

11-20-2020

Interview with Sandra Hise

Sandra Hise

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/auntiesewing_interviews

Recommended Citation

Hise, Sandra, "Interview with Sandra Hise" (2020). *Auntie Sewing Squad Interviews*. 18.
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/auntiesewing_interviews/18

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Auntie Sewing Squad Interviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Interviewee: Auntie Sandra Hise

Interviewers: Caitlyn Vieira & Leila Henderson

Date: November 20, 2020

Location: Zoom

Length: 00:45:28

Collection: Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive, SBS 112: Women & Social Change, From 1890s to the Present, Fall 2020

Overseen by Dr. Chrissy Yee Lau

Biography

Sandra Hise is one of the original Auntie's in the Auntie Sewing Squad. She's done all sorts of work from being a Sewing and Care Auntie. She's sewn, ran errands, shared materials, as well as provided support and tutelage to the new members. She is a retired high school English and Media Arts teacher from the Los Angeles Unified School District. She grew up in Los Angeles, California but made many trips back to the South to visit her family. It was in her teens that her mistrust for organized religion and zeal for social justice was born, as she lived through the radical and social unrest of the 1960s. Mutual aid and helping others is nothing new to Sandra Hise, so joining the Auntie Sewing Squad was a perfect fit.

Abstract

This oral history was conducted by Caitlyn Vieira and Leila Henderson as they interviewed Sandra Hise, a member of The Auntie Sewing Squad (A.S.S.) that was created by Krisitna Wong, who wanted to make masks for communities that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Hise shares her background (03:26) as she explains how she got involved in social justice and her influences. She delves into her role within the Squad (06:23), and how she got involved with A.S.S. in the first place (09:06). She continues to work on making new masks throughout the interview as she's working on a deadline as the latest surge in the pandemic hits around Thanksgiving and in preparation for the winter holidays (12:31). Sandra also describes the process of making the masks (13:13). She openly discussed what she wishes she could change about the world today (16:35). She shares her thoughts on what will happen with the Auntie Sewing Squad in the future (23:26) as well as reviewing how the Sewing Squad has changed since she's joined (25:35). And lastly, she explains how growing up in Southern California and visiting the South as she affected her (39:55).

Interview Transcript

Leila Henderson: I'm Leila, I'm a sophomore and my major is business.

Caitlyn Vieira: I'm Caitlyn, I'm also a sophomore and my major is Cinematic Arts and Technology.

Sandra Hise: Ahh right up my alley.

CV: I thought so, because you said that you were a teacher for LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School District).

SH: Yep, LAUSD and I taught English but I also ended my career as the media arts department.

CV: That's so cool.

SH: So I taught film and graphic design and Photoshop and photography and all that sort of thing.

LH: That's so cool. So did you want, did you want to tell us a little bit about yourself before we start asking questions and stuff.

SH: Um, well I sent in a bio. Have you seen the bio?

CV: Yes

LH: Yes

SH: I pretty much covered you know the the main points, so um I don't think there's anything that I feel like I need to add. Maybe just sort of as an interesting side note I have not, I have one child I have not given birth to any I adopted him at the age of thirty-four, he was a former boyfriend's son and I had been in his life since about 8 and he came to live with me when he was nineteen so that's sort of an interesting and odd side light that I didn't mention.

LH: Wow, that's actually really amazing. I'm a foster youth I got adopted like when I was seventeen.

SH: Oh, cool.

LH: Yeah, that's really cool. I admire that.

SH: Thank you, I have actually thought about fostering quite a lot but I um, I wonder if I'm too old because I'm almost seventy.

LH: Um, I don't think that for me, I don't think there's really an age limit. My younger brother, he had a foster parent that was, she was like a great great grandma to like kids and stuff so I don't really think there's an age limit.

SH: Oh, yeah so I guess there isn't an age limit.

LH: Yeah, I think it's an amazing thing, like fostering and stuff.

CV: Yeah.

SH: Yeah it is, it's a great thing to do. And I think a lot of people are sort of intimidated by it.

LH: Yeah.

SH: A lot of people are intimidated by adoption too. There is, there's a lot of ego invested in parenting.

LH: Yeah, I can see that.

SH: It's just easier to do if it's your spawn than somebody else's.

LH: Yeah, I can see that. With my foster parents, I'm adopted but they have their own biological son that's like ten years old and I'm like nineteen now, so like it's different with um how they raised him versus how they raise me. But not in like a negative way, but it's very different like I can kind of see it but like in some ways they can't see it if you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah, there are a lot of blind spots in being a parent. How old were you when you went to live with them?

LH: I was fifteen.

SH: Ah, okay

LH: Yeah, I had just turned fifteen.

SH: Okay, and it's also different too with a teenager and a youngster.

LH: Yeah.

SH: It's very different parenting somebody where you didn't start the whole process yourself.

LH: Exactly and I understand that.

SH: There's lots of variables in that scenario.

LH: That makes sense.

SH: Okay, so uh, I think this is an interesting project and I love oral histories and I love storytelling. It's really huge in my background, um my family is from the south. I mentioned that and there's a huge storytelling tradition, a lot of rural communities especially in the south. And my grandmother had all of these sort of folksy sayings that I've always been sort of a verbal Magpie and I still say some of her, of her interesting folksy sayings. And for some reason I was the member of the family that got the family stories, so I got my grandmother's stories. My father was adopted and he was adopted in 1917 in the rural South which is a pretty unusual situation. Adoption was not at all common at that time and um she told me the story of when she went to adopt him. And I mentioned it sort of casually to my father in passing one day, about the adoption story and he said I've never heard it so he was like, wow he must have been in his seventies when he heard the story of his adoption, from me.

LH: Oh wow, that's insane.

SH: I know right.

LH: That must have been like, oh really, that happened.

SH: Yeah, yeah and she was kind of tricked into it she wanted a baby and she went to the local orphanage to look at the babies and the matron said well we don't have any babies but I'd like to give you a tour, so that you see how things run and we'll let you know when we have a baby. And she pointed him out, he was two and she pointed him out to her and said well you know I can always tell which kids are smart by the way they play and that one right there he's really smart.

LH: Oh, wow.

SH: Yeah and he was a towhead, you know what a towhead is?

CV: No.

LH: No.

SH: White-blond hair. He had white-blond hair and light blue eyes and my grandmother had dark hair and brown eyes so of course, you know that blond blue-eyed thing came into play and she was like oh he's so handsome. And she said why don't you take him home and she said oh no, I can't do that, my husband doesn't even know I'm here. And she said you can bring him back.

LH: Oh my gosh.

CV: Oh my gosh, yeah.

SH: And you know, I mean it the matron and it seems crazy, but the matron was a smart woman. Because it was an uncommon thing, I'm sure she rarely saw people come in and say they're interested in adopting. She wasn't gonna let a live one get away. That was his adoption story.

LH: That's amazing.

SH: Yeah pretty much, huh?

LH: Yeah, that is pretty cool.

SH: So, that was an interesting Icebreaker, huh? That's a good way to start it off.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah, that's cool.

SH: Okay, so what questions do you have for me?

CV: Um, we are wondering what exactly led you to becoming an auntie and like, what is it that you do as an auntie?

SH: Um, I've done a lot of things, make masks. Do you know about the structure?

CV: A little bit.

SH: Okay, so like we have, we also have something called Care Aunties. So our membership is made up of the working Aunties, the ones who make the masks. I'm one of those um, but I have various physical challenges that make it hard for me to sew a lot. We have some Aunties that do like, you know fifty masks in a day and I can manage, I can only manage to sew for a couple of hours at a time. So I usually do about like twenty-five or so a day and the Care Aunties are specially designated to help the working Aunties stay working. So they send them, they send them care packages and they used to, they're not really, they don't seem to be doing that as much. But in the early days they used to like buy lunch for them so they didn't have to worry about how they were going to feed themselves. Um, provided supplies, various, all sorts of support. So I've done Care Auntie stuff. Cause I like to cook, so I've made stuff, I've run errands, um I've shared materials. Because of my interest, in um making books and uh digital media art. I put together calendars of you know, a lot of our Aunties have pets. I have several myself. And one of the Care Aunties said you should make a cat calendar. And, I said uh, okay, that sounds like fun. So I made a cat calendar and a dog calendar. While I was at it I made a dog and cat book.

CV: That's so cool.

SH: I've done a lot of different things, so um I suppose technically I'm a working Auntie. That's most of what I do. But I'm also pretty diverse in the sort of things that I do as well. The way I got involved, I'm an arts maven of all of the arts. There is a local organization called Independent Shakespeare Company LA. And I um, I'm on their Facebook page. They posted a request for fabric for Kristina. It said, Kristina needs fabrics for masks and there's a fabric shortage so if anyone can donate fabric, that would be great. And I have, you know, I have tons of fabric because I've been sewing for years. Probably with fabric that's older than both of you. I know I have fabric that's older than both of you, you're sophomores. I have fabric that's forty years old.

LH: How cool.

SH: I'm kind of a hoarder and um, as one of my friends said, crafting and buying craft supplies are two separate hobbies and I have both of them. So I had a lot of fabric and I contacted Kristina and I said I have some fabric, so why don't you let me bring you some fabric. And I sent her some, I dropped off some fabric and then two days later, I got an invitation from her to join the squad. And when she introduced it, she said you know I'm making masks for people who need it. And uh, if you can sew join me and we'll work on getting masks on faces. And I thought, well you know I'm not doing a lot of stuff and I have fabric, so okay. I'm one of the OG Aunties, I joined, I think I joined the day they started. In March, late march the 27th or 28th. So I'm one of the originals, when there were only like fifteen or twenty of us.

LH: Wow, that's so cool.

SH: So Leila, you are, you adjusted your computer and something happened to your audio. It's kind of hard to hear you. I can hear you but it's hard.

LH: Is this better?

SH: Yes, yes it's better now, yeah.

LH: Okay, that's so weird, my laptop sucks.

SH: Well you have a working laptop so...

LH: Yeah, that's true.

SH: Give it lots of love. I'm really, I'm really, since I work for a public school district I'm really really really, aware of taking care of your equipment and working with substandard equipment. I had computers, by the time I left my job I had computers that were probably seven years old and that was pretty new. You know?

CV: Yeah.

SH: When I started they gave me, we had a Frankenstein lab. They gave me a bunch of junk computers that had been discarded by the, by the previous computer teacher when he got new computers and then we put together working computers from the junk computers. I had a couple of techy boys helping me out and my son came in and they, they put together working computers from all of the dysfunctional ones.

CV: Oh, wow.

SH: Yeah, you work with what you've got.

LH: I apologize, if I'm yawning. I just got home a few minutes and I've been working since like six in the morning and I just got home a few minutes ago.

SH: Oh, don't feel bad about that.

LH: Yeah, I just don't want to seem tired or like I'm being rude.

SH: No, no, no. They are signs of being a human. I'm okay with people who are human.

LH: Thank you. Um, so what are, what are some things that you enjoy about the Sewing Squad? Like what are your favorite things about it.

SH: Um, it is a large organization, there are some of the most amazing people in it. The hook for it is, is doing you know making a difference and doing good. So that automatically attracts some really great souls and just the way it played out possibly because of, I know in the beginning um Kristina was asking people she knew and you know, her friends and stuff like that. And since she's in the arts, there were a lot of artists, there are a lot of Educators so there are a lot of kindred spirits in the ranks and that's really nice especially during these times which are so isolating.

LH: Yeah

SH: And limiting you know there's there's so many restrictions and so many things you can't do. So having that point of connection, especially with people that um, you know you share values and interests and stuff like that. Sorry for continuing to work, but I'm working on a deadline, we're having a really, we're having a really harsh spike among the, the first uh, you know the native nations.

CV: Oh, yeah.

SH: And health care workers because of the conditions they live under. So I'm trying to get mine ready to mail.

LH: Yeah, of course. Don't stop working.

SH: I'm processing masks while we're talking. So if you see me with, fiddling with, that's what I'm doing.

CV: Can I ask, how long it takes to make a mask?

SH: You know it depends on the person and it depends on your equipment. It's, it varies widely. I have a tendency to be kind of slow in general, I'm, I'm not a fast person you know people have different speeds.

CV: Yeah.

SH: It depends um on you know your level of experience and the kind of mask you're making. But I, let's just say on an average I would estimate an hour to an hour and a half per mask.

CV: Okay, yeah.

SH: Now, there are plenty of Aunties that can do, um they can do a mask in you know twenty minutes.

LH: Oh, wow.

SH: Now I am not one of those.

LH: That seems so fast.

CV: Yeah.

SH: Well, we have um, one of our Aunties is a uh costumer and she used to build costumes for Cirque du Soleil.

LH Oh.

SH: So she has, she has all sorts of professional expertise and you know quick, quick, quick tips and tricks and professional-grade equipment. All of which help maximize your efficiency.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah.

SH: You know a lot of the things, I'm faster now than when I started. I'm a lot closer to an hour than an hour and a half or two hours because um, I just learned while I was doing it and there was a lot of sharing of tips to you know to try this and here, this is a good thing to do. And oh, I like this pattern and you can short cuts and stuff like that, things that helped make us more efficient and I had some you know, had some uh personal, not a crisis but you know feeling of I'm not doing enough because I was slow. I am slow and feel, uh you know, hearing Imjim who does two thousand a week and then comparing myself to that. Not two thousand I think she does two hundred regularly um, but there are Aunties, especially the ones that live in a house with other people and can be assertive and assembly line approach. They talk about, they talk about the missing child labor squad and stuff like that. I think it's been really powerful, in that kids have been involved in this, in a lot of instances, in a lot of our households. But one of my friends told me you know, stop comparing yourself to others, you're different and just remember each

mask makes a difference and that's a thing to remember. It's something I had to tell myself as a teacher, you know you can't save everybody but if you can save one, what a difference it is to that one person.

CV: Yes.

SH: Yeah, so since we are working with a lot of really vulnerable communities, it's especially powerful to think about the fact that you are directly touching their life. I am directly touching their lives.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah.

SH: The opportunity to pledge for communities that we feel a connection to. Because you know, there's a lot of different, there are a lot of different organizations that we've donated masks to.

CV: Yeah and I know leading off of that, because you talked a little bit about growing up in the sixties and you know the south, southern California and is there like anything that you wished like, in the present, right now that you wish you could change?

SH: Oh yeah, f--- yeah. Sorry.

LH: Don't worry about it.

CV: That's okay.

SH: So much, so much. Um, one of the things that I really really wish, ardently and I even wish it for my own grandson but I can't necessarily make it happen. I wish that people would be more willing to expose themselves to different people. Uh, you know all of this, you know the White Panic; calling 911 because there's a black person within fifty feet of you. It's, it all comes from that sort of inborn distrust of the *other* and I have so many friends, that they just sort of casually drop these bombs of like profiling and misconception and judgment and they just never had any experience with people of that sort, you know. The people that their profiling and calling names and making assumptions about, they have never talked to one they've never, they've never been in a situation. I joined a Zoom book group and for some reason I thought, I guess because of the subject matter that I would be dealing with a diverse group and I ended up in a zoom book club for a bunch of white women in Indiana. No judgment, but they're very different from me and they live very different lives. And the book that we were discussing, there was a woman who was, who had a conversation with a man who admitted to having this sort of in-born racism that

he can't really, that he feels bad about but he also feels like it's out of his control. And she said well, what is a situation where that's happened and he said I feel really really bad, I feel really vulnerable and awkward when I'm in a situation where I'm the only person of my sort, like if I were the only white person in the room and um the women started going, "Yeah, has anybody ever been in that situation?" And I was the only one who would ever been in that situation and it was so different to me. I guess I never really had that kind of a discussion with such a homogeneous group, uh plus I live in LA which is like diversity central.

CV: Yeah.

SH: But just hearing them talk about it and hearing them, like you know, watching them search their memories and having everybody admit, "No, I've only ever been around all white people or mostly white people."

LH: That's odd.

SH: It was really shocking to me. In 1999 I was a Fulbright exchange teacher, do you know about that program?

CV: No.

LH: No.

SH: You trade places with a teacher in another country.

LH: Oh, that's so cool.

SH: It works out and I went to England and for whatever reason um, it was, it was ill-fated. The Exchange didn't work out, you're supposed to go for a year and I ended up only being there three months because he couldn't handle it and had to go back home. So you know I had to come back home because that would have been two teachers in one school and zero teachers in the other. So, but when I got to the school and I was showing pictures of my students to my students in England, one of them said, "But they're all colored?"

LH: That's so weird.

SH: It was an unusual word.

CV: Yeah.

SH: And, it was a very working-class, very white school. There were a couple of kids, there were, there were, I think I had one student who was mixed and a sprinkling of Pakistani students um, but everybody else was white. It was a very very white school. And that was kind of weird to me but it was already, they were English so I was prepared for them to be different. But the kids said they're all colored, which was a weird word and then I looked at it and I thought you know, I never really thought of them as anything except my students.

CV: Yeah.

SH: But he looks at them and he sees people who are different from him. That's what I wish I could change, I wish that people who were different could sit down and talk to each other. They have a program in Finland, it's a lending library but you don't check out books, you sign up for a conversation with a person.

LH: Oh that's so cool.

SH: And they share their story with you. Yeah I saw it, I saw a video on it and it was just amazing what these diverse people sitting down across the table from each other and just like connecting. And it was particularly cool because they sought out the experience.

LH: I like that idea a lot.

SH: Isn't that cool?

LH: Yeah.

CV: Yeah, yes.

SH: Yeah, so I wish we could have something like that here and the people would actually do it.

CV: Yeah.

LH: That would be so, that would be so cool. Just like people wanting to learn more about other people.

SH: Instead of automatically fearing them or controlling them or trying to change them into themselves. Which we have a long history of in this country, let's face it.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah, that is true.

SH: Yep. So, I'm very talkative and I go off on tangents, so let me know if I go off.

CV: No, yeah this is your space.

LH: No I enjoy it, it's nice.

SH: Okay, like I said we have a tradition of storytelling in my heritage.

LH: So going off of some of that, like what do you or how do you think that the sewing squad has made a difference in like the communities like in the, well just like the aunties and stuff have made like a difference in the community?

SH: Some of the feedback that we've gotten from some of our recipients and the organizations that are in charge of disseminating the masks um, say that the most powerful thing about it, I mean it's a it's a very real and very, it's a concrete thing. And it's a necessary object but the recipients feel seen and cared for, because they know that somebody gave their time and their talent for them. So that's, that's very that's moving to me.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Do you think it'll continue to spread, and like progress even after like this whole like lockdown and pandemic and stuff, like if it ever ends?

SH: Um, I think that, I think that yes it will end in a way. I think there are things that have been set in motion that will continue, I think there are friendships that have been made and um an interest in you know, activism. For a lot of people it was already there and for some people it was sort of more simmering below the surface. So I think those kind of changes will continue, um I don't think the sewing squad will live, will live past, in its current incarnation I don't think it will live past the pandemic. I think once the pandemic is controlled, it will kind of subside. But some people will become, they will have made connections to some of the organizations, like I have. I already set up, like I set up a donation to one of the organizations that we have donated to because of the work that they do and it was something very concrete and direct that I could do to help them. That's another thing that I think, it has, it has helped because during these sort of shelter in place times, um a lot of people who might ordinarily be volunteering or you know like doing face-to-face work with some of these populations haven't been able to do it. So it gives them a way to continue with that, or get involved in it if they haven't been doing it. Like some of the, some of the child labor that they talked about in the Auntie Squad, these kids are actually as

you are. You know, becoming involved with this work as part of their education. I think that's awesome.

LH: Yeah.

CV: Yeah.

SH: So, I think that it's going to evolve in ways that we can't fully predict right now, but I do feel that it's been a very powerful agent of change on a very individual level for a lot of people.

CV: Yeah.

LH: That makes sense.

CV: So how do you think the Sewing Squad has kind of changed and evolved itself, since you've joined?

SH: Well for one thing, it's huge and diverse. When it, when it started off, it was um, our Overlord is um Asian-American, Chinese-American and there were a lot of Asians. And uh as I said artists and performance artists, and people from that. And now there's a lot more, you know like me, you know liberal white Granny's around the country and um we were mostly local. We were mainly Bay Area and Los Angeles and now we're all over the place, you know we've got people all over the place and they talk about Aunties being in deserts where they're, you know, they're one of the only aunties or there's only a few around them. So, the number of members and the type of members has continued to evolve and I think some of the people who started may have like burned out and dropped out, because some of the people who used to be very very active I'm not seeing action from anymore. So I think some people just phased-in and some people have phased out, but it's become, it's become quite a multi-tiered organization and I wish that we had Dennis level of caring and determination in our government, because we have, we have worked together to meet a need that we need to, that we needed to have seen at a national level, at our government level. You know, if-if this sort of talent and intent and compassion had been operational in Washington, I don't think we'd be where we are now.

CV: Yeah.

SH: Like this recent surge is terrifying.

LH: Oh yeah.

SH: Like we were already starting to feel like okay you know, we're seeing the end and then boom it's like a title wave again.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah.

SH: And some of the communities that were sort of virtually untouched, are now drowning in it.

LH: It's insane.

SH: Yeah, my great-niece, my sister's granddaughter lives in a small city in Illinois, Southern Illinois about two hours from St. Louis and it's very very Red, you know very very red area, your you know white, sort of rednecky. You know working class with a lot of questionable political beliefs and they hadn't seen hardly any and now they're having all sorts of problems and her cousin has tested positive. Yeah, so it's just, it's really, it's overwhelming.

CV: Yeah.

SH: Scary times to be living in.

LH: Indeed it is. Uh, sorry I was looking, I was thinking.

SH: Oh yeah, that's fine. Pauses in a conversation are okay.

LH: Um, so would you suggest that like, well like anyone join the sewing squad or just the Auntie Squad in general? Just like, would you suggest that or do you think it's like certain characteristics in a person?

SH: Well, I think that you need to have a certain level of um, tenacity, determination. There are a lot of people who liked the sound of it, who joined. And I know this because I've seen the posts from Kristina, that you know, 'hey we are, we're clearing our rosters' and people who joined and got the fabric and you know, got all of the supplies and then never turned in any masks. Um, yeah I think it needs to be somebody who has follow through and if you're going to join the working squad, you need to either have the skills or have the willingness to gain the skills. We have um, do you know who Grace Yu is?

CV: I don't think so.

LH: Um, I don't think, I personally don't.

SH: Okay and you are, what, what school are you from?

LH: CSUMB um, Cal State Monterey Bay.

SH: Monterey Bay. Yeah, she's I think she's San Francisco. Yeah I think she's San Francisco but she's a professor and she actually started a class where the student's sew masks. But she is incredible and unique because when she first heard about it she said, "Oh I want to do this, but I don't know how to sew." And she had a friend who was an Auntie who said, "Well I think you, I think you should learn, you can it's easy." And so she, she learned, she taught herself how to sew and has been making mass and now she started, now she started a class and the students are making masks, and the students are starting a club on campus and they're going to be making masks. So I think it does need to be a particular kind of person. It needs to be somebody who not just jumps on the bandwagon because it sounds like a cool thing to do. Like my students who would you know, 'Oh there's a walkout, I'm down' you know? just those people, the excitement that I'm going to get out of class. And you know, 'I'm going to be, I'm going to have this visible presence of doing something rebellious and edgy,' you know? You need to be, you need to be willing to be dedicated to the task at hand.

CV: Yeah.

SH: Because it's not easy sewing for hours and hours and just doing all of this stuff it's, it's painful and stressful and it takes you away from other things in life that you might want to be doing. So yes, I definitely think it needs to be a particular kind of person. Anybody can support us, you can throw money at us, which you know we need and will happily use. Because all of this you know, it takes time and money to do this but it's not for everybody, definitely. It's not for everybody.

CV: Have other work, similar to this before?

SH: Uh, you mean like Mutual Aid and, and doing good?

CV: Yeah, yeah.

SH: I am very, yeah I had a conversation with a friend of mine the other day about this. I am very much hardwired for service, service to others. As a public school teacher for God's sake, you don't do that for the money or the fame.

CV: No, you don't.

SH: Yeah, and when I was a teenager I was a, I was a member of one of those fundamentalist churches and um, they go out and prophesize, and now I'm horrified at it, but I didn't know any better. When I was a teenager I wanted to be a missionary and go to Africa you know, and steal their culture and impose mine on them, but you know, like I said I didn't know any better.

LH: Yeah.

SH: I blew out of the religion now by the time I was about seventeen because they had started saying things that created cognitive dissonance and I would ask questions and they would just shut me down and I was just like, "Yeah, no. That's not, that's not the god I want to follow."

LH: I think those are all my questions.

SH: Okay.

LH: Sorry, I was like looking at my paper. I was like, did I ask everything I wanted to ask?

SH: No, that's fine. Don't apologize.

LH: I tend to do that a lot, I apologize so much.

SH: Here's the thing, here's the thing. I saw something posted by a former colleague of mine and I think it's really powerful, instead of apologizing, say thank you. Thank you for waiting for me, thank you for waiting for me while I check my notes.

LH: Oh.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Thank you.

SH: So yeah, I think it's a good tip.

LH: I appreciate it.

SH: But, um can you tell me about your project, what's going to happen to this? What are you doing? I'm always interested in education and projects and all that stuff. I did a lot of projects, we did a lot of project-based stuff in my classroom.

CV: Yeah, so I think the goal with this is after we have the videos and everything, I think Professor Lau wants to put, I think she wants to put it into our library on CSUMB because we have like the online version so that anyone can access this archive and maybe do something with like a website I guess. So that more information goes out, about the Auntie Sewing Squad and what you guys are all doing.

SH: So do you know about Story Corps and This American Life?

CV: I think I've heard of Story Corps.

SH: Okay, so write those down and check these out please. That's your assignment from me. Story Corps is the Library of Congress I think and anybody can come in and record conversations and anybody can access it and listen to the conversations.

CV: Oh, wow.

SH: So you would have like, your college's version of that.

CV: Yeah.

SH: And, This American Life is actually a public radio program that's written, but they're interviews and they're themed. They're really really interesting. I've been, I've been listening to them a lot while I sew. So it's, it's kind of on the front of my brain. Um, I can't really watch TV but I can listen to stuff and I really like it. I've heard a few of them, driving in my car because my car radio is dialed to public radio and I've heard a few of them on some of the public radio stations that I listen to but they're really fascinating. And I was listening to one, a series today, I think it was three or four different stories about the elections and people's experiences with the elections. And some guy went on a, went on a ride-around with a vigilante group, one of the militias that were doing the election oversight. The you know, the armed people showing up at the election polling sites.

LH: Yeah.

SH: Yeah and they talked to a poll worker in Michigan who was inside when the people were pounding on the walls, on the window staying, "Stop the, stop counting."

LH: That was crazy.

SH: Yeah, so they have and you can like, you can look at the menu and you can choose themes and, and topics that sound interesting to you. So, yeah it sounds like that kind of a project so.

LH: Yeah, it's I think like for us posting the archive, posting them so anyone and everyone can see is just to also bring more exposure to, to the Squad, because I never knew about it until I took this class and I think being able to post it so other people can see if they wanted to, would be really beneficial as well.

SH: It's crazy how popular and publicized it's been. Kristina has been on a number of uh TV programs and she just announced a couple of days ago that The New York Times wrote an article on her.

LH: Oh wow.

SH: Yeah.

CV: I've seen a couple of those articles.

SH: Yeah, yeah. So we've gotten a lot of press.

LH: Yeah, that's really good.

SH: Yeah, but a lot of it is, it's intersectional you know? It's who you know and what you come across.

LH: Yeah.

SH: I know, I know about a lot of weird things because I know a lot of people and I have really diverse interests. I have a really really lively interest in human beings and the human condition and that drives so much about who I am, including my service work.

CV: Yeah.

LH: Yeah.

SH: And my passion for travel and my passion for the arts ,all of these are things that go back to my interest in and curiosity about human beings and how they live their lives.

LH: That's really neat, I really like that.

SH: What's up? This is my, this is my cat who has been really bugged because I've been talking and he...

LH: He's so fluffy.

SH: I know. He's really kind of an egomaniac. And whenever I get on the phone, did you hear about the, maybe-maybe you did, maybe you didn't. Um one of our professors who is a filmmaker did a film on the Aunties, The Auntie Squad with music by the Kronos Quartet. You probably have not heard of them, they are, they do modern music, modern classical music. But one of our members did the choreography, seated choreography that kind of rifts on some of the motions used in sewing and mask-making. And um, I was doing it in my bedroom sitting on a chair next to the bed and he did a cameo in that, in the video.

LH: Oh, wow.

SH: Because he's just got to be wherever, wherever anything's happening. If people come over he has to come and be admired and talked to and petted and everything. I have three cats. But he's the one who is always in everybody's space.

LH: Is he the eldest?

SH: No. No, he's not, he's the, he's the middle child.

LH: That explains it.

SH: You'd never know it, you'd never know it the way he carries on. You'd think he's an only child, the only pebble on the beach.

LH: That's so cute.

SH: Are we done?

CV: I just have one last question. How was it growing up in, well because I know you said you grew up in like Southern California but you also visited the South how was that, like different I guess because I know we read about it like history and textbooks, but how was that for you?

SH: It was very weird, it was unusual because when you're a kid the life you have is the life that seems normal and everybody should have and most of my life was here in Southern California and we were very true-cheese so we went to a lot of church and stuff like that. But because it is Southern California, there was, there was a diversity even here that um, even then, there was a diversity here that didn't exist in The South. The South was much more stratified and separated and um when we would go back to visit my grandmother we mostly were white people moving

in a white world and the segregation was virtually invisible because it is so separate and we didn't, as visitors we didn't have the kind of um function within the system that it became known to us. But when I was fourteen we traveled across The South during the time that the so-called Watts Riots were happening and people would see our California plates and they would start a conversation about the Watts Riots because it was a very, you know like BLM is today, it was a real hot topic to a lot of them. And um, for the first time in my life I heard people saying shocking, horrible, racist things because I didn't grow up in an environment where people were called n----- um, there were not that many black people in my life but they weren't called n----- when there were and that was, that was the term. My grandmother used that term, it was the only term I ever heard her use. Um, but 'nigra' is what she said, not n-----, nigra because she was very country but she also was a woman who left the denomination that she'd been in her whole life at the age of seventy because the church refused to accept a black member. So she was like, "Okay, I'm not about this anymore, I'm moving over to the Methodist Church because they don't have those policies." So it was a really sort of interesting, sort of disconnect and contradiction but I wasn't part of the conversation but I overheard the conversation and I was absolutely shocked by the vitriol that I heard at a very impressionable age. And, I can't remember if it had ever happened before or if this was just so significant that it really stands out to me, but I still remember very vividly my mother and I went to the laundromat, to do laundry and it was divided. There was the white section and then in the back with all of the junkie machines that were no longer good enough for the white section was the black section, colored. And my mother went in there to do the laundry and we of course were the only white people in that section and you could tell that the black women in there, were uneasy about it you know they would, they didn't say anything to us but they were like kind of side-eyed looking at us and you know questioning our presence. And because I was a kid and my mom died very early, I never got the chance to ask her, um I don't know why she did it, I don't know if it was protest, I don't know if it sheer pragmatism, you know like there wasn't, there weren't machines available and she wanted to get it done quickly but that really struck me, not only that there was a separate section but all of the stuff in there was junkie.

CV: Yeah.

SH: And having someone from the other side enter that was this like shocking experience. So those two instances, really stood out to me in a way that I had never even noticed segregate, segregation until that time and I've been going there you know since I was little, I think you know like five or six I can remember going there but I don't remember seeing evidence of it until that time.

LH: Yeah.

SH: But it's really, it's very interesting and amazing how one small experience can really sort of open everything up, shed a light on it.

CV: Yeah.

LH: I can imagine.

SH: Yeah.

CV: Well, I think that's all of our questions. Right?

LH: Yeah. I was about to say, I think that's everything so far, well yeah.

SH: Okay.

CV: Thank you for doing this and like giving us a chance to talk to you about this.

LH: Yeah, I really enjoyed it.

SH: Oh, it was fun, I love talking to people and I enjoy working with kids. Sorry if I call you a kid, but to me you're kids.

CV: Oh, yeah.

SH: So yeah, I've really, I've really missed my students. I've missed that sort of lively interaction, so this is cool, this is fun.

LH: Thank you so much.

CV: Yes, thank you.

SH: Thank you, all right nice to meet you. Good luck with your project.

CV: You too, have a great day.

SH: Bye.

CV: Bye.

LH: Bye.