

**Oral History Interview of
Christina Carrizales**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
November 15, 2017
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Hispanic Interview Series***

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Interview Series Background:

The Hispanic Oral History Project documents the diverse perspectives of the Hispanic people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Christina Carrizales as she discusses her political activism in the Lubbock County. In this interview, Carrizales describes her interest in politics, the political attitudes in Lubbock, and the campaigns that she is helping with.

Length of Interview: 01:08:09

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Keywords

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Urbina Sanchez. Today's date is November the 15, 2017. I'm at the Southwest Collection. Tonight we're interviewing Christina Carrizales. Christina, could you please state your complete legal name.

Christina Carrizales (CC):

Christina Carrizales.

DS:

Okay. Where and when were you born?

CC:

I was born in Lamesa, Texas; October 26, 1963. [Laughter]

DS:

So I just have you by a few years.

CC:

Oh really? Okay. That's good.

DS:

So, how about your parents. Where were they born and what are their names?

CC:

My mother's name is Connie Longoria. She was born in Austin, Texas. My father's name is Ernest Diaz and he was born in Austin, Texas as well.

DS:

So that's where they met?

CC:

Um-hm.

DS:

Do you have any information on your grandparents, where they're from?

CC:

My grandmother, Mary, who I just lost three years ago, was born in Austin, Texas. Her mother, Stephanie, was born in Austin, Texas. We're all from—my great-grandfather was—actually, he

was part German and part something else. I think he was from, like, Louisiana. His father was from Louisiana but he was actually born in Austin, Texas also.

DS:

And what do they do for a living?

CC:

Who?

DS:

Your great-grandfather.

CC:

My great-grandfather's deceased. My great-grandmother's deceased. My grandmother I just lost three years ago. My mother is retired. My father is a retired jeweler. He had a jewelry store. He did custom casting and watch repair and stuff. He closed his store a few years ago, so he's retired, too.

DS:

Where did he do that at?

CC:

He did that in the Waco area; Waco, Temple, McGregor.

DS:

How did he get into that line of business?

CC:

He got his jeweler's certification, diamond cutting, and all of stuff, watch repair, and the granddaughter of Mr. Dickey from Scoggin-Dickey Buick owned jewelry stores in East Texas. They got to know each other through that market and he bought her jewelry stores from her. So they both—they knew each other from here but he bought the stores in that area.

DS:

So you said that he was in Waco. Is that where y'all grew up, was Waco?

CC:

No. I actually grew up here. Ours was like the opposite of where the kids move away and go to college. I stayed here and my parents moved away [laughter], and I stayed here with my grandmother.

DS:

Where did you go to school at?

CC:

I went to Lubbock High School.

DS:

And after that?

CC:

I went to South Plains and I went to Tech.

DS:

Okay. What years were you at Tech?

CC:

Eighty-two—no, that was South Plains. Probably '83 to, I guess, '85. I'm not sure. I don't remember. It's been a while.

DS:

What's your degree in?

CC:

Well, I got into the medical field and then I also got into business administration. I did dual, kind of. I worked in the medical field for twenty-something years. I worked for the same surgeon, for Dr. Shihab. I worked for him for maybe twenty-five years. I just left him in August of last year. I just left the medical field. He was getting ready to slow down and start getting ready to retire. My son opened his own law firm so I just started to—I'm actually taking class again. I'm taking some legal research and Texas civil litigation and stuff; kind of like paralegal and legal type things.

DS:

I was going to say, "You're thinking about going back to law school?"

CC:

No. I don't want to go to law school. I'm just trying to get a little bit of information to be able to help my son in the legal field because I can tell you everything about eye surgeries and stuff like that, but I don't know the law. So, I'm doing that now.

DS:

You mentioned your son. And that's Austin, right?

CC:

Yes.

DS:

Is that your only child?

CC:

That's my only child, yes.

DS:

well, did he come to Tech?

CC:

He went to Cavazos Junior High, Lubbock High School and he did his undergrad at Tech and then he went to graduate school and law school at Tech.

DS:

What year did he finish law school?

CC:

Two-thousand ten. Wait a minute, no, that's not true. Twenty-thirteen.

DS:

Because he ran for office right away.

CC:

He ran for office while he was still at law school, actually. He interned for the Obama administration, and when he was there is when Judge Head came out with the crazy—you know, the poster outside his office racially stereotyping mainly black people. All that crazy stuff. So, when my son was in D.C. everybody was like, "Isn't that where you're from?" It was just really embarrassing and he said, "You know, when I get back I'm going to run against him," and that's what he did.

DS:

I remember they were going, "Who's this young guy who's running?"

CC:

Right. So yeah. He was actually—he had just finished law school.

DS:

That's what I thought. It was just like right at the very end.

CC:

Uh-huh. He hadn't even taken his bar exam yet and he was running for office.

DS:

So he got that experience under his belt.

CC:

Yes.

DS:

Did you help him out with that campaign?

CC:

I did some, yeah. I was kind of new to that realm but I did help him a little bit—[whispers] and he's running again.

DS:

Good. So, you mentioned he was interning with the Obama administration. How'd that come about?

CC:

He applied at different places and he wrote essays and he was selected to go. Of course, we didn't have any Democratic representatives in this region so he went with Congressman Henry Cuellar. For Congressman Cuellar, he was the liaison for the National Hispanic Caucus. He was actually there when the House Resolution 3392 passed, which was the Obamacare. So, he got to witness a lot of good stuff.

DS:

You mentioned he's still going to run again. So he didn't get soured the first time around?

CC:

No. He will be announcing on November the twenty-ninth.

DS:

Okay. That's just around the corner.

CC:

Yeah it is. It is. He finally decided—he's been asked and asked to run. He said he wasn't going to do it and just—

DS:

Same office or—what is he—

CC:

No. He'll be running for 84, District 84, against—for John Frullo's seat. It's a good chunk of minority area mixed in—well, you know how they gerrymandered that area so it's—if we can get Hispanics to vote it's a winnable race. It's one of the few races that can actually be competitive if you can just get minority representation to the voting booth.

DS:

To get them to get out there and vote.

CC:

Right.

DS:

So you've been learning about politics in a hurry, haven't you?

CC:

Yes I have. [Laughs] I've always been involved. When Obama ran the first time, I did—I called Florida. I called Colorado, Nevada. I was on their list and I made calls from home off my computer. So, we did that for his whole campaign. I signed up for that.

DS:

So were you working through the Democratic party here?

CC:

No. I was actually working through the—directly through the Obama campaign, just online. I registered online and just started doing it on my own.

DS:

So, you know, we have the Tejano Democrats. Are you the chair of that still?

CC:

I am vice-chair. In the next month or two I think I'll be running for co-chair with Gilbert. I think we're going to—

DS:

That's right, Gilbert's the chair right now.

CC:

Yeah. Gilbert's the chair. I don't want him to step down so I said, "Okay, what if we run for co-chair and I help you?" So, I feel like with his name recognition he needs to stay in the group because he knows everybody across the state. He's got good connections. I just—I can't let him step down.

DS:

So when did you get involved with that group?

CC:

Probably 2013. Probably. Yeah, around 2013. Kind of had heard about them but I didn't really know a lot about them. It was around 2013 as well. It's been about four or five years.

DS:

I think that's about when they started. They haven't been active in Lubbock that long.

CC:

They had—I think the former city councilman Victor Hernandez used to be president and I think he had it going for a while before then. I'm not sure who their presidents were before him but I know he was the chair and they did a lot of stuff. I just was not active at the time.

DS:

So was it when your son got involved that you got active?

CC:

Yeah. It just turned out that I knew most of those people in that group and started—I met Melodía and Billy and Ruth Martinez. We started getting invited to meeting and stuff and asked to be on this committee and that committee. It just kind of snowballed from there.

DS:

And that's while working full-time, right?

CC:

Well, that was—yeah. I was working full-time at that time, yes, and going to school also. I was taking some evening classes, too.

DS:

Busy schedule.

CC:

Yeah. Now not so much. I'm not working right now so it's not—I am now—besides getting back into school, I got my certification and I'm doing mediation, court-appointed mediation. I love it. It's like a judge without the robe. It's wonderful.

DS:

What type of cases do you mediate?

CC:

Juvenile. I just got my certificate to do family law so I've sat in a few family law cases but I haven't actually done one. You know, just personal injury; the insurance company against the injured party. Just different—landlord against tenants. Just different stuff. Most of them are money type cases where someone's been injured and they are trying to reach a settlement. This person wants an outrageous amount of money and this person wants to pay them two pennies and you have to kind of get them to meet in the middle somewhere, both walk away happy, and reach a settlement and keep them out of court to save both of them money. So, that's what I'm doing now.

DS:

Is it something you like to do?

CC:

I absolutely love it. I wish I had been doing this years ago. I don't know that—I don't know that I could be a lawyer but this is really—I like being the buffer. It's just—I mean, they call me Dr. Phil so I guess I'm okay. [Laughter] Billy and Ruth of the Tejano Democrats, they call me Dr. Phil. So, I think it just works out good, just kind of getting people to kind of see each other's point of view and agree on things.

DS:

So when you retired from the medical field, you didn't retire. You got busy still, right?

CC:

Oh, I stayed busy. In fact, Dr. Shihab is a good friend of mine and we're like family. I mean, he bought every fundraiser my son ever sold, sponsored every baseball team. I think I talk to him more now that I'm not working for him than when I was working for him. He is very supportive of the party and the candidate I'm working for now, and of my son as well. So, we talk all the time and we—he helps me with a lot of stuff in politics as well. I kind of just quit working for him, quit drawing a paycheck, and just kind of still working together but on other things.

DS:

Tejano Democrats, y'all brought in quite a few people in the past couple of years. Can you talk about that and what the strategy is there?

CC:

We took over at a time—I think we took over maybe around July. I'm not even sure. Maybe July or August of 2016. It was when this heated race with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. It was getting really nasty and really ugly. His negative words about minorities and stereotyping us as rapists and bringing drugs just got a lot of people interested, which we were blessed that they heard those things that he said and decided, "Hey, I want to be a part of something. I want to be a part of this movement. I want to fight that man and I want to stand up for my people and show him that that's not what we are." So, we just were really lucky to fall into our—we were voted in. Our officers are all voted in by the members. We were voted in at a time that—we didn't know at the time that this man was going to slander our people. So, a lot of people became angry and upset, and they wanted to stand up and speak out. It just so happened we just had just taken over as officers being elected. So we had this race and we registered over a thousand people to vote. That was mainly myself, Debbie, Gilbert, Cathy, the executive committee for Tejano Democrats. We had a lot of help from professor Dan Epstein. He came out and helped us a lot. Dr. Andrew Azab came out and worked with us a lot. Stuart Williams from the Lubbock County Democrats. Sue Barricks senate District 28 chairwoman. When they actually saw what Tejano Democrats was doing, they started coming to us and saying, "Okay, when are you going to be out there." So, we were at the United Amigos on north University several Saturdays and Sundays. We were at the United on 50th and Avenue Q and we were at the Parkway United. So we stayed focused on the minority regions and we were able to register over a thousand people with just a handful of people. And everyone was the same. Everybody had the same thing. They were upset with Donald Trump. They were upset with the way he was stereotyping minorities with his divisiveness and what seemed like, at the time, to be the white supremacist type mentality, which, obviously, it developed into that later. So, it wasn't hard to do this. We had people come up to us and say, "Look, I've been out of prison for ten years. I was in for a burglary charge. Can I vote now?" We were like, "Yes. As long as you're off"—there was people that were just interested in doing it that I don't think would ever have approached us if it had been a different time, different situation.

DS:

Have you sensed that that's still out there, that there's still people that are wanting to get involved?

CC:

I think that there was a lot of people that were thinking, Well, I'm going to vote Republican because he's not a politician. I'm going to give him a chance. Once he got in there and refused to rebuke the KKK and David Duke, I think that maybe their eyes were opened as to what type of person he was. They then regretted it. We do actually have people that say, "You know what, I voted for him. It was a big mistake." It's hard for someone to say that. I would feel—I would have a hard time saying, "Oh my gosh, I voted for a monster. What a big mistake." It takes a big person to admit that, and I respect them for the honesty in saying, "I did do it but I'm not going to do it again." It's almost embarrassing to admit that you voted for him. So, there's more people now—especially Hispanics that were voting Republican—that, I think, it kind of maybe may have shamed them a little bit at that choice that they made, especially after they see how he values us and his lack of respect of us.

DS:

I think I read somewhere last week that it was like 29 percent of the Hispanic vote is what he got nationwide. That's as shocking as getting fifty-one percent of the white women's vote.

CC:

Exactly. Right.

DS:

Two groups you would say, "There's no way," and yet they did.

CC:

How did that happen or are you not listening to what he's saying? I think a lot of it is—I think in Lubbock, Texas—because I talked to people in Austin and Austin is, it's like night and day.

Austin, somebody can sit there and talk to you about politics and you don't feel—you don't feel like they're talking down at you. Even if they don't agree with you, they engage you. Here in Lubbock, it's—the attitude is so different. It's like a cult. "If you're a Republican, you're okay. You can be moderate. That's okay. We're going to let you be a little moderate. We'll let you slide on that part as long as you're Republican." But once you tell them you're a Democrat, you know, you get the snowflake, the libtard and all this other stuff. You can see it in the media by the comments that they post on the local TV stations Facebook pages. They start posting and posting and it just gets downright ugly. This is supposed to be such a good, conservative, Christian part of the state and it's the ugliest when it comes down to that. It is like just ugly, ugly. When you see the way people talk on their Facebook pages, when you see the way they

respond to any news that has anything to do, they—if you're a Democrat and you speak out, even if what you're saying is true, you get called all kinds of names. You will get slandered. I've been slandered before after interviews that I've done. It's just people lose the civility. Here in Lubbock it's not just Democrat and Republican. Here it's like a cult. If you're in the party, you're a cult. There's no respect. There's no—you just can't have a D by your name because that automatically—you're going to hell. I've been told I'm going to hell. I had an—I was wearing a Texans for Obama t-shirt and I'm going to say he was about eighty-something years old, saw me at the United gas station and walked up to me and told me I was going straight to hell. I said, "Why?" He said, "Because you're a Democrat and you voted for Obama." I said, "Okay. Well, I'll see you there." Yeah, it's rough here. It's rough being a democrat here in Lubbock.

DS:

But I think you hit it on the head when you said, "Civility has left."

CC:

It's gone. It's gone.

DS:

It's not politics anymore, not here.

CC:

No, not in Lubbock. Like I said, in Lubbock it's a cult. It's not politics. You have this guy, like Jodey Arrington, going against everything that is going to help the cotton farmers, "But he's a Republican so we're going to overlook everything he's doing because he's a Republican." Sitting there defending Roy Moore for molesting these thirteen and fourteen-year-old girls. I would think that the right-wing Christians would come out and say, "We need him out of here. We don't need a child molester representing us. We have values. We are church-going, god-fearing people and we have our values and that is not what we want representing us. Instead he's—you have Jodey Arrington defending him and talking about, "Don't jump to conclusions because it might not be true." Another woman comes out and another one and another one. This is where I feel like the hypocrisy happens because this is where the Christians should stand up and say, "No. You do not molest our daughters, our fourteen-year-old daughters. You do not do that. We will protect our children from people like you, not protect you from the Democrats." You got to draw the line somewhere. Humanity and civility has to come back into play. It's left us and I think that with this president in office, it's just—it's getting worse. It's just getting worse.

DS:

Because many of the things you were highlighting about Moore, he's been accused of himself.

CC:

Um-hm. Exactly. Exactly So, you know, you lead by example. I guess if you tolerate that in the White House, it should be tolerated elsewhere, I guess. But yeah, it's just like—I just feel that—I mean, I think we all bleed red. I don't care what you look like on the outside. We all bleed red. It doesn't matter if you are a Catholic—I don't know if you're Catholic—or if you're a Baptist like me or if you are—I have a friend that's an Indian and they call God the Keeper of the Stars. We call him God. We call him Christ. My Muslim friends call him Allah. So, it doesn't matter how you worship. We all worship that higher being, and it ends up being the same. When you look at it, it's just we all bleed red. It doesn't matter how you kneel, how you pray, how you worship, we all bleed red. My blood's no better than your blood and his blood's no better than our blood. If we could just remember that, we'd be so much better off.

DS:

Have you always been politically engaged? If not active, at least engaged?

CC:

Yes. My parents were very alert to all of that. It was something that was discussed in our homes. Even my grandmother, who she just loved Obama [laughs] and she loved Hillary. But it was just something that we always discussed in our home. Always. Always. Always.

DS:

That was a historic time. What did you think when you heard Obama had won, when you saw it on the screen?

CC:

I cried. I sat there and cried because I had been Team Hillary. I, you know, wanted to caucus for her. I wanted her to win. But he was so charismatic and it was a win-win for me. Even when he got the nomination I thought he seemed to be a good human being. People don't really pay attention to that side. They want to know—I mean, his education was just wonderful. Just great. You couldn't question that. His wife, the same thing. I just felt like the way he talked, the way he presented himself, he wanted to represent everybody and be everybody's president and do what was best for all of us. I think that he embodies the American dream. I mean, single mother. Grandparents helped raise him. I mean, what else? Even Hillary, you know, raised by her mother. If coming from a single parent and you can still make it to that office, that says a lot. So, I just—my admiration for him just grew and grew. And the people he surrounded him with. They were engaged. They were goal-minded. They were—they had their mission and they were going to accomplish it. It was planned out. Their strategy was just great. So, it just made me respect, you know, his team and what they were doing. I was happy to become a part of it.

DS:

Years later, were you back on Hillary's team when she was running?

CC:

I was. I was. The Tejano Democrats—actually, we were asked to take over the—well, Stuart Williams actually was instrumental in bringing a Hillary headquarters to Lubbock, which nobody could believe. We even got articles in different newspapers because it was like, “What? A Hillary Clinton office in blood-red Lubbock, Texas?” But he really fought for it and then he did that. So, we had the office downtown then he—when the insults started with the Mexican Americans and stuff, he kind of said, “Okay guys, this is your chance. Would you like to do this West Texas for Hillary event?” So, we went with it and we got as many people involved as we could. We had Senator Krueger there, the last Democratic senator from this area. We had Miguel Levario talking about immigration. We had so many people there and everybody was happy to be there. At that time—it was kind of funny. Like I said, our timing was just perfect because that politician, or whatever, made the comment about, you know, if Hillary wins that there's going to be taco trucks on every corner. [Laughs] So, when we had our fundraiser we had a taco truck on the corner. It was just everything fell into place for us and we worked really hard. We raised enough money—and I say we but really Gilbert Flores raised enough money to run radio ads on almost every Spanish station. He did commercials. I did commercials. Cathy did commercials. We all did commercials promoting Hillary Clinton and reminding people how Trump had slandered our people and labeled us murderers and rapists and bringing drugs. We did everything we could. We did every possible thing that we could. We registered voters. We went to the high schools and registered voters. We sat in the cafeteria through all three lunches and registered voters. We made phone calls. We made so many phone calls and we sent out emails. We just—we did everything that we could to get out the Hispanic vote. Unfortunately we fell short but we tried. I couldn't live with myself if we hadn't done what we did.

DS:

Were you there at the victory party that night?

CC:

Yeah. Actually, myself and the Tejano Democrats were the ones that put it together. We actually—somehow or another we started taking over stuff and we eventually took over—we were asked if we wanted to do that so we actually did the victory party; Tejano Democrats along with Texas Democratic Woman of the South Plains. But we were—once again, Gilbert's daughter, Debbie, helped us get the Reagor Building and we had a taco truck there, too. We had a band. Gilbert secured a band. We had Element perform, had DJ, had food, had just everything; beer, wine, everything. We had everything there, so we kind of took over that, too. We're a very ambitious group that we had. It was really terrible, though. Terrible night. It started out a great night and it ended up just a horrible night.

DS:

Was that—taking over, was that part of—because, you know, Stuart was relatively new in the position and he was welcoming the help that y'all were given.

CC:

Stuart is a person that when he sees someone strength, he's like, [snaps] "Let's use that." We had a group that we really jelled. I was vice-chair; meant nothing. Once we sat at the table, we were just five or six people taking care of business. Everybody lost their titles once we came to the table. In fact, Gilbert says, "I need more men because I'm outnumbered," because he would suggest something and we're like, "No, no, no. This is how it's going to be." Once we come to the table, we forget who's what because it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all. So, when Stuart recognized that—before the West Texas for Hillary event, we had two or three events at Catalina's restaurant. I just happened to know the people that were running it at the time. So, the first event we had there, I got to Senator Sylvia Garcia from Houston and Senator Jose Rodriguez, then Joey Cardenas who was the state chair of the Texas Tejano Democrats. So, that was our first function that we actually did and we were able to get two senators and the state chair for the Tejano Democrats here. So, I think that kind of got people's attention.

DS:

It did.

CC:

The Texas Democratic Women were like, "Hey, let's do something. We'll help you." Stuart was like, "Gosh guys, since y'all are doing so good, why don't—you guys want to do this," and we're like, "Yeah, bring it. We'll do it." That all goes back to the people that you have in the group. Billy and Ruth Martinez—Ruth is so knowledgeable about voting rights and voting this. She was with the elections office for years. I mean, we had an unfair advantage because we had the most awesome people. Then Gilbert has been involved in politics for so many years. I mean, if you say, "Do you know somebody in Houston," he will pick up the phone and find somebody in Houston he knows; or El Paso or Dallas. He's well-known and well-connected.

DS:

And respected.

CC:

And respected, yes. And Cathy is so well-liked. She's like, "Oh, well I can ask so and so." Nobody ever says no to Cathy because she's so sweet. And then Debbie, the same thing. We just happen to have people that just—everything just fell into place at the right time. With Trump insulting our people, Gilbert could pick up the phone and say, "Hey, I need a donation because we need to run some radio ads," and people were like, "Yes, come pick up a check." And not just

Hispanic people. White people, black people, everybody was so disgusted with him that they were just—I mean, we didn't pay anything out of Tejano Democrats fund for those radio ads, and we spent thousands on radio ads and everything was donated to us because people were so upset with the things he was saying. Like I said, it is—it just all goes back to having somebody that knows what they're doing and utilizing them. That's when Stuart came in and said, "Wow. You guys are really good at that. You guys want to the election night party?" We were like, "Sure." So, we looked around and we wanted it to be at a nice place and we knew we were going to have media there and we were going to have a lot of distinguished guests. We checked around a lot of places then through a friend of a friend, you know, you get your homeboy hookups where you get a good discount here and there. So, we were able to make it a really nice thing. You were there, weren't you?

DS:
Uh-huh.

CC:
I was going to say, "I just now remember you."

DS:
You know, Stuart used to be one of our student assistants here. He actually worked right beneath us right here at the reference area. He had his start here.

CC:
Yeah. And he's just—he's just really gung-ho and he's always gung-ho. Sometimes you're just like, "Okay. Just give me a break for just—just let me have a break for a week," and he's like, "Oh no, no, no. We have work to do." He never—he just doesn't stop. He is 100 percent dedicated. He is a total—it's like black and white from what we had before. Ms. Reynolds just didn't have the energy like, you know—she was a good, kind person. Actually, I think she taught my English at Lubbock High, but when you're doing something like that position, I think you have to be a little more up-to-date with what's happening in the world and how you respond and how quickly you respond. You have to utilize social media and all these things. He was able to do that. Where she wanted to send letters and—you know, you just have to jump on these things. You can't wait for all of that. I think that it just—her stepping down was actually a good thing for the party because we became more energized, I think. You know, if you have someone that's a really slow-paced type person, then everyone that follows is going to kind of, "Okay, well, we can't step in front of her so we're going to have to go slow and just"—

DS:
It gets kind of bottlenecked back there, doesn't it?

CC:

Exactly. Exactly. So once she was gone, he just came in and said, "Hey, hold on, because we're going." Everything he did, everything he—he's on top of it. He can tell you tomorrow if there's a special election. He can tell you as soon as the announcement is—he will tell you how it turned out. He just stayed on top of those things. He will tell you any comments that any of the local Republicans make, anything, because he keeps tabs on everything and everybody. And that's what you're supposed to do. That's how you stay competitive.

DS:

And Stuart, along with your son, are a part of the new, young generation that's gotten involved in politics.

CC:

Yeah. We have—our vice-president of youth is Brenda Cruz and she is from like Laredo. She's young and she's in Tejano Democrats. She's in the Texas Democratic Women. She's in charge of the local chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Control. She's like twenty-something years old and she's already doing all of these things. A lot of the decisions we make from Tejano Democrats come from her. She just has like outstanding ideas. She actually was in charge of the banquet we just had in September. She put that together and she's only twenty-something years old. They didn't let us do stuff like that when we were in our twenties. They were like, "You stay away from there." [laughs]

DS:

You were busy though, right?

CC:

Yeah. And you know, that's what I'm saying. She's twenty-something years old. She's just a young, bright Hispanic woman and she's already put on a whole banquet for the whole county, Lubbock County Democrats. She was in charge of that banquet. I'm on the events committee and I was just her helper. We have an events committee, which I'm co-chair of the events committee. But that was her baby and she took it and she ran with it. She got Poncho Nevárez to come and speak, Mrs. Morgan from the Young Texas Democrats, the state president. I mean, she was all over it. And that was a twenty-something-year-old girl Tech Student and she planned the whole thing. I mean, it's just amazing. Just amazing.

DS:

You mentioned earlier about interns and then this young staff but what makes it where you can use those is when you have leaders that are willing to say, "This is what I want you to do," and then let them do it.

CC:

And, you know, sometimes it's like—it's not even way even with—of course, I'm not giving out any secrets on the Levario campaign that I'm involved in but on the Levario campaign I can honestly say we have a lot of people like that. We have these young guys that just come in and say, "We should try this. What do you think," and it's just like, "Oh my god. You're brilliant." They have so much to offer and they just want someone to listen to them. If you just listen to them, a lot—most times they are spot on on what needs to be done. They're young and they're inexperienced and I understand that but you have to keep an open mind. You can't keep doing things the way they've always been done and expect a different result. So, we are blessed on this campaign that we have some young interns. A lot of them do have experience. They've worked for Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Cuellar and some other Congressman and stuff. But they're just a lot of—I don't know. This youth that we have hanging around the Democratic Party, I'm just amazed with them. They're just inspiring. They just really are inspiring.

DS:

You mentioned Miguel Levario. How did you get involved with his campaign?

CC:

You know, I can't even remember how I got involved with his campaign. I think what happened—well, I met him—I think I met him at a Cesar Chavez march maybe a couple of years of years ago or something because we always do the Cesar Chavez march, the Tejano Democrats. I think I met him there and then when we took over the West Texas for Hillary event—the Latinos for Hillary, I asked him to come speak there as well. I met him—I actually met him there and then my son also met him. We would see each other at the Democratic headquarters and at different functions and stuff and we would always talk and always talk. You know, I kept saying, "You need to come with the Tejano Democrats and blah blah blah." So, we just—when Beto O'Rourke came last February—like a year ago, over a year ago, that Beto O'Rourke actually came to Lubbock before anybody knew who he was. Miguel and his family came out to Montelongo's and we got to talking there. So, we took pictures and stuff. He was really sweet, really kind and he said, "You know, man, you and Stuart are really—you're doing a great job." I know Stuart was trying to get him more involved. He just had—he's very charismatic; his family, his wife, his children, just a beautiful family and we just became friends. So, last February or March he said that he was—well, Stuart had told me that he was working on Miguel to run. He just asked me to come to a meeting. I didn't realize that I was—it was for that. He just said, "We're going to have a meeting at headquarters. Can you come?" So, I said, "Yeah sure." So anyway, he sat down with a few of us and he said, "I really want y'all to help me," and I was like, "Oh. That's what the meeting is." So, I guess—I don't know—he had picked a few people from the party that he had gotten to know and work with a few people. He just said, "I just want y'all to be on my campaign." I was really humbled. I was hoping that he would decide to run and then there was a little period there where he wasn't sure if he was going to be able to

run because of his job here at Tech. Then finally once he said yes I was like, "Okay." So, he said, "You want to plan my announcement party," and I was like, "Oh yeah. That's what I do." So, that's just—I mean, it just happened. It was so weird. He just asked me to come to a meeting. I didn't know that's what it was for.

DS:

So, that was February some we're what—

CC:

February, March, something like that. March.

DS:

So we're like eight, nine months into it. What's it been like?

CC:

You know, it's so strange because it's not like—it's not stressful. It's not a job. It's something that you want to see come to [fruition] and you just—it just makes you feel good when, you know, you go somewhere and he's going to speak. He's up there talking and I'm handing out cards and people are like, "He's so down-to-earth." It's just so nice because people are starting to see who he is and what he's about. And when they start commenting, "Oh, what he said about this," or, "What he said about health care," or, "What he said about education." You know, "Oh, that just,"—it's just when you're seeing this flower just blossom in front of you. It's kind of strange to compare this six-foot something tall man to a little flower but really it's what it is. It's like he's just blossoming and people are getting to know him. As they do, they like him and people are learning his opinions and his views on different things; education, and health care, immigration. You know, to hear him speak and then hear them come up to him and say, "You know, that's exactly how I feel. I'm so glad you said that." Just today—today at lunch we had a—we've been to the Mae Simmons Senior Center with former City Councilman T.J. Patterson. He's a good friend of the campaign and so is the City Councilwoman Sheila, his daughter. So, we go over there and—in fact, T.J. did an endorsement video for us and I've got a couple of people that are doing endorsement videos for him. We went over there today and this was the second time he's been over there. The first time he went he sat at this table and talked to everybody then he moved to the next table, then he moved to the—just talked to everybody. You know, people like that. They like the one-on-one. They like to know that you're not going to come here and just talk at me but you're actually going to come here and listen to me. So, today was the second time that we'd gone—we took lunch over there today at lunch. Some of the same people were there. It's like I tell you, this blossoming flower because you had this lady that told him, "I'm going to hold you to that. I will hold you to that. You don't come back here or you don't listen, I will hold you to that." He remembered her and she talked to him. He did the same thing, he went from table to table to table and everybody said, "You know, that guy he's running

against, he's never even been to this part of Lubbock." They said, "And he's already been here twice and he said he's going to come back next month." They are just—he said—they said, "Nobody has shown an interest in us. Nobody listens to us." They said, "This is the"—they were just amazed that he told them he'd be back and he came back. He said, "Next time I come, I'm bringing you lunch." We took them lunch today. But that's part of that little flower just blossoming because people, I noticed, they really respond well to him. He's a soft-spoken giant. He comes in and he is this big, tall man but yet he comes across as having a really big heart and really caring about what they're telling him, and today was a good example because several of them talked to him about things that were concerning them. You know, he pointed them out and was like, "You're the one that told me so and so and so and so." They're like, "Yeah." It makes people feel important when they're not just being spoken to but listened to.

DS:

I think that's the key because we have a whole generation, it seems like, of politicians that don't listen. They're going to do what they're going to do no matter what you ask.

CC:

And that's one thing that I think that's one of his strong point. That may not be something that wins elections. It's just listening and listening, but he really does. He really does. We had a fundraiser in Abilene and it was the same thing. He went from here to here to here to here, listening to everybody. You didn't hear him speak that much because he was listening. Like he told them today, "I can't just come here and tell you everything. I need to know what your concerns are. You need to be telling me," he said, "because when it comes down to it, Jodey holds the seat. That's all he does. He's holding just a seat. I want to represent you. I don't want to just hold that seat. I want to actually represent you." So, it's been really easy. He's very easy to sell because he has—he's charismatic and he's soft-spoken and he listens to other people. So it's not a hard job to do.

DS:

I know this is his first campaign but do you know if he's worked on other campaigns before?

CC:

I don't know that he's worked on other campaigns. I think he's been asked to advise on immigration issues and stuff. I know a statewide candidate that when he was here last said, "I need to get your phone number and contact information because I need you to help me with these immigration issues. I need to get"—and these are statewide candidates that have wanted his opinion.

DS:

And that's what he earned his doctorate in.

CC:

Uh-huh. Right.

DS:

He's at the forefront of that.

CC:

I actually have a friend who is an engineer and he's working on a huge project. I'm talking the whole border. His object is to beautify the border and make it a tourist attraction. Not very many people know about this project. My friend's name is Mitchell. He's from Austin, Texas. So, he is reaching out to people like Miguel that are immigration experts, people that grew up on the border. He's getting funding from all kinds of people. I think he was fixing to go speak at A&M last week. But he's getting like heavy hitters involved in this. So this is like a big deal and nobody knows that much about it. I've been giving him contacts. I scheduled a fundraiser in El Paso here from Lubbock. I've never even been there. [laughter] But I scheduled a fundraiser in El Paso for Miguel. It was like a coming home fundraiser. So, I just happened to start getting a lot of connections: professors of immigration, professors of this. I was like, "You know, I've got this guy over here that's thinking of doing this," and they love the idea. I know you've heard of Los Colonias or whatever, where people are born there but they don't have a birth certificate and it's supposed to be this just horrific place. You know, this guy is, you know, this white guy and he wants to build museums there. He wants to build tourist attractions and make it a tourist attraction so people will quit demonizing the border. So, I've been really blessed that I've come across people that just, you know—I don't know, God just puts them in my path. You know, he put Mitchell in my path and I just happened to have just hooked up knowing Miguel and his family and it was like, "Oh, well you know what, you two guys need to be talking." And then from Miguel I did a fundraiser and I met all these different Congressmen and stuff and professors of immigration, professors of Mexican American studies and blah blah blah. I was like, "Hey, you know what, these guys can help you." So, it's just been really weird. God's just used me as an instrument, or a buffer, you know.

DS:

So what is it about your past that's helping you do what you're doing now?

CC:

You know what, that's so weird. I don't know because I was a—I mean, I think my parents just kept us interested in politics. We were always interested in politics. I've just—I don't know. It's just always interested me, always. My sister—I have two sisters and a brother. They could probably care less. They are not interested in it. It was just always me and my dad; me and my dad and my mom, always, always interested in politics. You know, just listening and getting involved. I remember hoping that—what's his name—Henry Cisneros would make it to run for

president then he messed up and it just crushed me. Just—I don't know—just seeing Latinos and women—Latinos—anybody. Just, you know, if you have the right message and the right mission, you know, I just—I don't know. Just seeing these people succeed. And I'm not—people ask me, “When are you going to run? When are you going to run?” I'm just like, “No, no, no. I can't do that. My mouth is way too big.” [Laughter] Because I'll tell you how the cow ate the cabbage and then I'll be in big trouble. But yeah, that's just—I don't know. I've always been passionate about politics for some reason, always been interested.

DS:

And in the role that you're fulfilling, this Dr. Phil, how did you acquire that skillset to where—

CC:

I don't know.

DS:

—that you can do this.

CC:

I don't know. I just—you know, we have people in the party that they don't get along. They just don't get along. You have this group and you have this group. I don't know how I managed to not, you know—because I will be partial to one group, in all honesty. I'm partial to the group that I work with all the time but I don't want to alienate that group because it's just like they say, “Stronger together,” but there's just some people that have to have that constant, you know—they have to have something going on all the time that's not always positive. I just don't—I just don't—I don't fool with that but I respect them and I'm nice to them. So, I kind of end up being that buffer in the middle because I'm just like, “I'm not on your team but I'm not really on their team.” I don't know. I don't know how it happened. It just happens. And I wasn't that way before because I used to be very hard-headed. It was my way or the highway. I don't know. I've softened.

DS:

What softened you?

CC:

I don't know. I don't know what it is. I think—I really don't know. You know, when Austin was growing up it was—it just wasn't about me anymore. I mean, before you knew it he's in kindergarten and I'm already PTA [**Parent-Teacher Association**] president. He's playing in the Youth Football League and all of a sudden I'm on the board. I stayed on the board for the Youth Football League for years, the whole time that he played youth football. Then I was on the board

at Dixie Little League. I don't know. I don't know how these things happened to me. They just happened.

DS:

Those lead to what you're doing now because you started getting involved with the community at that when you're doing that.

CC:

He was at Lubbock High. Well, I knew all the coaches. I don't know how I knew all the coaches. I knew all the coaches and I knew their wives. They were friends. So, you know, before you know it I'm Booster Club president for the Football Booster Club and I'm president for the Baseball Booster Club. I don't even have a kid in this, but I'm helping with that. It just—I don't know. We were like a family when they were at Lubbock High. So, I don't know. I think that all of that—yeah, all of that probably had a lot to do with it. Yeah, that was the first office I ran for was PTA. [Laughter]

DS:

Look at you now, right?

CC:

Yeah.

DS:

Well, I think we've been going for, what, about—

CC:

It's eight-forty.

DS:

About an hour.

CC:

We started late.

DS:

About an hour.

CC:

Yeah.

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DS:

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to discuss?

CC:

No, not really. I mean, unless—I don't know—there's something else you'd like to know. I just would love to see things change here in Lubbock. I hate this blood-red state and this right wing crazy, you know—just mentality that there is here, it's sickening. You go to other places and they're like, "Oh my god. You're from Lubbock, Texas," and it's like funny to them. I mean, they laugh at Lubbock, Texas. They really do. They laugh at us and they're like, "[groans] How can you tolerate that? How can you tolerate living about so many ignorant people," and I'm just like, "God, how do I tolerate it?" They think it's hilarious that these people are so far right winged that we are able to survive here among them. But that's when I tell them, "Hey, I go to Austin as much as I can."

DS:

You know, the other thing is right now Tech is a Hispanic-serving institution. Through its system it's set that 25 percent mark. Back when you were coming out of Lubbock High it was maybe 8 percent. So, what was it like coming from Lubbock High? Were you like the first Chicana that you knew that was coming here or did you already have friends here?

CC:

Oh no. I had a lot of friends came, so no. No, it wasn't.

DS:

So you didn't have that hurdle.

CC:

No I didn't because I had a lot of friends that came here. I actually went to South Plains first. Like I said, I had two friends that went to Lubbock High with me, that we carpoled. We took turns taking our cars up there. So, it wasn't—and there was a lot of Hispanics there too, even there. So, we used to drive to Levelland like every day. So, I never noticed that, I guess, because I had so many friends going there and going here as well.

DS:

Well, I guess, you know, you probably got to get going. It's already going to be nine o'clock, right?

CC:

Yeah. I turn into a pumpkin like at ten. [laughter] No, I'm just kidding. I'm usually not even home by now.

DS:

Oh really?

CC:

No.

DS:

Are you going to go back to the office?

CC:

No. I'm not going back. I've got—I'm doing some legal research so I'm going to go work on that. I don't know. And I've got to pack. I packed my clothes and thought, Okay, I'm going to leave this suitcase down and I'll just—because I'm leaving tomorrow after lunch.

DS:

To Austin?

CC:

Yeah. I'm going to Central Texas. I have a friend that has a mother that's ill so I'm going to go to Brady, which it's not that far from here. It's like three and a half hours. I just hate driving. And I had two flats today.

DS:

You mentioned that. At least you're good to go now.

CC:

Yeah. [Laughs]

DS:

At least that's been taken care of.

CC:

I know.

DS:

Be worse if it was on the road.

CC:

I know. I started to go back to headquarters because Isaiah, one of our interns, said, "I can't make these phone calls. I need some wine." I was like, "Oh, are you going to go get wine?" He

was like, "Yeah, I might go get some wine." He said, "Are you coming back?" I was like, "Well, if you're going to get wine." No, I didn't want to go. I'm just going to go home.

DS:

Well, I thank you for coming out here and talking with us.

CC:

Thanks for inviting me.

DS:

We all know—Miguel and everything you're doing for him is good.

CC:

Well thank you. I appreciate that. I'm hoping I can do the same for my son. I don't know that I'll help on his campaign.

DS:

How involved were you with his the first time around?

CC:

I did help some, just scheduling a few things here or there. He had his staff and I just—I don't know. He had a very diverse staff. He had a Republican campaign manager. He ran as a Democrat, because he's a Democrat, but he had a Republican campaign manager and Libertarian treasurer. They just all had similar views but they all claimed to be this, this and this. I think they were all Democrats but they wouldn't say—

DS:

You don't want to admit—

CC:

Yeah, they don't want to admit it. He did okay. I think he was realistic in what was going to happen, but it was just something he felt he needed to do.

DS:

I was going to ask you, what was more bittersweet: seeing your son lose or Hillary lose?

CC:

Or what?

DS:

Hillary.

CC:

Oh gosh. I think that Austin was just trying to make a statement at the time. He would've loved to have won. He would've been prepared. He would've saved the city hundreds and thousands of dollars in legal fees because he was an attorney and they wouldn't have to keep hiring out people, like Tom Head, because he's not an attorney and doesn't know the law. All he does is probates. That's all he does is probates. He does nothing else. He can't—he calls a professor at the Tech Law School to get help with that because he's not a lawyer, doesn't have a law degree. Austin would've saved the county hundreds and thousands of dollars in legal fees because he wouldn't have to hire out for those things, he could do them himself. He would've love to do the job and he would've done a good job. Of course, I'm mama so I'm saying that from mama's point of view. He's very responsible and always has been. I mean, he walked at seven months. He read—he knew how to read his consonants and vowels by the time he was three years old and it wasn't my doing. That was Ms. Joann at the Raider Ranch. [Laughter] So, everything he did, he did it fast and he's real responsible and just has always been that way. So, I just feel like he would've done a great job, a lot better than what we have. But it wasn't his time and maybe that's not the office that he was meant to hold. You know, now he's going to try this District 84 and we'll see how it goes. He's got—he's made a lot of connections and made a lot of friends. Maybe this'll be the right time.

DS:

Maybe that experience of the smaller race is getting him ready for this bigger one.

CC:

Yeah. I hope so. I hope so. But he's—I feel like this one is going to be a little more—more intense, maybe. I think he's ready to—I think that if he went to debate with Frullo he would do very good, because Austin's a very studied person. There's nothing that Frullo has been doing that he doesn't know about right now because he just—that's just how he is. He stays informed and I think if they had a debate today that he would hold his own.

DS:

And he's somebody I'd like to interview eventually and the same with Miguel but with both of them, I want to wait till after their campaign are through, whether they win or lose, then sit them down because I want them to be able to talk freely when they're interviewed.

CC:

Right. You know, there was a gentleman there—I told Miguel that I was coming today at lunch and there was a gentleman there—I can't think of his name now, I feel so bad—but he's retired

Secret Service. He was Secret Service when Kennedy was President and he hangs out at the Mae Simmons place with the seniors.

DS:

What's his name?

CC:

Oh god. I can't remember his name. I need to ask Miguel. He's a Mexicano.

DS:

Somebody I need to interview.

CC:

I told him that. I told him—I was talking to Miguel and he said—and I told Miguel, “I don't know why Daniel wants to interview me,” and Miguel said, “Well, probably because you're everywhere,” and I was like, “I don't know.” So, I told Miguel, “That's who he needs to interview.”

DS:

Well, I think it's also because the other day when you mentioned that you may eventually move away and I go, “Well, if we're going to do an interview, it's got to be now while you're here than you move off to Austin.”

CC:

I'm thinking about it. I don't know. With this mediation business—just as an example, Austin has a death case where one of his clients was actually—they were killed and the father was permanently disabled by an 18-wheeler and the guy was on opioids. The mediator in Midland—that's Midland, Texas, it's not even Dallas—is getting four-hundred dollars an hour per party, so eight hundred dollars an hour with a five hour minimum. So, for five hours, four-thousand bucks. So, I kind of want—I have a friend that does it here in Lubbock. His name Dirk Murchison. He's a retired lawyer and he does it for all the big firms here. So, I saw him at the Beto event at David Langston's office—house—when he was having that event for Beto O'Rourke at his house, the former mayor, and I saw Dirk there. I told him what I was doing now—and Dirk was an old patient of ours so I was his nurse for years. I was like, “Guess what I'm doing now.” He said, “Well, you need to let me know so we can start”—I think he's trying to slow down. So, I'm thinking if I could just handle just a few cases a week, I wouldn't even have to work all month, just a few cases. I don't know. I don't know. I need to get established somewhere, I just don't where I want to do it.

DS:

And how did you fall into this line?

CC:

The mediation?

DS:

Yeah.

CC:

Okay. I told you I started taking like paralegal classes to help in Austin's law firm. Well, professor Kline knows Austin. We started talking—we just started talking and he said something he said, "You know, I think you'd be a good mediator," and I said, "What is a mediator do?" He said, "Well, really you're like a judge without a robe." He said, "You bring the parties together, they tell you what the case is about, then you separate them into two separate rooms," he said, "then John Doe says, 'He broke my leg and I had to have surgery. I want two-hundred thousand dollars,' and the insurance company says, 'No. It's just a broken leg. It's already healed. We'll give him twenty.'" And he says, "And you have to be in the middle and say, 'Okay, you need to be realistic. How about this? And you need to—what about this?'" He says, "You've got them to meet in the middle and agree on an amount." I was like, "Wow. That sounds interesting." He said, "Come watch me do a mediation," so I did. I was like, "Oh, I can so do that." [Laughs] I don't know. I just felt, "Yeah, I could do that." So anyway, I did. The first one I was really nervous but it was like a juvenile case. You just kind of feel them out and see. The juvenile cases are really the easy ones. The kids that come in and are like, "Yeah, I got caught drinking beer and blah blah blah," and they don't care. You just kind of talk to them and it's like, "So, you just graduated?", "Yeah.", "Are you working?", "No." "Are you going to go to school?", "No." You just think, Okay, well I'm just going to throw the book at you then. You have no ambition. Then you have the kids that come in and they're just like, "Oh my gosh. That was the stupidest thing I've ever done," and you're like, "Okay. Well, are you in school?" They're like, "I'm going to start the electronic program at South Plains in August.", "Are you working?", "Yeah. I work in the fields," and you're just like, "Oh okay. He just made a mistake." It's different. It's just different. Dealing with them is easy. It's just when there's a lot of money involved and nobody wants to budge and this person wants unrealistic money and this person doesn't want to pay anything, it's kind of hard. And you can't show any emotion. You just have to have a blank face. They're talking to you—I'm talking to you and you're talking to me and I'm shaking my head because that's habit and you can't do that in mediation. If they're talking to you, you can't shake your head. You can't do that with either side because then they think you agree with them so you just have to reel it in. [laughter]

DS:

Well, I think with that we'll let you go. Thank you.

CC:

All right, Daniel.

End of recording



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