[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. Hello, everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from the Equal Opportunity Office. My pronouns are he, him, his. Today, we are talking to Gloria Alonzo from the HR office, who you tell us about her life, how long she is in this position at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us Gloria, please tell me your story.

Hi Edgar. How are you doing?

We're good. At least you have quiet time right now. Tell me what position you occupy at the HR.

I started at the law school in the HR department as the HR Program Specialist in January of 2020, and I recently got promoted to the employee engagement and development manager.

Congratulations.

Thank you.

That was well deserved. [LAUGHTER] We were all cheering for you and saying, now she's our manager. [LAUGHTER] Tell me a little bit more. Let's go back to your background, your family history. Is your family from New England area, where your family's from, whatever you can tell about or everything.

Sure. I grew up. I was born and raised in Huntsville, Alabama. It's a very different city. Huntsville really grew in the 1960s because for some reason, NASA created a base there. Wernher Von Braun lived there. He's a German scientist who helped develop the technologies behind the V2 rocket in Germany, and then eventually helped us get to the moon. Huntsville really exploded in the 1960s. There's a lot of transplants there. My parents are both originally from Chicago. I have friends' parents who are from Pennsylvania, Missouri, California. A lot of my friends from Huntsville were born and raised there, but none of our parents really were. It's definitely a town filled with people from various perspectives.

Would you say that inside of Alabama with such a different style, it was a progressive town or still have conservative views of Alabama in general?

I would say that Huntsville is definitely a more progressive city in Alabama. It's still definitely within the State of Alabama. There are conservative views. But I've always described Huntsville as the way Austin, Texas is very different than the rest of Texas. Huntsville always felt very different than the rest of Alabama.

That's a different take, though. How big in terms of population, have a sense more or less?

I don't know exactly how big it is, but I do know that it just became the biggest city in Alabama. It was Birmingham before, but Huntsville has been growing faster.

How was it for you? Well, first, I would say, until when you stayed there until high school?

We are born there, went all the way elementary, middle high school, and then for college, I never wanted to stay in Alabama. I have a lot of friends who stayed there, and my mom and dad, and sister are still there, but I very much wanted to get out of the state, wanted a different experience. When I was applying for colleges, my mangle was a location that's not Alabama, and ideally not even in the South. I didn't even apply to a school in Alabama because I didn't want to go.

Really?

Yeah.

You want to go far away. You think that you're growing up there as far as you can remember. Going to school, but also neighborhood, family gathering. Were just your parents there or your extended family also lived in the area? How was growing up, having sense of freedom? How was growing up for you as a kid?

Definitely just my parents were there. The rest of my relatives live literally all over. My parents, like I said, are both from the Chicago area. But I have relatives who live in St Louis, in Chicago, still, in Washington State, in Arizona.

That's a paradise to travel.

Actually, it really has provided me with a lot of opportunities to travel. I think I have five states left of all the 50 states to travel to.

Really.

A good chunk of them happen because visiting relatives in those states as well.

That's my dream. I have a good number. I think I passed 30s already, but you will just have five.

Just five left.

Which ones?

Alaska, North and South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Nevada.

Wow. Some of them are very close. [LAUGHTER] I always think about Alaska and Hawaii.

My cousin lived in Hawaii for a few years and a family trip out to see ourselves. [LAUGHTER] Like I said, it really got a lot of it.

That's awesome. They haven't have the chance to go and visit relatives. Sometimes that's the thing. Having the experience that you had to be traveling around would be awesome. But what about the town? Growing up, you had a lot of friends there.

No, I had a lot of friends there. In fact, I'm still pretty close with a group of friends from middle school into high school that we stay in touch well. We actually all got to get together recently over the holidays and had all our kids together, which is, I think the first time we'd all been in the same location in a really long time. But with the advent of the Internet and social media, it's definitely easier to stay in touch with people. I did a lot of things with dance and theater when I was a kid. Dance was probably my biggest thing when I was a kid. I spent a lot of time just participating in the dance studio where we had classes every week and then all day on Saturday, we would have rehearsals for either the Nutcracker or the spring show. I was never an amazing dancer. [LAUGHTER] I never wanted to do it as a career, but it was just always so much fun and such a good group of friends that it was really just a huge joy of my life, especially in late elementary and middle school.

Did you picture yourself as a kid thinking about following that, or was just for the fun of it?

It was always mostly for the fun of it. I did get even more involved in theater as I was older. I did theater in high school, and I did some choir camps and things that were through churches and things in the South. When I was younger, my mom is a singer, and so I feel that heavily influenced my interest. I did originally went to college. When you go to college, and you don't really know about a lot of different career opportunities. There's five or six general career trajectories. It was engineer, doctor, teacher, lawyer. [LAUGHTER]

That was those paths and I think the only one that appealed to me the most was a lawyer. I did start my degree in a double major in theater and philosophy thinking I'd be a lawyer. Now I'm at a law school, but I don't want to be a lawyer.

Now you're in the right place. First for check no. Not this one, not that one. No that one doesn't appeal to me. I cares here because you mentioned that your mom sang. You mentioned church singing. If she was just sing at home, too, why is she?

My mother has a master's degree in voice

She taught music in schools and then when she had the three of us she transitioned to being more say at home but also still directed the church choir and sometimes taught piano lessons and things part time. She's a very musical person. In fact, my sister and brother are both very musical. I would say I'm slightly musical. I'm not afraid of music, but compared to my sister who has a master's in voice also and my brother who has a master's in percussion and loves the drum. I'm the least musical of the three children. Still musical enough, but.

What about your father? Did he play anything?

No. My father is not a music person. He worked typical 9:00-5:00 business job in sales and medical plastics. He work every day, five days a week. He likes to run, he likes to do handyman jobs.

But probably would be fun to get home after work. If his wife was singing then the kids were all involved in music somehow. That probably would be a good weekends or family gatherings as well.

Yes.

Well, from a Brazilian perspective I think that would be exactly what we used to do because everything, well, I hear you, but any gathering, any barbecue, any family gathering, you would have music somehow. We would choose or pick house or somewhere else’s house to go and then you get together, barbecue is being prepared, food somehow in the kitchen and everything else, then everybody eats after that and dessert and everything else. Everybody would clear the entire furniture because then they will start dancing. A music was always playing. But at certain point, after some people were drinking already, let's go dance and a lot of fun too. I think that my memory of a family gathering music would be. Going to school, kindergarten, all the way to high school was easy. You felt that?

I'm a pretty academically minded person. I liked school. I did well in school. I enjoyed learning. I took some advanced classes and things like that. I worked really hard in school. I also had a lot of competitive people in my high school in terms of how well they wanted to do. I got on the competition train with that a little bit as well where I wanted to have a high GPA and I took a lot of AP classes and things like that.

But we were more towards grades and how to succeed instead of something a little bit more. Because sometimes you hear the stories about how difficult it was in high school for some because of the bulling, because of whatever mean girls and whatever name we call in terms of everything. But in your case, it feels like was not that side.You had a better.

I don't think I had the most stellar beautiful experience of all time because it's still middle school and high school and there's plenty of awkward phases you have to go with. But I think I did really focus my energy on things that I liked doing and enjoyed doing and didn't really let myself get bothered too much.

You ignored the noise.

One of my favorite stories to tell from middle school is how there was a girl in my sixth grade onto class who in the bathroom after lunch was saying how this person stuffs their bra. It was a friend of mine, and I defended her and I said, no, she doesn't.

Nice.

Most people think of that time they were like, I'd be too afraid. I was the person who was always calling people out saying, no, you can't just make up these rumors and lies. That's not okay. I'm a very honest person and maybe to a fault at some point where you can be a little too honest, and maybe you should hold your tongue but in situations like middle school and stuff I was strong-willed and not willing to just let people make up fake lies about people who were friends of mine. When I knew that they were just spreading bad rumors.

You just feel comfortable if you have to say, you say, and you do with the consequence.

I didn't care about being popular. The people care about being popular, and I didn't care about being popular. I wanted friends who were true friends.

You went to be in school to do what you need to do and just get out of there but some people sometime waste so much time with that effort. I don't even remember the play anymore. When she said, I'm popular.

Wicked.

Wicked. Yes.

Popular. I was okay, there you go. I was going to tease about honest frank to a fault. Is it do anything with your zodiac sign? That was the Aries folks. They're always there. Then you leave your town and go to college. I don't think I asked or you told. Where did you?

I ended up going after going on a lot of college tours because all I knew was I wanted to go to a smaller school and I wanted to go out of the state. I ended up picking Ohio Wesleyan University. It's a small liberal art school. It's been in Ohio since 1842. I was a tour guide. I should know. These facts. It was founded by the Methodist Church, which is where the Wesleyan term comes in, but there weren't any religious requirements or anything for the school anymore. A lot of those small schools even Harvard itself founded by a church originally and then have evolved to still have connections, but not necessarily have a requirement.

The education spoke louder in terms of the ideology that they probably had. How was the experience? Was good?

I loved college. I spent all four years there really enjoying myself. I did a lot of different activities. Like I said, I was a tour guide. I was happy to talk about the school. I always said on tours when people asked me why Ohio Wesleyan or Woo, as they liked to fondly call it. I always thought it was a great balance between academic and social. After being in high school where I put a lot of emphasis on getting the best grades and doing the best I could possibly do and working really hard. It was nice to both deepen my academic knowledge of things, but also, find times to be social with other people. You got to meet people from all different parts of the world and of life. That's definitely something I would always encourage of going to college that's going to shift your perspective of who you've been around your whole life? I think if I had gone to a school that was closer to home, I wouldn't have necessarily experienced that.

You said that a lot of people from international background it was a very diverse school?

It was pretty diverse. I wouldn't say it was the most diverse school, but it was about 10% international students. I was going there. Then there were also, a lot of different clubs and people from 45 different states. There was a lot of different perspectives in that sense.

Did you join the drama club there or not?

Yeah, I was a theater major.

There you go. When you said I was a guide tour, I say, okay. There she is having her moment of acting. Here I am in my character. I'm a guy tour here, pay attention. Awesome.

I was a theater major and a philosophy major. Like I said, I thought, oh, I'll take these two things, and I'll be a lawyer because I like to argue. I don't know. I take small things and really try to pick them apart sometimes and people thought that would be.

What made you change your mind in terms of a lawyer?

I was actually on a committee, while I was there. One of those student faculty staff, combo committees. I remember we spent a whole hour talking about the placement of a comma. I was like this is so boring.

I realized, I was like, "This is what being a lawyer is going to be."

I had to talk about a coma for half an hour.

Because specifically, where the coma was placed, and I was just like, "It's fun for a little bit, but I just can't keep doing this forever."

I can see. I agree with you, because sometimes how much they are devoted to the details and trying to pick things apart. I like some of the things, but I think the subject and all the laws and all the things, they sound so cold for me. I understand and I admire their passion for what they do, but definitely not for me either. I can see your, "Oh, that's what it takes? If I have to pay attention to this coma for so long, I'm out of here." By the time when you finish college, where was your mind set?

Well, so my mind shifted a bit to just I very much enjoyed doing theater in college and philosophy and taking classes. For the first time ever, I liked the idea of potentially being in the realm of teaching. I never wanted to be a teacher when I was younger, because I didn't want to deal with the chaos that I saw teachers having to deal with students, and parents, and all that stuff. Then when you get to college technically, you're not supposed to be dealing with parents anymore. I know that's not necessarily true, but I had a really great mentor, Edcon in the theater department. I mentioned being interested in maybe being a theater professor, and he was like, "Oh, yeah. I could see that for you." He helped guide me and ideas of ways to do that. I was really interested in the theater theory side, which was a combination of the philosophy and theater major that I had, where it is a sense of not just about putting on the show, but the impact of what different theater you do to create different impacts, whether it's political theater or social theater. We learned about Boal actually in Brazil, and the spect-actor where people would be performing things on stage and have the audience come up and act out how they think the solution could be. The idea of performance theory, which also ties to gender performance and things like that that I just found very fascinating and interesting to dive into, and a way of using performance to explore different parts of your identity with something that I very much enjoyed and it is very much like a person in their early 20s is feeling, but I really do think it helps people figure out aspects of who they are, having to do it in an artistic expression.

Very nice. Then when you figure something out and what you were planning to do, where did you go?

I ended up going to get my master's degree in theater theory in history at Illinois State University.

Illinois?

Yeah.

You leave Ohio go to?

Uh-huh.

Okay.

Yeah. I went there, I spent two years there. My husband, who I met at Ohio Wesleyan and we were dating. He's two years younger than me. I went off to grad school, he was still in college. We did long distance for a couple of years and grad school was very hard for me. I say this to most of any friends I have who are going through grad school. I think grad school isn't hard academically, but I think it's really hard mentally.

Why do you say it, Gloria?

Because you all ready know the material, but you have to fight with things like impostor syndrome and just in general feeling not sure what you're doing or if it's worth any value. You have to pick a topic that people haven't done a lot of research on, and it's like, do I even care about this topic, or once you do all that research, you maybe cared about it before and you don't care about it by the end. It is very isolating and lonely to have to work on writing a paper, and I wrote a thesis, and I was like, "I don't want to have to do that again with a dissertation." So I decided, I'm not going to go after a PhD right away. I finished my degree, it was only two years. But then I was like, "I don't know if I want to do theater." At least not as getting a PhD anymore.

So, would you say, it sounds like you had such a great time in college in terms of, not a great time like, oh, I'm not talking about party. But you had a good feeling about the whole experience in college. But then that becomes a little bit more somber in graduate school, it feels like the difference was the other one is more dynamic, that is a lighter perspective on everything. I'm curious to see how one is so interesting maybe because of your curiosity coming away from home, and how the other one becomes something that I feel you mentioned some aspects of it.

I think a big thing is, I'm a very extroverted person. I'm extremely extroverted and the work you do in college, especially in theater and college is very collaborative, you're working with a lot of people. Then all of a sudden, in grad school, you're a theater person, but you're not doing anything collaborative, especially in the theory and philosophy. In history track of theater, it's very much research focused and doing it on your own. And I was just so lonely, and I remember the advisor I had in grad school saying, "Oh, just wait till you're done and see how you feel when you're done." I was like, "If I hate the whole journey, though, who cares about the accomplishment?".

Exactly, yeah.

For some people, that's not the case. Some people really enjoy the accomplishment, but for me not enjoying myself along the way didn't justify having an accomplishment.

You want to enjoy the journey not just the freaking destination like they say. Which makes sense, but you explain it all ready as well. Like if you are an extrovert person, you like the collaboration, you like to be in that environment, and then suddenly, I imagine that someone that's an introvert or someone that probably that would feel, oh, this is great. This is my right, my way, but I can see the difference now. It's not necessarily the graduate school that provides that, it's probably the person's personality as well, like you described. Wow. Then you finish your master's.

I finished my masters and go, "Okay. I definitely don't want to get a PhD right away." I wasn't even sure if I wanted to get one. I was like, "Okay. I need to take a break." I was still with my boyfriend at the time, now husband and we were like, "Maybe we should just move to a city and try being in a city together." I can always find random theater jobs to do as well as office work to make money. He had a degree in managerial economics. So his was wide open of what he could do. We were looking at a few different cities, and then he ended up needing to be back in Boston. He's from the Boston area.

So he is from here?

He's from here, yeah.

Because that's was going, "I didn't know that he was in Ohio."

[LAUGHTER]. Definitely, from here, great.

He needed to be back in Boston for family and I had been to Boston and liked it before, and was like, "Sure. We can go to Boston, we can figure things out, and then we can either stay in Boston or go somewhere else from there." Because he wasn't sure if he wanted to stay in Boston because maybe he wants to have a different experience. For me, I just was like, "I don't want to move back to Alabama for three months and then move again." So I sublet in Boston for three months, and then we ended up both finding some work and things to do and staying in Boston for a while, and now we've been here for 11 years.

Eleven years?

Yeah.

How was the transition? For example, being born in Alabama, having experience in Ohio, going to Illinois, and then end up in Boston, how you see the difference between them? Is this a place that you expected to be somehow, and how are you feeling about the whole thing until now? But 11 years, you would have changed different thoughts. [LAUGHTER].

Well, there are different things I like about each location. Huntsville, Alabama, really was a great place to grow up in. I always called it a suburban city because it was a city. It's the biggest city in the area. But there's not a lot of tall buildings, there's not a good public transit, so it's like you're living in the suburbs, but you're in the city. But because my parents are both from Illinois, going to Ohio felt very familiar in the sense of it's very Midwestern, it's faster paced in the South. I've never liked how slow the South can be. I'm not really a fan of the slow. [LAUGHTER]

That's one thing I do like about Boston. Boston has an honesty that I really like.

Yeah.

They're harsh but not cruel for me. Some people would see it as cruel.

Safe for me.

But I've always joked that, When I lived in Alabama, people are like, Oh, you're kind of mean. Then up here in Boston, everyone's like, Oh, my God, you're so nice. It's just such a perspective of the type of people you're around.

Yes.

Yeah. It's just a very different personality, spectrum. My honesty in the South was seen as being too harsh, too mean. You shouldn't just say these things to people. You should always err on being nice.

I can see that so well. But do you miss it somehow? You like to be there or go to visit?

I like to be there to visit and see family and friends.

Not just stay too long.

I mean, maybe for the housing prices [LAUGHTER].

Yeah. That's true.

But permanently one thing that I love about Boston, but I also think is a bit much in Boston, is the value people have in education here.

Yeah.

I very much have always valued education, and Alabama as a state is not great at it. They literally have so little money for schools. I know that. Looking back, I was able to do so much in school, partly because my parents were able to afford to help support things. I did theater classes and dance classes in school and literally in the syllabus you had to go home and get a check from your parents for 50 bucks to participate in the school. That was not something that I realized of being a thing. You would be cast in a show and then have to write a check to be cast in the show. Maybe they probably had things for students who couldn't afford it, but that wasn't even something that crossed my mind. It's that sense of privilege you don't realize you have until you're outside of that. I appreciate that there's so many things available in Massachusetts and the Boston area for education. I do think people care a bit too much about where people go to school here.

That becomes a little bit elitisting things up.

Yeah. I've met a few people who are in the high school path and seeing how stressed they are about getting into the right school. For me, it's like you're probably going to get into a school. You're at a school, Massachusetts. If you're trying hard, you'll get into a good school. I personally think it's more important to go to a place where you'll enjoy it as opposed to going to a place where it's got a specific name on it. Sorry, Harvard. Because you want to make sure you're making the best out of your experience. If that is an elite school for you because of the type of research or education you want to have great, but if it's about, having a different experience, then I think it's beneficial too.

Sometimes the focus is right outside of a high school to go to elite school because of the doors that are going to open. Yeah. I can see that makes sense in certain level, but not completely, because you are going to make the best of anything with your own effort. If you were a good students, whatever you go, we're going to have a chance, and then you can make that professionally with your own capacity, instead of dedicating so much because it doesn't matter if you go to the elite school and then you become a crap professional that you are going to be. You are from that school, but that's what it is. I think it depends a lot on your own potential as well and what you have to offer. So you come to Boston and work. Where that happens?

Yeah. When I first came to Boston that summer, I had to spend the summer finishing my thesis for grad school to officially be graduated, because I had a graduate assistant-ship, which meant I didn't have to pay tuition, but if I didn't finish by the end of that summer, I was going to have to pay tuition to finish, and I was like, I'm not doing that. I spent a lot of my effort working on the thesis and then getting some random part-time work through a staffing agency to just pay the general bills. Then I ended up doing a few odd and longer-term positions when I was done with my thesis, I actually worked at Google for a month and a half and a few other locations. Then I ended up getting a temp to perm position at the MIT Sloan School of Management. I realized pretty quickly working at MIT that I really liked working in Higher Ed. I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a professor anymore, but I still liked being in the environment of Higher Ed because it's a place where it's constantly new because there are students coming in, but then there's also this sense of establishment, too. I stayed there, the position was made permanent, and I worked four years at MIT, worked with both faculty and then eventually became the program assistant for the Sustainability Initiative there for a while. Really enjoyed the type of work I got to do and ended up going over to Wellesley College for a couple of years, and then came over here.

You're working in MIT. Did you deal with events like you were doing here? Was that a different program?

Yeah. At MIT, I did faculty support as well as, like events and program coordination for the sustainability initiative. They had lunches every week during the school year that I ran. I helped support, their action learning class of having poster presentations and other things, the graduation for the sustainability certificate students. Then also just general admin work like processing receipts and travel reports and all those sorts of things. Then also sending out a weekly email update about like sustainability events happening on campus.

You dealt with student, professor, staff, same? Wow.

Yeah.

What made you change and go to Wellesley?

Yeah. I got to a point where I'd grown a lot. I had made full time for the sustainability initiative, and I just wanted a chance to do more, and I felt I couldn't do that.

Okay. There was no space in the department.

Yeah. in Higher Ed, sometimes if you want to grow, you have to go somewhere else.

I started looking for the jobs. I looked within MIT as well as Harvard and Wellesley. I think Wellesley really appealed to me because I did a lot of research on gender performance theory, so the idea of working at a woman's college was really appealing to me. I got a job with the summer school and extension program and I did a lot of work with helping. It was like a mixture of admissions and coordinating classes and stuff for the summer program for high school students as well as the summer classes for college students. It was a very new area at Wellesley.

A little bit away from the events part that you showed [OVERLAPPING]

Yeah, it was more away from events and not quite as much stuff with students, and I think I really missed that. I started to try to explore what things might be of interest to me because Wellesley was the first job that I went after and realized pretty quickly, like, oh, this isn't really what I want to do. Because it was a lot of technical sides of things that I was good at but didn't really like doing. Just other stuff where I just I felt like I couldn't, like I wanted to grow in one way, but the job needed me to grow in another way.

Does it sound like MIT was a little bit college and Wellesley was a little bit graduate program again that you didn’t want to be in.

Yeah, maybe. I did have a lot of really good co workers at MIT.

But the job was a little bit more containing.

Yeah, I just got to a point. Yeah, at Wellesley, it was more technical.

You were there and how hard it happened then? Or, you were looking for a different [OVERLAPPING].

I was looking for different opportunities. Because I thought when I was at MIT I was like, oh, I want to work with students. I really love working with students.

That, makes sense.

Because I did a lot of work with the students, so I thought oh, maybe I want a job in the student event space or something like that. Then at Wellesley, it was more like the students were a mix of Wellesley students and some high school students who came in. It was just like, I don't know. I just because of the type of work it was or whatever, I decided I didn't trust my own intuition. I put the effort into hiring a career coach to help me figure out what to do next, because I didn't trust myself to make the decision.

Yeah.

It was like how I thought I knew what I wanted to do with grad school, and then ended up not liking that. Thought I knew that these the job would work, and I didn't end up wanting to do that. I hired a career coach, and they mentioned, like, oh, have you thought about working an HR? I was like, I don't know. I think I might be too honest to work in HR. I'm not the most sensitive person. She had worked in HR, and I was like, actually, it's really good to not be too sensitive to work in HR because there's a lot of things. I mean, I think we have a lot of very sensitive, like, caring people on our team who are very good at dealing with those things, but it's definitely, like there is a benefit to being a bit more, like direct and straightforward for stuff. I looked at a lot of different jobs when I had that career coach. I looked in the private start up sector and things too, and, I did well in terms of like getting to like the final interview and then not getting the job. But this position, the HR program specialist job showed up, and I was like, well, this is the best of so many worlds because it was like the events and communications, experience that I already had. In a field, I was interested in exploring without having it to be like the entry level job. Because I just was, like, the idea of having to go back to an entry level job sounded like exhausting to me, and I was like, I don't like and what if I end up hating it, then I've gone all the way backwards.

Exactly, another frustration. I see what am I doing here?

Yeah. When I saw this job, I was like, Wow, this is like I'm like the perfect candidate for this because I have higher ed experience and event experience, but it's new for HR, but I don't need to have the HR qualifications for this job, but I could gain them while working.

And the MIT experience paid off. That would be exactly right on the spot then.

Yeah.

Why do you do the lining?

Also, like, I very much appreciate the staff who work in higher Ed because it is very much a role where there are students in there are faculty and then there are staff. I really love that. I get to be in a role where I get to focus on the staff, and I get to find ways of bringing the staff joy and lifting the staff up. That's really credit to what the law school offers in terms of like these programs existed already. Then I've been able to expand upon them. But the fact that there were already social and academic events for staff like more class and topics. Made me think, wow, they invest in having opportunities for staff. This is like, I wouldn't be in this role and then be unable to do things. I would be in this role and then able to really build upon it and make a vibrant community for the staff. But I did also get this job in January of 2020. What I was expecting the job to be shifted drastically.

I'm going to work at Harvard, 2020 hits [LAUGHTER].

I'm going to run all these events for staff. Then it's like, not the same events.

Look what we have virtually here. Oh, my God, Gloria that probably was. I wonder how many know ideas or expectation to do a lot of things and then comes this block that just well, for worldwide, for everybody.Yeah. But I mean, for someone that was already here, is just a transition that everybody would have to go. You were coming from a different place with a lot of perspective and expectation as well, to do this, a new position, let's do and then sounds, okay, I cannot even know where the buildings are because I cannot even be there. When you come back from that, tell me about this experience, starting here in January, and then right after you were going already right in isolation, working virtually. We started getting to know people just through the Zoom. That was the connection and everything else.

I mean, a big part of what I had to do and figure things out were how we can help bring people together and help people feel not as isolated while in the midst of the pandemic. I think having this job was actually a gift for me in the pandemic because my main goal during the pandemic was to find happiness and joy. It was definitely a lot of work, but it was, finding the balance of, like, how do we provide opportunities for the staff who are living alone, unable to go anywhere or see anybody, but also not put pressure on the staff who are like dealing with three kids at home now and have no time. Trying to find like those moments of appreciation and when the world is going through this rough time, it really helped put my perspective in a way of okay, well, what can I do, can I effectively make happen?

I think, Gloria, that having, I'm talking here. I'm going back to your graduate experience when you felt like I was so in a lonely past trying to figure out what I was going to do with that course and having you start on my own when I enjoyed, an environment that was more what you said dynamic. Do you think that going through that also helped you to even navigate this new part when the COVID happened and pandemic isolated everybody because you had a sense of what can I do to bring some joy for these folks that are isolated like do you know what I was trying to say. Did that brought that feeling too that understanding?

I think there was definitely a sense of I don't I don't know. I always have said, I think the pandemic also, like really prepared me for parenthood because there was the sense of, okay make all these plans now don't expect any of them to happen. Just, like, controlling what you can control and not being too upset when things change?

I think there was definitely a sense of what genuinely helps people feel connected and what do people need, and what can we do for people? We started the keeping connected newsletter then, which is still going. I think the big thing I always focused on during the pandemic was to have a mix of things people can do at their own time and things that are at a specific time. For the people who wanted to do something fun, but felt like, I can't take the time for that, I'm in the middle of this, I want to have photo competitions, or voting, or something that you could do it at any point of the day when you're free. But then I also wanted to have, hey, here's this. We did a pet parade at one point, where we had people all come onto Zoom and share their pets in the cameras because and that give people a little sense of joy and something silly in the middle of the day.

Which is awesome. I can see that. I can picture that really cool everybody introducing their pets. When you come back, then you are hands on everything that you need to do, creating new events and dealing with a different all for a staff. What do you have in mind when you try to create something for staff? How your mind works thinking about that?

I try to think of things that are lighthearted. There's a few different events. There are the social fun events, there are the learning and development events, and then there are the recognition events. I think they're all equally important in different ways. The learning events is a partnership with the Dean's office because they're the ones who run the math class and the topics. Then also looking for other opportunities like the negotiation workshop that we're having with Sheila Heen that we've been able to bring twice now and a few other potential opportunities of what things can we do and then also just letting, Carverd as so many things. Just trying to provide a navigation for that for staff. Then recognition is we have the Deans Awards and Harvard heroes as the major, like annual events, and then we have peer-to-peer events and always service milestones, things that are in exists, but how we can make sure we bring light to it. Then the social events are always like, what's something that would appeal to different groups of staff? Just because I like to do it doesn't mean other people like to do it. Also, what's something staff are going to feel comfortable doing in front of their colleagues? I think that's something I always want to consider because I don't. There are things that you would do for fun, but you would never do it with your coworker. Just because it's not for you the right place to do it. Having things like the sound bath, trivia, the craft afternoon we had. Just trying to find small ways of bringing fun, and requires as much or as little participation as you want to give. The trivia and the crafts. It's like you can come and you can participate, but you can also just sit and chat with people. You're not forced to participate in something you don't want to force them to participate with.

Trivia, for example, I would be a disaster helping anybody because I know nothing about a lot of the things, so, but I can be there, if necessary, just to give you support like, here, here. Also, I think your background, the drama and philosophy the thing to be a lawyer. Then in all the experience that you had growing up and all the way to college, it helps a lot with this position. Because a lot of creativity comes from.

Oh, yeah, definitely. I love the amount of creativity I get to have in this job of thinking of things to do and ways to make it a bit more fun and lighthearted, as well as being creative of how we can, share and spread the news. The theater background I had more so was also the directing and stage managing side, which is very much the way events come. Events is something that I always have liked doing. I like putting on events. I like having a plan and like having something to execute, and then having something to be like, check, it's done. Events like theater shows are like that, where it's like, you have a timeline, you have a final date. You know whether or not you work backwards from when the timeline is and work towards it. I've really liked events in that sense. I like to throw out my own events. AJ, my husband and I have a great community of friends here in the Boston area because we have people who like to throw random themed events still. Themed parties was one of my favorite things in college was just silly themed parties where you had to dress up in a ridiculous outfit and go to a party. I think it makes it more interesting and fun than just going to be like.

Is AJ also extrovert?

Yeah, I'm more extroverted, but he's still an extroverted person.

That's a good combination. Though, even if you are the opposite, would work somehow because somehow you have. You mentioned growing a family.

Yeah. AJ and I we moved to Boston. We got married in 2017. We're married almost seven years, been together like almost 14. We got together young. I think we always knew we wanted to have kids. It was a weird timing of having a child in 2021, but I think we just knew we were at a place where we wanted to be in. Both of our parents are older, and we want to make sure our children have a chance to be with their grandparents, if we can. I think we have our first daughter, and we are expecting a son in October and then I'm done. I can't handle more than two. Kudos to the people who can do multiple kids.

Different times different measures this is not the same as [inaudible 00:51:38].

My mom's one of six, and my dad's one of five and so the idea of having a large family with a lot of cousins is so appealing to me in theory, but the idea of actually having to create all of that and manage all of that.

The reality is not the same anymore. You are much younger, but it's still coming from a smaller town, that environment. Mine is the same, or so much simpler. Now, everything is so in such a speed, and the technology is all around you. You cannot do anything.

For example, for you to have your professional life, you have to think about babysitting in schools and how to manage, all those things. Before you used to go to work and you had family settings that would be taken care. Most of my nephews and nieces, mom was there to help or someone, we were there to help my brothers and sisters. Now is a different situation. It's not easy. But it's you. I think it is just a proportion, you don't need to have six anymore. So two, two, three, be like oh, we are going too far there. But how is your experience with your daughter?

Vivian is very much a mixture of myself and AJ. I know I was a stubborn child, especially like a toddler. My mom always talks about it. There was a time apparently when we were at like Williamsburg, the historical society in Virginia, and I got lost. When my parents found me, I was mad because I wanted to find my way back on my own.

Wow. You're not mad because they did find you.

I was mad because I wanted to be the one to do it all by myself. I see that determination in her as well. I think overall, I think, that's also what then, like, the story of me not caring about, being popular and stuff. I think that is that strong will that's been with me my whole life. I hope that transfers well to her. But she also I can see the more sensitive nature that AJ has, she has. I think it's really nice to see the best of both or maybe not the best. The strongest factors of both. Because I am a firm believer of, you have your personality traits, and it's a matter of like capitalizing on the parts of it. Being stubborn can mean you're unwilling to change, but it also can mean you're very determined and you get things done, it's trying to see it, trying to cater it towards the, like, this is a characteristic you have, so let's figure out how we can make that a success as opposed to like an obstacle.

No. I will never forget. I told you already the story. I will tell you really briefly here. When we had the picnic that she came and introduce AJ and introduced her, the way that she looked at me when I tried to be all cutesy, and she just gave me a side eye. I could read her saying, “uhmmwho are you?” Why you are talking to me? I love that look so much because the way that she was almost putting herself like, I see you, but stay there where you are. I love that one.

She's already very confident about a lot of things. There was also an incident, I feel like similar where someone we were at an event with friends, and another woman who was there was like, you're adorable, and she went. No, I'm not adorable. I'm Vivian. Like, that's not who I am. Like that is, to be honest, that's amazing. That's exactly the type of person I want to raise. She is adorable. But I love that she's saying, No, don't define me by that.

Gloria, we are getting to the end of our conversation. One thing that I have to say to you because I want that to be clear, because I know that sometimes I don't think you judge yourself that harsh being an Aries, but I still want to make sure that you know that. When you say that you are frank, I think you are frank but you are very mindful in the way that you show how frank. I can give an example. I'll never forget that too. Our first try to when you were working with our conversation series and first project that we had that I say, we're going to do this, or I'm going to show you a slide show. There I am, bringing you like 30 slides and what did you tell me? Edgar. You need to cut that a little bit. Because the time that you have versus this and the amount of a paper and how much they were talking, you gave me a whole equation about that organ and I said, so how many? I think nine would be okay. I think you make your point across of what is reasonable. But I never felt working with you, and you know that I'm very sensitive person, in general, although I come like an ogre sometimes that I say things. You never came across as someone that was mean, that you were trying to make me feel less. Your opinion was always in a very practical, nice way to say. Like almost telling me, you should learn this this way because it's better. You are making your point. You are being honest about what it is, but you are being guiding that. My impression of you is always coming from someone that I can trust. Even if you don't agree in certain things, you are giving me your best advice in terms of how I can do things better. Not just because you are an ignorant person, listen to me, and that's how it should be, even if in the background. No, you are not a mean person. I don't think that's true for you. I think you have been an amazing co worker and you have always helped me a lot in discoveries that I'm doing in this position that I have now. You are awesome person to work with and I see if there is something big that I can tell, our Halloween celebration is one of the best thing that I have been here since I worked for 20 years in this place. That's an awesome thing that you are doing. I think people enjoy and hopefully someday, the students can get more involved as well because it is an awesome event. That's all props to you. Thank you very much for joining us, for telling your story, taking the time to talk to us. I hope it was not that difficult.

No.

Was easy?

No, thank you. It's a pleasure to work with you and be able to collaborate with you on offense and things like that. It's been such a joy having you be part of our team.

Thank you, Gloria.

I'm glad I don't come across as mean. I think I've definitely softened as I've aged.

Was Dave? Dave is doing that to you. Anyways, thank you again for everything and for everybody out there, I'll see you around. Bye bye.