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Interview no. 1704

Kristine Levy Taylor

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee Taylor, Kristine Levy

Interviewer: Ligia Arguiles

Project: Seeking Refuge

Location: n/a

Date of Interview: October 24, 2019

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Transcript No.: 1704

Transcriber / Summary: Roberto Cristoforo

Taylor Levy used to be an immigration attorney and she is now a private attorney. She says that when she first graduated she had no interest on being an attorney but when she realized that being an attorney had its benefits she did not think twice and became one. Some of the benefits they had were that the donations would increase; for example they received food, clothes, wheelchairs, event surgeries that were donated from other people that were willing to help. She says that having to hire an attorney can be expensive and she sees the necessity of immigrant people and she wanted to be a more affordable attorney so she did that to help immigrants. She has gone through a lot of challenges in her life, being an attorney and listening to all of the different stories can be hard. She is telling a story of when she was going into court with a woman and they were practicing what they were going to say, the woman told her that she had 5 children but one of them was murdered. Taylor was in shock but she had to explain to her that she needed to say she only had 4 children instead of 5, because the judge might think it was a lie. She has a lot of emotional breakdowns listening to all these stories because they are cases where she is so sad that she just starts crying and gets really sad. She explains that the migration situation is getting very difficult because there is a lot of cruelty. Back in the day, custom patrol officers used to arrest immigrants for no longer than 72 hours or they would spend a week maximum in jail. Now things have changed and they can arrest someone and put them in to concentration camps for 40-50 days in extremely bad conditions. There are people that have lost their children trying to cross the border, because they drowned on the river. Since October of 2019 she started helping immigrants that were getting this type of treatment and this type of legal issues. She helps a lot of shelters and she gives donations for them, she even brings people from

the university so that they can see under what conditions they are living, and even groups or organizations from the U.S. are taken to Juarez into these shelters. When the immigrants are trying to cross illegally and they make it to the U.S. they are taken to jail they take their fingerprints, then they are given a court date that can be months away, and then they are sent to Juarez where they have a huge risk of being kidnapped by the cartels in Mexico. She says that the possibility of winning a case is 5% and the probability of losing is a 95% that means that out of a 100 cases 5 win and 95 of the cases lose. This type of case not only happens with Mexicans there are people from almost all over the world like Cuba, Venezuela, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and people from Africa too. Most of these people will end up in shelters where there is a higher risk of being robbed, kidnaped, or beaten by the cartel because they want to recruit more people for their cartel. But not all of the things are bad, she says, there is a lot of support from the Mexican government, they help a lot of shelters and they even put more shelters for all of the people that are being deported from the U.S. She feels very proud about her job and of what she has accomplished. Sometimes helping other people can be difficult because they have high hopes but you need to be honest with them and explain to them that it is very likely they are going to lose, but even though she has won very few cases she is happy with that because she is being the voice of that people in front of the jury.

Length of interview 44 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a