

# Transcription

Alexa Reyes

Oral Recession Project

Soc. 201

4-29-13

**ME:** Thank you for taking part in this very important research. My name is Alexa Reyes, I am a CI student. As a class project, I and my classmates are collecting the oral histories of those in Ventura County who are affected by the current economic recession. By signing the consent form that I have provided you with earlier, you have agreed to participate in this research and/or you have agreed the audio-recording of this interview to be archived at the CI Broome Library. I would like to assure you whenever you feel uncomfortable with the interview, you can take a break or you can decide to withdraw your participation in this interview.

**ME:** So I want you to start off with telling me about yourself. When and where were you born?

**HER:** I was born in Culver City, California. Umm I'm 44...

**ME:** Ok, what do you do?

**HER:** I'm a Deputy Probation Officer for Ventura County

**ME:** And what were some of your previous occupations?

**HER:** Well I've been here 17 years so I didn't have a lot of occupations before that but I did work at umm Wells Fargo bank for about... 2 years before coming here to probation.

**ME:** Ok and what was your childhood dream?

**HER:** (Laughs) Umm.. I wanted to be a mom or a teacher.

**ME:** A teacher, and why did that change?

**HER:** I'm not sure, well I am a mom umm I'm still thinking about why the teacher thing changed I'm not sure. I kind of umm think I wanted to be done with school and I wanted a job.

**ME:** So then you just became a probation officer?

**HER:** So I, yea they were hiring and I applied and I took it.

**ME:** Ok, so you say you're a mom, tell me a bit about your family, are you married?

**HER:** I'm married, I have two children almost 9 and 6.

**ME:** Ok, how old is your husband?

**HER:** My husband is 43.

**ME:** So do you live with your parents or you guys have your own home?

**HER:** We have our own house.

**ME:** Mk... So what does your husband do?

**HER**: My husband did work here at probation for about 12 13 years then he went to state parole where he was a parole agent for about 5 years, and then in October of last year he was laid off.

**ME**: So describe your hardship, it began in October you said?

**HER**: Yea... Well it actually started before that because umm the state was umm having mandatory furloughs at the parole level and so it was about 15% of his salary. He was actually working the same days but he wasn't getting paid for about 15% percent of it. So there was a decrease in his salary so that's probably when the hardship started.

**ME**: So last year for sure?

**HER**: So yea, so we were on furloughs for a couple of years so umm easily half of the time he was even there were he wasn't getting a full salary.

**ME**: Ok umm so he was laid off since October of last year?

**HER**: Completely laid off yea.

**ME**: So you're the only one with a job right now?

**HER**: Right.

**ME**: Ok, and what was the most surprising experience that you've gained from this hardship?

**HER**: (Laughs) your tapes not long enough (Laughs) umm the most surprising... Ughh that's a hard question. Umm just how difficult it is to live off one salary. I mean I knew I don't make a lot of money here but umm when you were both working there was always things we couldn't afford obviously but it was. Just how stressful it is to inly have one income.

**ME**: And going back to, you both went to college right?

**HER**: Yea we both have umm a degree, a BA degree.

**ME**: So you would never think that when you go to school...

**HER**: Well that's what you think yea I mean I never like I didn't grow up where my dad was ever out of work umm my mom went back to work full time I think I was like 10 years old so he was able to support us with his salary. Umm my dad was never ... My dad was also a probation officer so it was always a stable job, he didn't, wasn't rich but he always had a job that had income and I don't remember wanting anything as a child.

**ME**: Mhm

**HER**: Umm but it was stable and I think that's what kind of pushed me towards this career to is that I... these jobs you don't make a lot of money but it's supposed to be stable so what happened

to my husband at parole you know is pretty unprecedented and its not supposed to go that way.. (Laughs) but it did.

**ME:** So that was a surprising experience, and what was most painful to you?

**HER:** Well I'm still in it so umm (she begins to cry, audio paused) What was the most painful... umm well we haven't, the kids don't know so that's kinda hard to like keep I mean their dad always worked weird hours so the fact that he's home and like he's home a lot more but they haven't really I don't think put two and two together because there would be times where daddy would be home on a Thursday and could take them to and from school and so it wasn't really a big deal to have him home you know, on uncommon or more common work hours. So the kids kinda really don't know I don't think umm... but I would say the hardest part is just kinda like keeping it together in front of them you know having money to give them stuff.

**ME:** Still yea, so I'm guessing I would say your life has changed because of the hardship like how's your health, housing, is there food insecurity?

**HER:** Yea you know I, we, have my parents have been a great help. I mean thank god we still have our house, still update to on our mortgage umm we had thankfully paid off some stuff, like debt wise were pretty good umm we don't really have a lot we had paid a few things off prior to it happening so that was lucky umm but yea every month it's a struggle to figure out how everything's gonna get paid. Umm were not doing as much, you know. My son's birthday is coming up in July you know so I'm kinda thinking how am I gonna even do anything for his birthday, you know I'll manage but my parents have been a big help. So thank god we've had them to help us out every so often when were short.

**ME:** So you're saying you're coping with it by the help of your parent's right?

**HER:** Yea, and my husband is receiving unemployment

**ME:** Ok.

**HER:** But its umm a ridiculously little amount really honestly but you know it's helping us tread water a little bit I you only get that I think for 9 months or a year and so you know were just hoping he finds something fast.

**ME:** And for your hardship who do you blame? Like the economy, the government, how do you feel? Is there anyone to blame, or...

**HER:** Well I think... well there's more than one person (Laughs) umm you know it's a combination of things it's a combination of umm governors not understanding what parole does umm thinking you can cut all these jobs and still have the same community safety you know whatever opinions you might have of parole whether they're good or bad the jobs are really necessary now a lot of its falling on probations hands and there not adequately able to deal with

all this increase so it's just you know they look to save a dollar now to really end up paying a lot more later because someone's gonna get hurt and you know its.. Those jobs were very very important so it's bothersome that they don't realize that.

ME: Ok, So do... I'm guessing by hearing that response you have a different view on society now because of your hardship with the government... like the step their taking.

HER: Well I think in particular a few governors obviously made umm some bad decisions based on probably not really knowing or not caring I mean I've always I don't know that this made me change my opinion that much, because when you've worked in probation and stuff as long as I have umm I've always had where they have this feeling like (pause, interruption) So as I was saying that when you've worked in this kind of business there's always been a mentality that it's not that important and well let's just cut money from there so it's like stuff that I've always had to deal with so I don't know that it's really changed my opinion that much. But I can say that I never thought that this would happen to his job, like there's always been threats oh we'll cut this or we'll cut that but for the number of parole agents that have lost their job it's crazy like I mean we would have never thought that would happen. And my husband and I are actually in the best shape umm more so than all of his friends and co-workers that have gone thru this. Were the only ones that still have our house umm most of the people he worked with they've lost their house they've had to short sale, two of them have gotten divorced. You know because it's a lot a lot of stress so, umm we try to look at that and feel like were lucky (laughs) you know because at least were still treading water and we haven't drowned yet, but so..

ME: Ok, so what do you want the government or others to know about you and your experience, like what advice would you have to say about it?

HER: Well, pause that one... I guess I don't think that they'd care what my opinion is but.

ME: Or your advice to me, what would you have to say?

HER: Well I give you my advice everyday (Laughter) find a different field... Umm

ME: So you really don't have anything to say, a comment... So what life lessons...

HER: I just you know I guess have some kind of backup plan, like I never had a backup plan I don't know what kind of backup plan I could have you know we both have been doing this almost 20 years. You know it's like our whole adult life so I don't know really what we could do or could have done to prevent this from happening I mean...

ME: Do you wish you would of chosen a different career now?

HER: Yes, yes, I say that very quickly (laughter) which is upsetting because you know when I first started umm I was very, umm no one was happier to get this job than me...

ME: Mhmm...

HER: And if my children had wanted to do this I would have been really like thrilled and now there's no way I would encourage them to do this because these jobs are not safe and secure anymore. Umm there treated very poorly, I mean I sound very disgruntled but I mean there just isn't a lot of respect for them.

ME: Yea...

HER: You know and I don't want my children to have these financial problems, I want them to get even more schooling than I did and go into a job that's gonna be more lucrative because the stress of not having enough money is horrible.

ME: Yea, the life lessons you've learned from this experience are...

HER: Well I'll tell you when I'm over it... (Laughter) I don't know...

ME: You're still going through it...yea

HER: Just umm...

ME: Be hopeful... So are you hopeful for the future?

HER: (audio paused, she begins to cry)

ME: Ok, so where did you draw the strength to keep going and persevere through your hardship?

HER: Well I have to because of the kids... umm I know he's a smart guy, he's gonna find a job eventually

ME: Mhm...

HER: You know, you just have to stay positive or it'll make you go crazy. Umm so I'm just hoping... I didn't really think he'd be unemployed this long.

ME: So you're hopeful for the future

HER: Yea, you have to stay somewhat hopeful... umm I know we have the support of my parents... so like I guess realize like I'm never gonna be homeless, my kids will always have something to eat umm but you know so it's hard some days are definitely harder than others so the good thing is there's times when he's feeling really really down I'm having a stronger moment and vice versa so like were leaning on each other.

ME: That's good... ok so is there anything else that you want to add?

HER: Just keep going to school young lady (Laughter) umm just make sure that when you choose something that I mean nothings 100 % or secure in life but you wanna at least be

cognoscente of how much a career offers you not just is it something you like but financially the financial parts really important, and it's not something I ever thought about...

ME: Yea...

HER: So I would just encourage you to at least look into what

ME: Ok, so I just wanna thank you again

HER: Your welcome, you're a wonderful student (laughter)

ME: Ok, thank you!