

Interviewer: Hi. This is the oral history from Kesha, a 15-year-old in 10th grade at BLCI in Chula Vista. Kesha, thank you for participating in my interview. Could you start by introducing yourself?

Kesha: Hi, my name is Kesha Gomez Lopez, and I'm here to participate in your oral history project.

Interviewer: What are your preferred gender pronouns?

Kesha: She, her, please.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Kesha: I was born in LA, California.

Interviewer: Can you share an early memorable encounter you had in your community?

Kesha: Sure. My earliest memory is probably going to school and helping with the garden during the walk club. I remember going to the park a lot.

Interviewer: Is there any significant incident in your life that was a life changer?

Kesha: When I was in fifth grade, I went to Chicano Park. That's when I first learned the term "Chicano." When they explained it to me, I realized it was a term I had to know and that I could feel connected with. It has stuck with me ever since.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about your childhood and family background?

Kesha: Both my parents are born Mexican. They came to the US at a very young age and had to start anew here without knowing any English. My parents had me and my sister when my mom was 20 and my dad was 23. They struggled for a while to find jobs because they couldn't speak English. It took a while to process that and get it to actually function, but it's been getting better. My parents always encouraged us to do our best so we could have better opportunities than they did. They always told us to take opportunities like Chavistas, book club, orchestra, and YC to have a better future.

Interviewer: When did you first become familiar with BLCI?

Kesha: I first joined BLCI in third grade. It was really new, like, "Oh my God, I'm learning about college in third grade." That was so far away, and there were a lot of big terms to learn, but it actually really helped a lot. I'm grateful that I got the opportunity to join.

Interviewer: What kind of relationship do you have now with your family of origin?

Kesha: I would say I have a good relationship with them. I feel like we're all connected and we can all see one another in each other. We're really connected and close.

Interviewer: What is your earliest memory of BLCI?

Kesha: The earliest event I can remember was when I was in fourth grade, a year after I joined. They brought us to the Barrio Logan building and had a little celebration there with raffles and everything.

Interviewer: How has BLCI changed in the years that you've been part of it?

Kesha: It's changed a lot because now they keep adding the same grades, from third and up. Back then, they used to use a lot of big words I didn't really understand, and it was all about only college. Now, they include high school and different career paths you could pursue in college.

Interviewer: What's your favorite thing about BLCI?

Kesha: My favorite thing about BLCI is probably that we only have to go once a week. There's a lot going on in high school right now, and I don't really have time. So having one day a week to focus helps a lot.

Interviewer: What's the most challenging aspect of being part of BLCI?

Kesha: The most challenging aspect was being able to agree on colleges that we wanted to go to because we all had different interests, and we were all in one class. We had to come together and pick one college that we all wanted to go to.

Interviewer: Do you have a dream college?

Kesha: I really want to go to UCLA at the moment.

Interviewer: Because you were born in LA?

Kesha: It could be part of the reason, but I really want to go to UCLA because of the majors they offer.

Interviewer: What majors do you want to pursue?

Kesha: I'm not 100% sure, but I really want to go into the arts, maybe theater, fashion, or maybe as a musician in an orchestra.

Interviewer: I thought you were good at chemistry, though.

Kesha: I am good at chemistry, and I enjoy it, but it's not something I would like to pursue as a career.

Interviewer: Are there any particular communities in BLCI that have been especially important for you?

Kisha: Um, I kinda like how that each grade is separated as it, it makes you get a stronger connection with your people your age and for my grade there's only like two other peoples and we're like, really connected. So I kind of like those two people are like my main BLCI, so

Interviewer: Is there any specific spaces in BLCI have been most significant in your life? is it any of your favorite places or, or any teacher, any instructor that had been impacted for you really hard, really much?

Kisha: Um They, they're still at BLCI from my, my knowledge, but they're no longer my teacher. But Miss Santa Cruz and Miss Nadia both really impacted um my life with BLC. I, by the time that I had them both.

Interviewer: And can you, can you share more story about them?

Kisha: Um M Santa Cruz, I had her like when I first joined BLC, I, and she was always so nice to us and encouraging us to do our best. Like everyone's always encouraging us to do our best. But she felt like more, I don't know, like it got to me more in a sense. And Miss Nadia was always like, looking out for like everyone like the entire class and she would like also share like her help. Her struggles were like during high school or like elementary school, middle school and like the fact that they wanted to like, feel that connection with you really impacts your life.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing the BLCI stories. I wanna now I wanna hear more about you. So who are the most important person in your life?

Kisha: The most important person in my life. It's probably my mom. Mm She's my world. I love her and she's always been there for me since I was little. She's always, like, bearing with me really. And she's always encouraged me to do my best and every time that, like, I struggle she's there to hold my hand along the way and we've, she's, we've been through so much together that, like, we have a really strong bond and III, I just love him.

Interviewer: Um, what communities are you a part of now? And what were you part of in the past?

Kisha: Mm. I like in school and like just, well, I've, I'm in the community school of performing arts. Uh I've been on it since freshman year. So last year I've been on it with orchestra and theater and now fashion and then 3D design. Mhm. I've been with um sports. I don't know if that counts. So I've played soccer for five years. And I've been wanting to join volleyball, not there yet next year. But um and then I was also in the Chavistas Book Club in elementary school. I've been in orchestra a lot since I was in fifth grade. I was in the YMC. A community all throughout elementary school.

Interviewer: Wow, you're in a lot of community. Yeah.

Kisha: Yeah. I was also in the gardening club.

Interviewer: It's a lot.

Kisha: My mom will always, like, tell me, like doing everything. Take as many as you can.

Interviewer: Can you describe a key moment in one of your communities?

Kisha: Um, a key moment in one of my communities I'll go with orchestra because that's what I love doing. I played a cello and a key moment that I knew that I, that's what I wanted, that instrument that I wanted to play was when, um, they gave me the paper, the first paper that I ever got like to play the music and this was when I couldn't read and the teacher was, like, explaining, like, how to read it and everything. And, like, when I first started playing, I was the only female cello in orchestra. Mhm. And, and like, I, I feel, I don't know, till this day, but I feel like I did a pretty good job and the teacher congratulated me and then he, like, told me that he wanted me to join, like, out throughout the year. He's like, you, you better join next year and it's, that's when I knew like, this is what I wanna do.

Interviewer: And who do you typically spend time with socially?

Kisha: I would say with my, my family and friends, both of them, I spend an equal amount of time with them, my friends at school, my family at home and, uh, with my friends, I just talk like random stuff or like about school stuff that we both like, or we'll be playing like board games that they're at the library of my family. I watch TV, with them most of the time. And, um, we used to do board game Friday but right now we don't really have time. So sorry, I can't, we don't have time but we still try to, like, watch TV. S once in a while together.

Interviewer: How do you see yourself in current social and cultural landscape of your community? Hm. How do you find yourself that in the current, current social and cultural background?

Kisha: Um I found myself, mm. Comfortable confident. Mhm. To show that we've come far and I just, like, feel that it's something to be proud of. Hm That's so good.

Interviewer: So Kisha, you have a lot of identity, right? And which aspects of your identity are most important to you or your most favorite one?

Kisha: Um I would say probably the arts. Mhm I like to express myself with the arts a lot so that um I'm not lessing the others. They're still part of me and I still know they're there. Yeah.

Interviewer: Why, why art? Because that's the way you express yourself?

Kisha: Yeah. Um I like, I like the arts. I like the different types. There are like drawing music, theater, hands on crafts, guitar, like there's so much you could do with the arts and it could get you so far in life and not only for like um career wise, also for personal wise, like there's no limit to it. Mhm um And

Interviewer: is there any events in your life that has shaped your sense of who you are?

Kisha: Mhm I guess every time I have a show in like orchestra or my theater, it always like helps me know like if this is what I wanna do because at the end, like playing the final note in orchestra or um the final pose in theater you feel accomplished.

Interviewer: So how do you understand different identity, different as different part of your identity? Like race, class or ability?

Kisha: One more time? Sorry.

Interviewer: Like, you know, you have a lot of identity like a daughter and race and like ability, right? Ability can be art and race can be one, those kind of thing. And how do you understand different part of your identity?

Kisha: Oh, ok. Um Well, like, I guess identity would be like what you believe yourself as like. so like I would mm I Latina or Mexican American and I'm, I kind of embraced those when, as an identity to pursue and like my community.

Interviewer: Thank you. And has your understanding of identity changed over time?

Kisha: Yes. Not a lot really. But um I had to learn like new terms, like when I learned what Chicano meant and Latinx and um my family mostly explained it to me and told me like, like, oh this is what this means And then they're like, ok, do you? I, like, they wouldn't say this is what you are. They'd be like, do you identify yourself as this? So having like that made me like, yeah, I, I identify myself like that. Mhm.

Interviewer: When did you first become aware of concept like affinity or religion like race?

Kisha: Um Well, um well, uh sorry, I guess like when I was younger because people would like, ask because like, we all look different. So people would like, ask like, um where I was from and like teachers like to fill out paperwork sometimes and I would like, have the permission slip and I'll like, have to give it to mom. But I was curious. So I look over it and then there was like some words. So then I started asking my parents about that. Mhm.

Kisha: And then for ethnicity and religion, I'm Catholic and I went to church for a while and I had church classes and um I did my two years. So, ok.

Interviewer: And is there this would be my last question. And is there any um is your youth impacted by your race? You think I would say?

Kisha: Um But it's not a negative. Mhm I would say it's more of a positive one because it shows you to embrace what you have and to um work harder for what you want.

Interviewer: Mhm Can you share like stories about it? Because I uh for example, I'll share my story first. I'm actually a Korean and East Asian. And I've lived in my most of life in Korea. I've been living in there for like 16 years and I went to Japan for four years and then came to us just

for the school, the just for college. So actually, I've been here for like four years, only four years. So I've been um you, you're more person from San Diego than me, of course.

Interviewer: Yeah, like that. So I think uh my life of living different countries impacted my life a lot. And as a Korean, I also have Korean uh parents and my sister, my sister is in New York and while my family, my parents are all in Korea and they can't, they barely barely speak English. So based on those my background, I could learn more about Korean culture than American. And I think that also living around the country impacted my life since I can like face new challenges easily. I don't take more. I don't take if I have challenges. I don't take it really bad because that's just one another chance that can be grow. It's like based on this is like my culture background and my race. And do you, can you share a story about like that?

Kisha: Well, I was born in LA and I lived there for a year or two. I don't really remember. And then I lived in TJ for a while with my grandparents for like four years and then we moved here. So I've only been here for eight years and, um, my, my mom's side of the family is all in TJ and they don't really speak English either. So that's something. Hm. That's fine. And my, my mom still struggles with English sometimes. So I would help me and my sister help her. My dad's side of the family lives in Mexico City over there in New Delhi. it's only my family that's here in the US and maybe like one of my uncles that recently moved here too. So, um, and the way that it's impacted, well, certainly different. My first language is Spanish. Mhm. Oh.

Kisha: You said that you don't like Spanish?

Interviewer: But, but, yeah, yesterday.

Kisha: Oh, you like my Spanish class?

Interviewer: Yeah. You said you don't like Spanish class?

Kisha: Yeah, because not because I don't like the language. It's because, um, in my school they're teaching kind of like Spain Spanish and it's different.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kisha: Um, but no, I love speaking Spanish and this is my first language and I like how it connects me to my family. I spoke Spanish too. I was kind of like my parents, I didn't know really English and, like, my school actually had teachers that would speak Spanish too. So it wasn't a struggle all up till second grade. My teacher did not know any Spanish. The last one I had to start like also learning English.

Kisha: And um now like, now I'm better at it. But back then I would have like a buddy and be like, hey, can you translate this for me? Um But it's being bilingual show will open a lot of doors for me. So, yeah, surely. And I think that's why I, I don't really remember much of my childhood. So, no, it's uh it's like,

Interviewer: totally explain my questions and I think that it would be it. Thank you for agreeing interview today again. And thank you for sharing stories.

Kisha: Thank you.