

Interviewee: Nahomi Sanchez

Interviewer: Fatima Maciel

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List of Acronyms: NS=Nahomi Sanchez FM= Fatima Maciel

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Fatima Maciel: My name is Fatima Maciel and today is May 24, 2022. I am interviewing Nahomi Sanchez through a Zoom video call which is being recorded. This is for my Race and Oral History Project at UCSD, can you please state your full name.

Nahomi Sanchez: Nahomi Sanchez

FM: Awesome. Okay, let's get started with the first question. Tell me a little bit about yourself, your identities, and your background?

NS: Uhm, so I'm seventeen years old. I'm currently a senior in high school. I'm actually going to graduate next week. Uhm I'm hoping to attend San Diego State University and majoring in International Studies and Criminal Justice. It's still in the works but that is kind of the plan right now. I identify as she/they. I'm Latina and I also identify as Chicana.

FM: Awesome. That's so exciting! Congratulations on graduating super early. That's amazing. Okay, next question. Can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing?

NS: Yeah, so I grew up in a single-parent household with one older sibling. Uhm the majority of my life up until I was eleven we lived in a single bedroom. Like a single bedroom apartment and I think it was? Yeah, six years ago we moved into a two-bedroom. I think that demonstrates a little bit of how we were financially struggling back then. So then most of my upbringing was without my mom then. She usually worked a lot and I actually grew up under my brother's raising and that was a bit frustrating sometimes because he was seven years older than me and so he didn't really know much. But I think because of that we have grown really close as a family because we have been through so much.

FM: Thank you for sharing. Okay, next question. What motivated you to pursue a career in reforming the U.S. prison and criminal justice system.

NS: So I had just. This was my freshman year. I had just gone to a MECHA high school conference, MECHA is Movimiento Estudiantile Chicano de Aslan and it was a conference at San Diego State. I attended a workshop talking about the school-to-prison pipeline and it was a

couple of days later after that my English teacher gave us a factoid. Basically, we research a current event or issue and we have to present it to the class. So since I just learned about it I was like oh I'm a student, I'm a person of color. I was like I wanted to research this one and I researched it. I presented it to my class and that was kind of the start. I was introduced to it at a workshop but I became passionate about it because I was given the chance to research more it right after.

FM: Awesome. That's amazing how like it was just that one moment that just kick-started it for you and now it's like what you want to do for the rest of your life. That's amazing. Okay, next question. Why do you think it's important to address the issues and inequities within the prison and criminal justice system?

NS: Well, I think it's important to address the issues and inequities within the prison and the criminal justice system because like how could can you not? I feel like it's such a fundamental part of our society that impacts so many people almost everyone if not you at least someone you know and it's just you can't ignore it because we are living in it. This is the reality of our society it's just not something we can ignore. Like there's this saying in Spanish "Es imposible tapar el sofono con el dedo" it's impossible to cover the sound with your thumb. And it's like we can ignore it we can try to hide it but it's never gonna go away. If we don't do something about it and I feel like it's such a big problem that I might as well focus on it. I know there are people out there focusing on it but it doesn't hurt for someone else to.

FM: Yeah I completely agree. Thank you for saying that as well like you beautifully put it in words. That's amazing that you want to do that. Okay, next question. Do you see reformatory justice work as part of your future career plans?

NS: So I don't. It's kinda hard because I want. I don't see myself under that term because I know it's a part of what I want to do in the future. Where I want to own my own business and like help people who are incarcerated like learn how to make handicrafts and offer them a job to start out and then you know uhm fund like school programs to help prevent school to prison pipelines and then long term maybe changing the thirteenth amendment and stuff. But I feel like I'm more focused on the core of the problem not really the rehabilitation of offenders. I feel like it is an important aspect and that is an aspect I want to include but I really want to take the issue at the core than finding temporary solutions for these issues because I feel like reformatory justice is kind of like your focusing on a solution to this issue but it's really not permanent. It's gonna grow it's gonna get bigger and if I'm helping offenders when they come out and then establish themselves into society like integrating themselves back into it, I'm just kind of like preventing them from going back but like what about other people. Like what about the kids who are like in the school to prison pipeline and they fall into it like I'm not really doing anything about that. I

really want to take the issue to the core instead of helping with temporary solutions. So I feel like I'm more of a legal reform than reformative justice I feel.

FM: Okay yeah I see where you are coming from. It makes complete sense to me and I never really thought about it that way how reformative justice isn't really a completely permanent solution to it. Uhm so I really appreciate you putting that into perspective for me. Ok, next question. Do you plan to attend SDSU for undergrad and what are some goals you would like to accomplish in the next four years at SDSU?

NS: Yeah so I think that I plan on staying for all four years of my undergrad at San Diego State. That's kinda the goal but I don't maybe in the future I do want to transfer. I don't really know but I think some goals I really really want to do is that I want to join so many student organizations. Like that is a big thing for me. I also want to study abroad. I want to take a lot of classes, I don't know why but I really do. I don't know I don't want to overwork myself. And I think I also really want to socialize with people. I think I just want to do everything. I just want to live up my college experience.

FM: No I love that. I feel like my first years because they were mainly through covid I obviously didn't appreciate them enough but they do go pretty fast like I'm already going to be a third year. I just want to be able to do everything I want to do. So definitely take advantage of those years and I'm glad like you already have your mindset and your like I'm ready to do this. That's awesome.

NS: I'm like really ready.

FM: Okay next question. Reflecting on your journey so far what has been your greatest accomplishment either academically or personally?

NS: I think academically it would definitely be graduating early. Uhm I think I kind of knew already I was going to do it my sophomore year like I was already thinking about it my freshman year but the fact that I'm actually here doing it. Whenever I tell people its like no way but the thing is my school kind of specializes in that so like a lot of my friends are graduating early but sometimes it feels like I take too much credit out of what I do so sometimes its nice to just remember that I'm graduating early that I'm doing this a year ahead.

FM: No even if your school specializes in it like that's a pretty big accomplishment. I feel like a lot of people don't do it and when I heard you say it I was like wow. I cannot imagine being your age graduating and already going on to college. That's a major accomplishment and congratulations on that. Don't doubt yourself or try to put it down like that's a huge accomplishment.

NS: Well it's definitely scary.

FM: Yeah, but I mean you got this. You know what you want to do and SDSU is an amazing school so I'm sure you are going to fit right in like you said you want to join student organizations and there are people there who are going to support you all the way through. So yeah you got this.

NS: Thank you.

FM: Okay next question. Who inspires you or who inspired you along the way?

NS: My mom. I think it's definitely her. I think this is a cliché type of answer but it still holds true. I think my mom did so much uhm she worked like two jobs she was almost never there but it was for a reason. And when she became a single mom she had to take care of two kids by herself and I think it was definitely hard for someone who had never done it by herself ever. And I know many other people do but it's just that I saw it first hand from her. And I think she got my brother through college she's helping me like here. Like my brother got his master's recently like yeah his graduation ceremony was just last weekend. And like I'm going off to San Diego State so my mom definitely did what she set out to do, give us a better life. And I just think that... Every time I think about her and everything she's done I just... I tell myself because I never saw her crackdown like ever she just kept going so like I have to keep going too because I just can't imagine what I would do if I suddenly became a single mom with two kids it's a completely new situation that I've never been in before. Like I just don't know how she did it.

FM: That's beautiful. It's not cliché at all. My mom is my biggest inspiration as well and I always tell people that so it's really beautiful to hear that your mom is your greatest inspiration. Especially everything she has gone through. And also congratulations to your brother as well. That's insane that both of you like masters and now you're going to SDSU your mom has done a really great job and y'all are a beautiful family and see how smart and driven y'all are. Okay well, last question. If there's anything you could tell your younger self what would it be?

NS: It's kinda what you said remember? Like not underestimating myself uhm when I was younger I definitely had that problem. I was always too scared to say what I did because like I'll tell people like yeah I did that and kinda brag about it but I always feel bad for taking space from other people. And I feel like that is something I would tell myself to claim your spot don't feel bad about it. You know if you are there you deserve to be there. Like you did the work to get there. And I feel like that's really hard for me to do like just admitting to myself that like I put in the work and I did that.

FM: That's awesome. Yeah, I feel like that mindset is so good to have going into college especially being first generation student like sometimes... I know a lot of people I've talked to have said that they've felt major imposter syndrome going into college because they're like should I even be here? Like what am I as a Latinx student doing in higher education kind of thing? So it's really great that you at such a young age already know that you take up space and that this is your spot you deserve it you worked extremely hard to be where you are. So don't let anyone where you go you know tell you that you don't deserve to be there because you really do and just hearing from the story you told me today you definitely deserve to be there. Congratulations on all your amazing work and thank you so much for sharing your story today. I really appreciate you taking the time to share this with us and that will conclude our interview for today.