q: To backtrack just a little bit - and I'm sorry this is --

A: Oh no, that's OK.

Q: -- totally change the subject. But we hadn't really talked about your experience as the Chief of the Civil Rights Bureau for that, I think it was 13 months after you left Moldoff.

A: Right.

Q: Would you mind just going back and talking a little bit about that time period and the role you had in the Bureau?

A: The Attorney General, as I think I mentioned to you guys, recruited me to come over. I was angling for a job, but

she actually recruited me to head of the Civil Rights Bureau. And that's an affirmative Civil Rights Bureau, it's not -- they have a Civil Rights Bureau that defends actions against the state. So I always call it -- that's not civil rights that's anti-civil rights. Because basically they're arguing civil rights weren't violated. But she wanted an affirmative Civil Rights Bureau. There had been one there but under the prior administrations, the person wasn't allowed to do anything.

So she didn't really do anything. And this Attorney General wanted to make an impact and make a commitment to the community that she was pro civil rights and wanted to do something. So I started there, but then I realized there were no laws. The mandate's very broad. There's actually a statute on the books from 1947 that says this Attorney General would create a civil rights bureau which will defend the rights, investigate and defend the rights in all civil rights matters, of all the citizens of Illinois. So it's very broad but there's no laws.

There's no chief behind it because the only civil rights laws in Illinois are those under the Human Rights Act. Well now there's another letter, so rights after 2003,

which is recent. But there really wasn't anything to enforce. So basically the person was writing letters, "You better stop this." But there wasn't anything Chief. And the Human Rights Act, you can only enforce through the Human Rights Bureau, which is an administrative process, takes forever and is inefficient at best. And it made no sense that the Attorney General of the state of Illinois would have to file civil rights claims through an administrative agency where the claims are first reviewed by non-lawyers. None of it made any sense.

So I suggested trying to amend the Civil Rights Act to create an exception for the Attorney General so that she could file direct on certain court. And that was my biggest accomplishment. I can't even believe it happened but it passed. So we amended the Civil Rights Bureau. And so now she can enforce the Civil Rights Act in class action (inaudible) impact cases I guess is what the language is. There was a huge lobby against it. Employers were worried that the poor little employer would be sued by every individual. So we had -- so there had to be a pattern in practice of discrimination and that the Attorney General would first let the -- how did it go -- oh yeah -- what is it? -- sleight of hand. Because they were upset. They

didn't -- they were afraid that we'd just go out and file lawsuits without them having any notice. And I said, "Well we never do that. Especially a pattern in practice case. We can't do that. Because first we have to get evidence of a pattern in practice. So of course we'd be communicating with you guys first." No, no, no, that's you and this Attorney General. But what about some other Attorney General?" And we were joking, "Yeah, like there'd be some other Attorney General more liberal with civil rights, come on."

But they were just fighting him. So he said, "OK, well how about if we put this provision that we'll investigate first and you'll give us discovery?" And they agreed, which is huge. Because generally there isn't anything -- there is never pre-litigation discovery. But because of their own concern, we were able to slide that in. So we got more than we should have gotten. And it makes it easier for us. So the statute actually provides for pre-litigation discovery.

And then once we get the discovery, then we can file the litigation. So it worked out well. And when I left there were a couple of investigations going. I don't know where

they're at but that was huge. That was -- I wanted this job, but that was my one regret. That once the law passed, I left. Because I wanted to see what we could do with it.

Q: When were you -- were you appointed to the Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Can you tell us when you were appointed by Governor Running?

A: Yea. That was 1998. I'd have to look at my resume but I think it was 1998. And that was when I wasn't at Moldoff.

Q: OK. What did that entail?

A: Basically just attending a lot of meetings. It was a really great title but they didn't really do much. It was just -- I think the one thing they did, for whatever it was worth, was have town hall meetings around the state but then nothing ever came of those. The bigger thing that I did that I don't think shows up anywhere is, while I was at Moldoff as well I was part of the ADL Anti-defamation League's World of Difference Program. Which is a program that sort of facilitates -- not hate crimes but diversity -- it's like diversity training. But it facilitates -- it mostly works with students and teachers.

So we were invited out to schools that had racial problems. A lot of times when the -- and Homewood-Flossmoor is the one that sticks out in my mind because it was so surreal. Where the neighborhoods are starting to change or communities are changing. And in Homewood-Flossmoor there were more African Americans moving in and there was a lot of racial tension. To come out and facilitate the discussions and they had little role plays and little exercises that would get people talking. And I learned from that.

I used to say -- when I first started the program, I was like, "Please don't put me in with teenagers. Teenagers terrify me. I don't want teenagers." And so they said, "OK we'll put you in with someone who's really good with teenagers." But then I realized that I'd rather be with teenagers because as a facilitator you're just sort of moving the discussion. So you're just sort of asking the questions and people are talking and you're sort of managing it.

And teenagers will talk. They're not afraid of saying what's on their mind. It may be politically incorrect. It may be -- but they'll just say it. And then you can tease

it out. Well why would you say that? Well what if someone said that about you? Well what about this? And they'll get talking. And what I discovered with teachers primarily is they would just sit there and not engage. They'd sit there and grade their papers, kind of like, "They're making me do this. I'm sitting here but I don't have to talk. I'm not going to talk." And that's harder.

You can't facilitate when people aren't talking. So I learned to overcome my fear of teenagers and I saw that there's a lot of hope. Going back to your question, I think that the -- well one of the keys, I don't know that I know the answer -- but one of the things that I see is that the more that you put people together at a young age, they start to really understand each other, understand their differences. And really understand that a lot of the differences aren't really differences. There's a lot of similarities and people start to -- you start to go to each other's houses and you start to be friends and then it's not weird. It's hard to introduce that at 50.

When you have these teachers and these white women that have been teaching white children all of their lives and their almost on their way out to retirement, and you're

suddenly trying to introduce these new concepts to them, they're not so open. And so I really think the key is to mix it up, to mix up the groups. Because then you don't even -- you don't realize that there are differences. When my son he went to -- well both my kids go to Frances Xavier Ward School and I one day -- I was going to speak at Michigan -- they have a Martin Luther King symposium.

And I took them with me and we're on the train and this little African American girl starts talking them and she's about 11 I would think. And he looks at her and goes, "Are you Jewish, Catholic or African American?" And I was so mortified because I'm like duh, she's African American. But in his mind he didn't correlate African American with a skin color.

They studied the Jewish religion because it's a Catholic school with a huge Jewish population, half Jewish population a lot of African American kids. And so they studied things related to Jews. They studied things related to African Americans. But he didn't make the connection, it was I'm Catholic so are you Jewish or African American or are you Catholic? But it was just so funny because I thought he doesn't know. It doesn't matter

to him. Then I was trying to think how do I explain this without just putting it --

Q: How did you explain it?

A: Yeah well I sort of said you're Hispanic and you're Catholic. And people who are originally from Africa -- so I went through that, they could be this or they could be that. There's a lot, there's religion and then there's race.

But I was so thrilled that he didn't -- it didn't matter to him. It didn't really phase him. And I see it again with my daughter. There's such a mix -- and not only in race but also because she's adopted and very conscious of the adoption. And in her school, on day in the car she says, "Mom you know what, Jordan doesn't have a dad." And so my son and I were like, "Aw." "But she has two moms." And that wasn't weird to her. It was just different.

We're like, "Well wow that's really cool." And so again I think the more you mix it up -- I think adults mess it up. Because then we start putting our own good or bad seal on it. My nephew who I mentioned previously, I don't know if he does it for shock value or what, but he talks a lot of racist stuff. And I don't even allow him to start in the

house. And I don't allow my son to be around him. Although my son at this point cannot be swayed. And I'm very clear with him. I said, "You're free to thoughts. You're just not free to have them in my house." And I'm not going to let him poison what I've worked so hard not to -- and I argue with him but he's just -- sometimes I think he just does it for the shock value because he knows my background. So I think why am I letting myself be engaged But it so outrages me.

Q: Can you talk about your experience with the Jewish and Latino Alliance that you talked about on the first interview? How did that get started? Is it just specifically Chicago related issues?

A: Yeah. It's the only organization of its kind in the country. And it started before -- I joined a couple of years ago -- but the story goes it was started by Senator Miguel del Valle and a gentleman named Jess Lavine, who runs I think Latino Youth I think is the organization out of the near north and Humboldt Park.

And Jess Levine is Jewish. But this a program that is sort of a support group, kind of like a youth center but educational support group for kids from the neighborhood, most of whom are Puerto Rican or Hispanic. And he and

Senator de Valle were talking about, here's Josh this Jewish guy providing a support service, a program for Latino kids and how the community should come together and try to get to know more about each other. And that's how it started. It was the Alliance of Latinos and Jews. And they started bringing together business people to try to network in that capacity. And what they do changes on who's in charge.

I'm the co-chair now with another woman, Michele Ruiz, who's Jewish, and she's married to Jessie Ruiz. So I don't know what her maiden name is but she's Jewish. And we're both -- and we have kids and so our interests are more in the cultural, social. We had a Sephardic Seder two years ago which I'm thrilled to say came out of sort of my interest in what's a Seder. And it became Sephardic because most of the Jews in this area are Ashkenazi Jews and so the Sephardic aspect would be something new for them as well. We started with 50 people two years ago. And then last year it grew to 80 people.

And this year we're in the planning stages but it seems like it's going to be a lot bigger. But it was really -- and then there's all these really interesting ties because

Sephardic Jews speak a language called Ladino which is just like Spanish. The Seder was in Ladino, so there's a part where you have to read, a child has to read a section. And so they asked if my son would read it. So he read it. It's so funny he's going around telling people I speak Ladino. I said know you read a paragraph in Ladino. And you understood it but -- I thought it really interesting because there's so many connections. And I think -- a friend of mine is Jewish said, "Well how'd you get involved in this thing? Is it because, do you have a particular interest in the Jewish culture? Or is it, it could have been anybody?" And I said, "Well no offense Mike it could have been anybody?" I said, "I just like learning about people." Because again I think that the more you get to know different people, different backgrounds, you see that there's really more similarities than differences. Or even if there are differences, they're kind of cool.

You're like, "Wow why do you do that? Oh that's kind of cool." So with the Jewish culture we find there's that whole family thing. The same kind of family, it's all mixed up. And all the relatives are involved in your life. But there is a lot of similarity there with the Ladino and all of that. But then the Converso is how many, how some

Jewish people are forced to become Catholic and I didn't even know what Conversos were. And just learning all that. So it's very interesting.

But like that, I actually met the guy who introduced me to this group, the Alliance of Latinos and Jews to another group called the Ethnic Coalition. Which someone had -- I don't even know how I got involved in that one. But that brought together bigger groups. Like that had Africans from Africa not African Americans but some people of African background and Greek background and Serbian background just to get together. And every month we talk about a certain issue or sometimes it was something cultural like this is what we do in Serbia for this holiday. Or if there was a hot political topic on a certain area, talk about that, Muslims. I just find that the more you build those relationships and those friendships, the more you realize that -- you know I try never to talk in absolutes and I try to have my kids never talk in absolutes, never those people.

If you're upset with someone because of what they did, then be upset with the person for what they did. Don't bring in their background. Don't bring in the fact that they're

Muslim or something else. Because that's -- we could all be like that. That is not why they're like that. And I try -- sometimes you can't -- Art's grandfather is 88. I love him dearly and God he's 88. So all the things he's had to face. My little antennae go up every time he says things. Because the other -- what did he say Sunday -- "somebody's right, those Arabs, you just can't trust them because --" I don't know what, I just looked at my husband and we all kind of roll our eyes. We're not going to try and correct him, he's 88. But I just look at my kids to make sure that they're getting that I'm rolling my eyes. And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, we know." It's true.

Q: Have you drawn on that experience a lot in your judgeship so far, that understanding of cultural diversity?

A: Oh yeah, I mean I think -- it's funny because I've mentioned to you a couple of times and in many phases in my life I've felt like I don't belong. I felt like I didn't belong in my neighborhood, by the time I moved there I did. But when I was going to college and I was walking there, I didn't feel like I belonged there. And in law school I didn't feel like I belonged. In high school I found my niche but it was a little uncomfortable. But from day one on the bench -- well maybe day two, maybe initially I was

like, "Oh God" -- but once I got into it, I haven't had that feeling. I haven't felt like a fraud.

Like somebody's going to figure out I don't know what I'm doing or I don't belong. I don't feel that at all. I feel like it's exactly where I need to be and that's a really good feeling because I'm not sure I've ever felt that way. Maybe not right away in my (inaudible). But I mean I just -- somebody today I ran into somebody and she's like, "Well you're dealing with the dredges of society." And I said. "No Marilyn, I'm dealing with exactly the people I want to be dealing with." I said, "This is why I went to law school. These are the people that I would have been representing at LAF," I said.

And again it's very easy to think that if you buy into the media portrayals. But again if you look beyond it, if you really look at the reasons why and try to get to the reasons why certain things are happening and why they're in this cycle, then you know -- there hasn't been anybody -- I have fun. I love the job. I have fun on the job. Even when you have somebody who's really unlawful, people who are -- you've given them so many breaks and they're just real flipping about it. Like today I had a guy and he's

like, "Sir last time you continued this case you were going to bring in --" and he had like five tickets and he was supposed to bring in all his papers. "I didn't do that, I didn't do that, I didn't do that." And I'm like, "Well do you have any proof that you have a driver's license? You said you're driving on ticket, where's the ticket?" "Oh I forgot it in the car." I'm like, "Sir, I'm trying to help you here, but you're not giving me much." And then the officer says, "Well judge actually he did show me insurance after I wrote the ticket." I said, "So you're OK if I dismiss the ticket?" She said yes, so I said, "OK. Even --" and he had called her the lady officer -- I said, "Even the lady officer's trying to help you sir, but you're not helping yourself."

So I just have fun. Even if I'm like you're beyond help. There's no reason to lose your temper. There's no reason to call people names or talk to them in a way that lets them know that you think they're scum. Unfortunately some of my colleagues do that. Some of my new colleagues, some of the people who came in with me are already doing that. And I'm like, "You're still on the honeymoon stage. How could you be doing that now?" I tell people -- I have another friend of mine who's just like, well in this sense

he's like it when he says, "If I ever get like that, just slap me." And I said, "Yeah, you can slap me too."

Q: So what do you think the future -- do you have future aspirations for the bench or what area?

A: No I don't know. My husband is the one who always said, "Never say never." I know when people would say are you trying to be a judge and I'd go, "No. Never." Because I thought judging, I thought it would be boring. I remember thinking I would be so bored I would be falling asleep on the bench. I would just be counting the minutes until it was time to go home. That's what I thought. Because I'm a doer and I want to be out and about. And so I thought it's never, no I just thought I would be a horrible judge. And now -- and my husband kept saying, "Stop it. Never say never. Even if you think it's never. Why would you close that door? You don't know what opportunities are going to come your way." And he was right.

So now I'm afraid to say never or say no I don't want to go the -- I don't ever want to be on the Supreme Court, not the U.S. Supreme Court. I think it's safe to say that's not in my future. But state Supreme Court, I don't know. Right now I'm having fun with this job. I just got it so it's hard to think that I want to leave it. I suppose if

anything my feeling about the Appellate Court or the Supreme Court would be just that it's not as direct. I tend to like direct service, dealing with people directly. Because I like people. They just have good stories and if you like people and you can understand what's not to like.

But I don't know. I mean I suppose at some point it would get old and maybe I'll change my views. But for right now it's just to be the best that I can be. And try to figure out where I want to go next, because right now I have to sit in the Traffic Court. And at some point everybody moves on. But I don't know where to express a desire to go on. I think I figured out that I'm going back to what I initially wanted to do, social work. I want to end up somewhere -- like now in Traffic Court I know it sounds silly because people think of Traffic Court as just tickets you and I might get. But it's so much more than that, at the suspended license level and the DUI level that I really do feel like I'm making a difference in people's lives.

And so I'm trying to think where else can I go within the system that will really feel that way. Maybe Juvenile Court, I initially thought I'd never want to go to Juvenile Court because it seemed so heart wrenching. But maybe

because I do see, not many, but I see some of my colleagues that are really just not nice, not nice to people. And I just keep thinking there but for the grace of God go I, where I can see my relatives. I just think how could you do that? And there's no reason to. As my friend points out all the time, we always have the last word so why be mean. So I don't know. I don't -- as much as everybody here aspires to go to law division or chancery, where the big dollar cases are, I'm thinking, of course you're making a difference.

But it's just not at a very basic -- where it can really change people's lives. I had a kid the other day who had a DUI. He hit a tree a year ago. And when the cops came they -- I think he blew -- so I think it was clear he was under the influence. But he had no record. For a young African American 21 year old who had nothing else on his record, that's pretty impressive.

And in the year since he got the DUI, he got his GED, has held a job at McDonalds for a year. And he wants to enlist in the Army. That's like the next -- he's on a path here. It's not the path that I would necessarily choose but I realize for him, that's the best option he's got. But he

can't go into the military until he -- if there's a supervision hanging over his head. And for the kind of DUI the assessment that was given is normally 24 months supervision. But we were able to work it out. Everybody was in agreement. I was so happy.

The public defender, the states attorney and I so that we got him treatment within six months so that the supervision -- if he completes the treatment -- and I said, "Now you're future's in your hands. You got a lot of work. But if you can do the treatment in six months, I'll lift the supervision in six months. And you can enlist in May." So I feel like I know, I know for a fact if had been at least one of my other colleagues, that wouldn't have happened. It would be, "Look you did the crime, you do the time. You have 24 months." And by then, who knows what he might have fallen into, whether that would still be an option for him.

Q: Finally what advice would you give to others, especially women who are just starting out?

A: Well I think one is follow your passion, or find what your passionate about and do that, because that is what makes all the difference in the world. If you're just going to do it for the money, it's not going to make you happy. I hear people griping all the time who make a lot of money

and are driving really nice cars. But they're not happy and yet I know people who aren't making a lot of money. I mean obviously you have to be realistic. If you have tons of loans, I recognize all that but everything else being equal, money shouldn't be the motivating factor. It should be finding and doing what you're passionate about and what you care about. Because then it's easy, or easier. It's never easy but it's easier to prepare to do the background work so that you're competent at it, because you're not hating every minute of it. That would be my advice and find a mentor. That would be the other thing is if you had someone to mentor you along the way and to give you advice that's key, because nobody, no matter what anybody says, nobody makes it on their own. You have other people who are looking out for you and giving you the advice and opening doors for you, sometimes shoving you through those doors as it kept happening to me.

Q: Well thank you so much for this opportunity. It's been just an amazing opportunity to have an interview with you. And it's really going to enrich the archives and we appreciate it.

A: Great.

Q: Do you have any questions for us?

A: No.

Q: Is there anything -- when you agreed to do this, is there anything that you felt like you wanted to tell us that maybe you didn't get to touch on yet? Or is there anything specific that --

A: No I guess I didn't really know what to expect. I just kind of like the idea in general, not about me personally, but just the idea of capturing people early on. I mean the interesting thing for me will be to look back on this interview later and see what's changed, if anything. I think that's -- I mean I said the other day there was -- they put me on a panel which was really funny because they were talking about judges and there I am on this panel.

I've been a judge five months and I'm talking to these judges, some of them have been judges for 30 years about how you should handle (inaudible) dependents. And I know they were all like just yeah right, give it some time. And I said to them, I realize I'm new and I realize I'm not going to be the same judge five years from now that I am now, or ten years from now. I'm going to learn as I go, but there are certain things I hope never to lose. And one of them is my compassion and my understanding, empathy for the people that come before me. If I lose it, then it's time to leave. Because I don't think you do the people --

you're not fair to the people and you're not fair to yourself, because that's just not right. So I'll be happy to look back in a number of years and see if I've lived up to that.

A: Well thank you. Thanks so much.

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