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Interviewer: Chloe Brown
Interviewee: Zona Ascensio
Date: April 26th 2017
Topic: Women's March

Zona Ascensio Interview

CB: So this is Chloe Brown interviewing Zona Ascensio, and it's April 26th. So before we get started, I just want to make sure you consent to me using the interview in my project and donating it to the library of Special Collections.

ZA: Yes, I consent to this.

CB: Cool. Thank you. Okay, so can you just tell me some basic background information about yourself?

ZA: Okay such as?

CB: Just your current job, your educational background, stuff like that.

ZA: Well I am hopefully graduating in May, in three weeks unless there's bad news, in the masters of Public Health program here at Western Kentucky University. Before that, I got my undergraduate at Murray State University. It was a double major in Spanish and in liberal arts with a concentration in medical anthropology.

CB: Oh, interesting.

ZA: And prior to that, I dropped out of high school and got a GED. So nothing really super exciting there. I grew up mostly in Tucson, but back and forth between Tucson and west Tennessee. And that's pretty much my background information.

CB: Yeah, and you have a child?

ZA: Yes. I have a 13-year-old daughter. Her name is Sonora, and she goes to Bowling Green Junior High. 7th grade, about to be 8th grade and she's making me feel really old. She steals my clothes.

CB: Hey, at least you can wear your kid's clothes.

ZA: Right. It saves money.

CB: Yeah. So why did you decide to participate in the Women's March?

ZA: Well, let's see how to explain this. So I didn't—Sonora and I have been following the whole election cycle, and I've been assuring her, "You know, Donald Trump, he's kind of a ridiculous candidate and definitely we're going to have our first woman president." Sonora—and I've asked

her permission for this—Sonora, she came out as a lesbian in—it was really brave—in summertime after what happened in Orlando. And she’s like, “Look, I don’t like boys. I’ve never had feelings for boys.” I was like, “That’s fine. This is just a really weird thing. This,”—I don’t know how to say it, but it was bad. It was a terrible massacre, but this is not how the direction of our country is going. We’re about to elect our first woman president, and under Obama everything was good. And so I was watching the election results with her, and just seeing all these states go red. It was heartbreaking, and she cried, and I cried. I know it sounds ridiculous, but, you know, to see that the country was still—it’s like you get a sense that it’s there. That there is this hatred, but you feel like it’s behind the scenes. That it’s lighter. But for it to be so in your face and it’s like, “Oh, this is still a major issue. We still have a lot of problems. We still have a long way to go.” So when I found out that the Center for Social Justice—it’s the new Alive Center. I can’t remember what it’s called here—was sponsoring the trip. I said, “Sonora, this is what we have to do. We have to get active and we have to be out there.” And like I couldn’t take her to Washington D.C. I didn’t know what we were getting into really, but I wanted to pretty much show her: no, we move now. We push it in the direction I thought it was going in initially, and try to make a better world for her. So that’s basically why—as soon as I had the chance, I had to jump on it. Does that make sense?

CB: Yes!

ZA: Okay.

CB: So why did you decide to go to D.C. instead of attending a local march?

ZA: Well, I had the opportunity, for one thing. I mean, if it wasn’t for the funded trip I wouldn’t be able to go. I don’t have that kind of money to take a trip or the time really. But they had a bus that went overnight. But, also, I really wanted to show that we take big steps. This is—people were thinking that it was a lot more dangerous than it was going to be. Actually, it was very peaceful. But, the day prior I guess there had been some real riots and stuff. I was like, “No, we stand up. If it’s scary, we go.” And Sonora was able to watch it on TV. She was like, “My mom was there.” I wore her shoes and I wore her friend’s jacket and they wear them to school and they’re like, “This was in the Women’s March.” It was just—I don’t want to be like, “Well, it’s a part of history, and that’s what I want but it was.” She’s gonna have that like no we stand up.

CB: Did you know anyone else that went on the trip with you?

ZA: I roped my friend Molly into going. She’s another public health student, and we’ve been working closely together as Gas here in the department. And I was like, “It’s free! I kind of don’t want to be there by myself.” I was fully prepared to go, but she’s like, “No, I’ll go with.” And she was pretty spontaneous about it too, and we—she was very nice. She camped out on the floor of the bus and let me have the seat in the back. It was fun. We had a good time.

CB: How do you think that it—how do you think that your experience was different going with her versus going by yourself?

ZA: I probably would have—we kind of kept to ourselves so we were able to move around the city a lot more than if we would have stayed in the big group. So there was that. Also, we felt safer together, just generally. And I mean that's just the way things are. I'd rather be with somebody else in a new city, but if I had gone by myself I probably would have been more able to meet new people maybe. But I felt more comfortable with another person that I actually knew.

CB: Do you think—did it kind of improve or kind of solidify friendship going together?

ZA: Oh, yeah! Definitely. We—I don't know. It wasn't—we weren't super close before as—we were really close colleagues, but it wasn't we hung out a lot. She's actually significantly younger than I am. I'm 30 and she's I guess 25 at the most? And her lifestyle is completely different than mine, but she's a nice person like, "Yeah, I'm going to go." And since then, we have been a lot closer. I actually gave her avocado pie today. She just took it home.

CB: Avocado pie?

ZA: Avocado pie, yes.

CB: We're going to talk about this after the interview.

ZA: Yes. But, yeah, something we really share, since we are both here in the department, a lot of the professors encouraged us to go together and that's another thing.

CB: So your department was really supportive?

ZA: Oh, definitely, yes.

CB: Nice.

ZA: Yeah. We got a lot of words of encouragement, not just that, but afterwards I started a new—well, I co-started a new student organization here in the department to help get students on the—this is going to sound really boring—the shared governance of the public health programs by getting them to go to committee meetings and actually participating. Which is useful, but a lot of people find it very dry. So in addition to that, we've also made it more politically active. So you see our junk over here. We made March for Science signs and we participated in the smaller Woman's Day March here. We collect donations for the International Center. I wasn't this active prior to...

CB: Hold on. So these things...

ZA: Yeah. This—the department's all for it.

CB: So this was started—co-started by you or started entirely by you?

ZA: Co-started by me, but the other person who started it was an African student who's name is Umar. But the idea of taking it to the social justice direction is completely mine because it was going to be just voting, putting people on the communities.

CB: Yeah. Can you tell me more about that? I'm really interested in the social justice...

ZA: Okay! I was like the committee? I was going to be like, "Well what we do is, we go and they say all these things that they're going to..." No. And then we are like, "Yea," or, "nay." No. okay so this organization, we were writing it up basically in October. November, the election results kind of interrupted it, and then we wanted to get underway started in January. And the first meeting was in February. Since I had all these students who were involved, and since I had supportive professors who were like, "Yeah, do what you want with it," pretty much. I started following the, it's on Facebook, the Social Justice Calendar, and whatever we could get our students in on, I would pull them and the faculty members in just whatever is needed. Because I feel like if I'm up there, that's good. Sonora is going to see it, and I'm helping the community. If I'm up there and the department is sponsoring it, it says more to the students. And then if faculty members participate, and they do, it's just leading through example. And so that's what I've been trying to do with that.

CB: To me, it seems that you've created a platform through this department to where students have more opportunities to become socially active.

ZA: Right, and they are encouraged to. Not only that, but I try to frame it in a way where they understand it's a part of public health. So, for example, we did Take Back The Night. And I went to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] website and when I was recruiting people to come and join us to march for Take Back The Night, I shared with them that there's the mental health aspect, but there is the physical health, unintended pregnancies, there are STIs, and then just injuries. It's not just a social right's issue. This is public health. These are public health issues. And obviously, public health science is when you're talking about March for Science, you're talking about evidence based public health, obviously, you want to make decisions there and you want your science funded. You want the [National Institute of Health] funded. So a lot of the stuff that is going on—I mean, if you're talking about social determinates of public health, everything is health if you go back to it. The stuff that is going on back in Washington right now, it does affect the nation's health. So that's my in, you know.

CB: Yeah, but it seems as though—I mean my mother's a doctor and I'm trying to think. I can't remember them being political at all in terms of health related—I mean my whole family is in health in some way. Has it been kind of difficult to convince people that health is political?

ZA: With public health, we don't—when you're talking population health and prevention, it's been thoroughly researched that your economic status, your racial status, your social status, they determine your health. So within our department, this is—we don't have to convince anybody, but outside, sometimes it really is. Well, I hear people saying healthcare is not a right. And it's like, "But don't you want everybody to be, at least have that same chance at health?" and some people just don't really understand it. I don't know how to explain it, but, yeah, it definitely is a political issue.

CB: Yeah. sorry, that was mostly just for me.

ZA: No, I getcha.

CB: So how would you describe your march experience?

ZA: Well I had never been around so many people in my life. I am an introvert, completely. Normally, I would not have jumped into something where they're like, "Yeah there's going to be several thousand people there and you're going to a strange city you've never been to." So at first, it was overwhelming. But, it was incredibly peaceful. I didn't feel afraid there once despite the crowds, despite—I grew up in some shady neighborhoods and it's like if you get in crowds, you hold your backpacks and you don't—I didn't feel like anybody was going to rob me. And it was really empowering. Okay so there was this one instance where everybody's neck to neck, everybody was just crammed in the street and I can't—I wish I knew more about D.C.'s layout because I would be like, "We were right there on this street, Sonora." And this woman wanted to get by with her baby in a stroller, and somebody just hollered, "Baby in a stroller!" and everybody got out of the way. and it was like that. There were some people who were sick—you know, they got sick in the crowds. I don't know what happened, but when there was a medical issue, they would hold them and then everybody would get out of the way and let EMS people come through. It wasn't—there wasn't—I can't even recall anybody being rude. There were some counter-protesters but maybe five I saw? Because they kind of drowned in that whole sea of cabs everywhere. We didn't really see them. No, it was very empowering and I mean I felt, with all the people there, that even though the election went that way, there's still a big part of goodness in the country. And we're still going to move in the right direction.

CB: Yeah. a lot of people were framing the march as a kind of an anti-Trump protest march, but I also heard it discussed as a march for a bunch of issues instead of just against Trump. It's a march for progressive values, a march for equal treatment of people, respect for women. From your perspective, did you participate more out of anti-Trump sentiment or were you trying to support social issues that you care about?

ZA: Definitely, Trump's election was the catalyst. I'm not going to lie. No, definitely, there was that. But it's not a hatred for the people who support Donald Trump, if that makes any sense. It's more like clearly these issues are still significant, and I knew they were but—I don't know. Maybe being here in the University, I'm kind of isolated from the outside. I didn't grow up that way. I was very low income. I grew up in the—let's see. How do they put it academically?—food insecure. We were always on food stamps. There was domestic violence and a lot of very bad issues in the household. The University kind of took me out of that, and so from my perspective things were getting better. I didn't see that on a daily basis. I didn't experience any economic discrimination or social discrimination—I won't say completely not any—but a lot less. And Sonora, I keep her away from that so she doesn't see it so much. And it was kind of a wakeup call. So I would say to answer your question, it's kind of both because I do support equality and women's issues, and I know they were ongoing. But, gosh, I just didn't think it was so bad. It's like it's not going to be bad enough for us to elect a fascist president. That's just—I don't know if you wanted it to get this way. This is just honestly what I saw.

CB: No, it's fine! Yeah. So you have—one of my questions was have you taken any additional actions after the march. So I know that you have in your department, but maybe additionally,

have you been involved with the Women's March group on Facebook or any subsequent marches or actions?

ZA: I follow it. I try to keep up with what's going on in Bowling Green because one of the big pushes is instead of just getting active during national level elections, it's to active at the local level. I've also been writing congressman, calling whenever I can. They have all these daily calls to action and it's like, "Okay, when I get a chance." I do that. I also have been volunteering a lot more, especially with the refugee population and with the International Center. I participated in the Warren County Health Services Fair on the 22nd because we were pretty much rained out for everything else I wanted to do, so I stayed there all day and helped them understand the services of the Barren River District Health Department and everything like that. So yeah, definitely I've been trying to take more action at the local level and I bring Sonora to all these things. Just trying to say, "Look, there's stuff we can do. We don't have to sit at home."

CB: So would you say that activism has become kind of a bonding experience between you and Sonora?

ZA: Yes. Definitely. It's pretty much what we do. It's our thing now. No, it has. And she's become, I don't know-before-she's always been a good student, but she's finding her own voice at school. She's in photojournalism class, and so she takes pictures when we're at the march. She also is-they play news clips in her social studies class, and they write and discuss. And she's been very critical of some of the political things that are going on. And she'll talk to her teachers about it, and she's become a better, more involved student. Between she and I, yeah, that's-it's basically-she'll ask "are there any more marches going on?" Just yesterday, she's like, "When's the next march? What are we going to do?" And she'll find things, too. So when the Fairness Ordinance was first introduced here in the Bowling Green City Commission, I didn't know it was going on because I was busy with trying to graduate. But she told me, she said, "I saw on Facebook that they're going to introduce a Fairness Ordinance. Can you explain to me what that is?" And so I looked it up and I told her. I said, "they're going to be doing a whole demonstration out there." And she's like "I want to go to that. Let's do that." And so she finds it, and we did it. We stood out there, and she saw Slim Nash, you know, come down with the rainbow flag and everything. I mean, she was teary eyed. It was great. So I hope it inspires her to just go on, do whatever, change the world I hope.

CB: Do you think that the march fulfilled its purpose? And also, I guess, what do you think the purpose was?

ZA: I'm not sure what it's purpose was—no. I think for me, the purpose was just to—I mean not just to do women's issues, and I'm not talking as not just women either, all women, trans women, and people—and I guess even men. Because feminist issues affect men too. But not only—the purpose to me was—the numbers were so large you can't ignore these voices even if you don't agree with them. The government can't ignore it. And even thought it tries, it was bringing, not only, equality to women but social economic equality, racial equality, and I feel that the numbers, not just the numbers in D.C., but the numbers throughout the country and throughout the world really—what was it? The largest demonstration of anything ever—it was

the largest protest by anything ever. It really—if that was its purpose, I think it fulfilled it. I think it showed that these voices are there. These voices are powerful.

CB: What about criticisms of the march? So, of course, there were a lot of criticisms from conservatives, but I'm more interested in liberal critiques. So there was the idea that the pussy hats were trans-exclusive or the march wasn't—it didn't make enough of an effort to include minority women. Have you heard of these criticisms and if so, what is your opinion on them?

ZA: Let's see. I tend to get away from the pussy as the symbol of female, in most cases. But as somebody who has been in public health, I also understand that the discussion of female genitalia has been taboo, especially when you're talking about periods. Normal—natural things your body does traditionally, not just socially, but even in medicine it's been ignored or "let's not talk about that in public." So I understand the effort to be like, "No, this is my pussy." And also I thought it was funny play on words like, "I'm going to grab 'em by the pussy." No, we're gonna bite back. I don't think it intended to be—I mean I wore the hat. It was adorable. And I thought it was a cute way for people who couldn't go to the march to participate because you're not supposed to buy the hat, you're supposed to get it from somebody who sewed it for you. So there were a lot of elderly women who would sell the hats. Mine wasn't. Mine was a local artist here in Bowling Green who donated it, and I later found her on Facebook. It was given to me on the bus.

CB: Was it Rebecca Nimmo?

ZA: Yes! And so I've been following her and I'm like, "Oh, she's talented."

CB: Yeah, she is.

ZA: I don't think the intention was supposed to be trans—what is it? Not inclusive.

CB: Exclusive.

ZA: Yeah, exclusive not inclusive. it's late; I don't know. Yeah, and I saw some trans women wearing the hats so—but, of course, not one woman is going to speak for the whole, but I think it was more of a show of "this is us; we're here." But I don't think it was supposed to be that way. But, of course, if you ask a transwoman, she might be like, "No, I don't have those." So I can't speak for everyone. But if they ask me, I would say, "No, the pussy is inside you." It's the spirit of the pussy. I don't know. It's not supposed to—it doesn't matter what you have going on down there.

CB: That's my favorite response to this question so far.

ZA: It's your inner pussy. But no, and as far as excluding minorities, that—I think the organizers made an effort to include everybody's voice, but the reality of it is people who are less economically advantaged, who can't leave their jobs, who can't leave their kids, they're not going to get to this march. So when they're like, "Well it's a sea of white women who have the money and the time," it's like, "Unfortunately, that's the truth and that's what the march is pointing out." So yes, it was majority white women, not gonna lie. And like I said, if I wasn't

here in the University, I wouldn't have even gone. And I'm lucky to have had that chance, but most of the people who go to University are of that economic class and I think it's—let's see how to put it. It's a legitimate criticism, but I don't think it's a legitimate criticism of the social structure that we currently live in. It's not so much what the march intended. I mean they did it on a weekend, and a lot of places were—there were a lot of grassroots organizations that were trying to fund so that people could go up there. There were people from various Black Lives Matter groups up there and nobody was being harsh to them. I saw—I mean migrant people who were like, "I'm undocumented and proud." So I mean there were definitely welcomed but, yes, definitely there were more white middle class women than anyone.

CB: So you feel like it's more an economic issue than the march was being, the march wasn't welcoming enough.

ZA: No, I feel like it was really welcoming, and especially when you're talking about people with disabilities, they were very accommodating. And I thought that was impressive considering the mass crowds, so it was unintentional if it wasn't completely intersectional.

CB: Yeah, and the list of speakers, I thought, really incredible and inclusive.

ZA: No, definitely.

CB: So did you carry a sign?

ZA: No. I didn't know what the bus was going to be like so I didn't want to overcrowd. I brought a small backpack and wore the same clothes. I wish I had.

CB: Yeah. Were there any signs that you remember just really loving?

ZA: I remember, yeah, a lot of people just saying, "I'm undocumented and proud." Just standing there and being like, "No, this is me and we're human beings and we contribute to the discussion." And, especially, since then with the whole—well he had already been talking about the wall with the whole immigration ban and all this, the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement] raids throughout the United States. This is something that goes back to living in Arizona. We had it all the time, but harsh immigration policies and the "show me your papers" laws where if you're brown on the street then police will stop you and be like show me if you're a citizen. So I always think that's a very brave stance, to stand there right in front of the White House holding the sign like, "No, I'm here. I'm showing my voice even though you're against me and potentially arrest me and deport me. I'm still here and I'm proud." And I thought it was just incredibly brave.

CB: Did the march live up to your expectations or were you disappointed?

ZA: I was not disappointed. I don't know what I was expecting. I would say maybe it exceeded my expectations in that there were so many people. Does that make sense?

CB: Yeah!

ZA: I was like, “Well, this is going to be a big deal, but I didn’t think it would be so huge.” I was kind of disappointed that I didn’t ever get anywhere the speakers. I don’t know anything that they were saying, and later I got messages from people like, “Oh did you hear so-and-so’s speech?” and I was like, “We didn’t hear any speech because we couldn’t get into the center. It was so crowded.” But that’s a good thing. It’s like, “I’ll watch them later. I’m just glad so many people showed up.” But, no, I wasn’t disappointed. And at least, here in Bowling Green a lot of the people have continued to be active and trying to get some—get the communication going where there are different agencies that are working for the same thing, working together now. These grassroots agencies had been working, but in their own little silos and that was like, “No, we’re going to have our targeted efforts and be very visible in the community.” And I think that—I got connected to that through the Women’s March and the women that went to that. Yeah, I think it was.... Yeah.

CB: What is your impression of the activist community here? So we have all of these different groups that are active and you’ve been attending some of these different meetings and kind of running in these circles. Do you feel that the activist community is a strong community or do you feel like people kind of do their own thing within?

ZA: I would say it’s a lot stronger than I expected out of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

CB: Yeah.

ZA: I’m not from Kentucky, and so this is completely red state. My neighbors all probably voted for Trump. So I think that it’s strong, stronger than I expected. And I think there’s been a lot more effort to get this connection going, especially now, this year. For example, I think tonight there’s a meeting of different agencies, volunteer coordinators or something, and I think that’s fantastic. And I think a lot more people who were liberal but quiet are finding their voice and being more out there. I was one of them. It’s like, “Okay, yes, of course I am pro-choice, I am pro social justice. Blah blah,” just didn’t really do anything about it, and I think that it’s been inspiring to get more people—the more we’re out there, the more people are like, “Oh, I could also be out there.”

CB: Yeah. How do you—so for example, for me as a queer woman, there was an added importance for my march. Did maybe your status as a person of color or as a mother kind of amplify the meaning of the march for you?

ZA: Yeah I believe so. If it wasn’t for Sonora, I probably would have been—I mean, I can’t describe to you how heartbroken we were. Yeah, she was definitely the reason I marched. I would not—I can’t say I would not. I don’t know what I would have done, but knowing that she’s watching it on TV, that I’m wearing her tennis shoes, that I was walking for her, that made it even more powerful. And my grandparents, they came from Mexico. They didn’t come here to not live that American Dream, and they worked their butts off to get us here, get my mom. And it’s—to sit and be silent, and to watch people get trampled all over and watch my own daughter, to watch myself because it affects me. It seems like I would be betraying them, and so, yes, both of these things but especially Sonora. It really amplified it. Like I said, I’m an introvert. I don’t

jump into big crowds. I don't just "let's do this." But I felt I had to since I had the opportunity. Yeah.

CB: Yeah that makes sense. So this idea—the phrase 'nasty woman' was thrown around a lot during the election. Do you identify with that term? And if so, what does it mean?

ZA: Do I identify with that term? The way he used it in the debate as a way to silence a woman just stating her opinion, I don't think Hillary was generally nasty. It goes back to when a man is assertive, he's being assertive, but when a woman is being assertive, she's being bitchy. So I understand that, but the way it's been manipulated in conservative circles, nasty woman is the same thing as—I believe people who want to express themselves sexually—I don't know how to put it, but if you're, you know, that's just fine. I personally don't, but I really don't understand what the term is being used as now.

CB: Oh, it's just kind of reclaiming. So people are using it as, "I'm a nasty woman because I have political opinions and I'm not afraid to say that."

ZA: Oh! Well, then yeah, sure. Fine. I'm good with that, but some people are like nasty woman is slutty woman. But I don't have a personal problem if you want to express yourself, if you want to go and claim, "Yes, I am a slutty woman." That's fine, whatever. I have no problems with the female body if that's what you're suggesting.

CB: No, it's just a general—some people that attended the march identify very strongly with that term and it's like a point of pride to say that...

ZA: Oh, yeah. If they feel proud about it, that's just fine with me. Sure. I go with bitchy, but I guess I'm older. I'm like, "No, I'm a bitch."

CB: It's the same idea.

ZA: It's like, "I'm a bitch. I'm a child..." I'm with it.

CB: Cool. I've just seen it a lot on social media. I always wonder because I don't really identify with that idea, but a lot of people seem to. So I was just wondering. So I've just been asking people.

ZA: No, that's fine. If they do and it makes them feel good, that's fine. But personally, I missed it.

CB: Me too.

ZA: I remember it in the debate, but...

CB: Yeah. How do you feel about women in politics in general? Maybe—I mean we did have a female candidate that ran and came very close to winning, won the popular vote, but there seems to be a big backlash against women in politics. How do you feel about the way—I guess the

amount of power women currently hold in politics and do you see that changing after the Women's March?

ZA: After the Women's March, I believe, for me personally, I noticed that there was strong push to get women running in local elections and in national elections. Currently, no. Women don't have a strong voice in politics as they should, and when you're talking about women of color, obviously, they do not. But we're half the population and how many women were in there when the men were deciding to defund Planned Parenthood and get rid of the Title X funding? 0? 1? I can't remember. But no, definitely we need a greater voice in politics and this is going to have to be a change on—I don't know how to explain it. I think, currently, there are just so many people that don't see women as fit to run government still, these days. And, obviously, many women voted against their best interests and voted for Trump, and that's a problem. It's a huge problem because there's still the idea that a man needs to be in charge, who needs to be a voice in so many areas, and that's—I'm telling you but clearly it's not true. When you have an experienced, intelligent, well-educated woman lose to a reality show host, essentially that's all he is. I guess he owns some property. They're like he's the oldest candidate that has ever run and been elected. They're saying that she looks old and worn out. I mean that is a problem, and so I hope and feel like it's happening, but again like I said, I felt like we were going to vote for Hillary. So who knows? But I hope that after the Women's March, especially with these big pushes to get more women in local elections and in other elections, more women will run and then just see more women out there will make it more normal. And I hate to be like, "We need to normalize women," but I guess we do. Let's normalize women.

CB: Would you ever be interested in running yourself?

ZA: Like I said, I'm an introvert, but I've considered running for the school board or something, going there. I noticed that the mayor ran unopposed here and I'm like, "Maybe if my name was on there, I could come in second." Nobody in Bowling Green would vote for somebody with my name on it, I would think. Some people would, but some people would be like, "That's a little weird. That doesn't sound Kentucky." If I accidentally became mayor, that wouldn't be a problem for me. But, yeah, I've considered maybe in next local elections, running for something small and working my way up. You just never know.

CB: Yeah. So do you feel like the Women's March formed a community? Maybe, I guess, did you feel as though you were a part of a community while you were there?

ZA: Yeah, I think so. I felt like I was a part of something. We, Molly and I, we would jump into different crowds and would be chanting with them and would just talk to people from all over the country. Who were we talking to? People from Chicago who were getting updates on their phone and I have a crappy phone so I wasn't getting my updates, but they had good phones. And they were getting updates from Chicago and we were like, "Yeah, go Chicago! You've got so many people there." It felt like we were together even though we're from Bowling Green, not Chicago, but also we would—they were like, "Where are you guys from?" "Bowling Green, Kentucky." "Oh, that's great." It felt like they were just next door neighbors. It didn't feel like me and Molly were hanging out by ourselves. So even though there were so, so many people and just from so many different backgrounds, I felt that there was something stronger. There was a connection.

And since coming back to Bowling Green, I see a lot of the people that went to the march on the same bus and everything at all these different events and it's like, "No, we know each other now." We're not like best friends or anything, but I recognize her. We do a lot of things together, and it feels good.

CB: Do you feel like there's some kind of inherent connection between people who all attended the march? Do you feel as though—say you see another one of the women that went at a meeting, do you feel like a kinship with her, or do you feel as though you have a lot in common or, do you feel more comfortable around somebody that you know who went?

ZA: I don't want to say innate connection, but it's like when I get there I don't want to be like, "Yeah, we're cool. We're sisters." But there is something. When I see people that I recognize that have done stuff like this, I feel safer. Like I said, I didn't grow up in the best situation so safety is important for me. And so I'm like, "No, this person, she made the effort to go and stand up for what's right. She's probably an okay person so if there is a problem, she would help me out." Does that make any sense at all?

CB: Yeah! That makes a lot of sense.

ZA: It's like she's probably not going to, if she finds out I'm in trouble, she's not going to be super judgmental about Sonora or something.

CB: Yeah.

ZA: And that's important, here in Kentucky! Because you just never know. I mean I hate to be on Kentucky because I've loved it here, people have been friendly. But you got to watch what you say to some crowds and when you're around people, you know, stand up for social justice issues, it's like, "No, I don't have to be as guarded." So that's nice.

CB: Yeah. So did you—what did the march do for you as a person? Did you come away with anything that you didn't have before you went?

ZA: Oh, yeah! Like I said, first of all I wasn't socially active, but I've also taken a lot of steps toward leading, especially here with the new student group and here in the department. Leading initiatives and just saying, using my voice to say, "No, I'm not going to hide the fact that I'm offended by the things the president is saying. I'm not going to hide the fact that I feel like these issues are affecting, not just me, but the people I love and also the entire country. And that I don't agree with the direction that this is going. Now I was still—I was kind of young under the Bush administration. I was able—I voted in the first election for Obama, and that was the first time I was legally able to vote if I recall correctly, 2008? So, yeah. and so—but before it didn't seem as pressing under a Republican president. But after going to the march and hearing the voices of just the people around me, and the fact that I did this—I mean I felt that it was a big thing for me because I don't come for people who do this. It's like, "No, I'm a strong person. I can do more." And that's what I've been doing. I've taken more leadership roles even though I'm completely uncomfortable with. I annoy the faculty advisor on our—what is it? We call ourselves the Phugas [sp?] but it's the public health undergraduate graduate associate student.

We're really ridiculous here in the department, in a good way, good ridiculous. Yeah, the faculty advisor on that, I'm like, "Let's do a thing!" every time there is a thing he's like, "Fine. Just do it, you do it." So I've been more taking initiative and more leading and encouraging other students, not just Sonora, but students here at the University to look at the issues where it's like they probably otherwise would not have.

CB: So it was empowering to you?

ZA: It was very empowering. I mean before I just tried to sit quietly get by. Now it's like, "No, I need to be out there and I need to take those leaders out there, I need to inform others even if I'm scared, even if I jumble over my words. And the words sometimes don't feel like mine." It's very important, so I at least make the effort.

CB: So the last thing I've been asking people to do is just sum up your major takeaways from the march. So if you can distill your march experience in two to three sentences, what do you think is the most important thing to say about it?

ZA: Let me think, two to three sentences. See, when you give me a strict rubric, I want to stick to it. I would say that the march, the numbers, the variety of voices, the fact that it was looking-mainly put together by women, it showed the power, the strength, of women. And all women. It was very disheartening to watch Hillary Clinton lose. She wasn't my favorite candidate initially, you know, I was totally Bernie. But you can't deny that she was very qualified, so after that, seeing something this monumental put together and organized and initiated primarily by women, that was empowering. And I think that served as a catalyst for any ongoing efforts, and I think it's going to continue, you know, that's what I took away.

CB: Nice. Alright. So that's all my question. Was there anything that you were thinking I was going to ask that I didn't ask that you had prepared an answer for?

ZA: No.

CB: Or if there's anything that you haven't said that you think is important.

ZA: No. I think I said everything that was important. I hope I didn't ramble on too much. I hope it makes some sense.

CB: No, I love rambling. It's great.

ZA: I'm not the clearest communicator, but I try.

CB: No, that was great. I'm going to go ahead and stop recording.