

Telling History in Public: Loyola Project for the Innocent Oral History Project

Jacqueline Lyon

December 7, 2020 (interview conducted on Zoom)

Interviewed by Nathaniel Flores

SUMMARY:

An interview of Jacqueline Lyon, a former star student for the Loyola Project for the Innocent and current Los Angeles public defender on issues and solutions in the county's criminal justice system.

TRANSCRIPT

Nathaniel Flores (NF): So today we are interviewing Jacqui Lyon, and she was a star student for the Loyola Project for the Innocent Clinic. And we're doing this for the Telling History in Public Loyola Project for the Innocent Oral History Project. It is December 7, 2020, and we are conducting the interview using zoom. I am Nathaniel Flores, one of the project interviewers. And alright, so our first section of questions are just going to be pretty general; we're going to kind of just go into your background. Can you tell me about your general background?

Jacqui Lyon (JL): Of course, so I'm from LA originally. I grew up in the valley and I went to LMU for undergrad, actually. There I was a psychology major with a philosophy minor. And then I graduated 2020 from there and went took a year off and went straight after that to Loyola Law School downtown. Since then, I followed for the Loyola Project for the Innocent for about eight months post grad, and then got my job at the Public Defender's office, and that's where I've been for the last over three years.

NF: Okay. And how did you first get interested in the field of law?

JL: It was actually a little bit in the back of my mind through LMU. I was kind of leaning towards forensic psychology for a while. It was either going to be forensic psychology or I was going to be a criminal defense attorney. So I was already kind of leaning that side a little bit and then at LMU I took a class and I got to meet Frankie Carillo. He is one of the exonerees from the Innocence Project. He was wrongfully convicted and he actually came to one of our classes and spoke to us.

JL: And it was at that point in time...LMU actually admitted him into the school and he was studying at LMU, and his story kind of really solidified my decision to go towards law school instead and work for the Innocence Project.

NF: Wow, what class was that, if you remember?

JL: Oh gosh.

NF: I'm just curious.

JL: Yeah, I think it was a forensic psychology class I had waited, I think, until my junior year to take it.

NF: Wow. And what was your educational background before Loyola Law School. So you mentioned it already, I guess, Loyola undergrad. So, I don't know if we really need to go anywhere into that. And could you speak more to, like, why you decided to get involved with the Loyola Project for the Innocent. You said, you talked about meeting a former exoneree in your class. Can you, do you remember exactly, maybe, just was it like his general story? Or was there another reason?

JL: I'd always been interested in it a little bit and then it was something about going towards law and working with criminal defendants just because of how vulnerable that they are and how much the system really takes advantage of a lot of them. And so that aspect of psychology really drew me in. I think having a psychology background going into criminal defense is really helpful to figure out not only what, you know, our clients are going through at that moment but what kind of got them there. And using a psychology background and knowing kind of how society works, social psychology, it really clicked a different way to see how our society is brought individuals to the criminal defense system, criminal justice system, and then how it keeps them in there, unfortunately, on this revolving door. So I was already really interested in that aspect of how they correlate. From there, what kind of directed me towards the Innocence Project was Mr. Carillo, and I had heard about the Innocence Project in general at that time, because exonerees were becoming more popular and the Innocence Project was becoming more popular. So I started just doing my own research on it and found out that Loyola Law School had a great clinic there run by Professor Lori Levenson, who was like an idol I wanted to meet, because of what she was doing as a former prosecutor and now converted into creating this clinic. So, it was kind of just a combo of everything and then hearing Mr. Carillo's story just confirmed that that's what I wanted to do.

NF: Wow. Thank you. So, how did the, so I mean, I guess you kind of hinted at this at the end of your answer, but how did these experiences influence your post Loyola Law School career?

JL: So, you know, working for LP – we call it LPI – Loyola Project for the Innocent in law school is just an experience that's unlike any other. You know, I got to not only do a bunch of research and learn about wrongful convictions and study them, but we got to, you know, go to prisons and meet these clients and see these, you know, devastating impacts that they have on individuals who are not only the wrongfully convicted languishing in prisons for crimes they didn't commit, which is in its own heartbreaking, but even the people that we couldn't help and seeing how the system is tearing them down. It really just connects you in a different way to individuals that you would never really get the experience to meet and talk to. So it really helps prep you for what you're getting into if you do criminal defense work, just seeing how the system really just tears people down, especially minorities and then just forgets about them or sets them up for failure and releases them. It's something I think that most defense attorneys should have an experience in if they want to fully understand their clients going forward.

NF: Yeah, and especially, just like on the outside. It's something that most people I think are really not exposed to, you kind of don't think about it. Defendants like from like, far away, like, from the law-like aspect, they're kind of like dehumanized to an extent.

JL: Yeah, our whole job is really, especially when it's pending trials, you know, you have to really get to know your clients and understand them. And you really have to humanize them in front of a jury, because if you don't take the time to do that, the system is built to dehumanize, to, you know, take that emotional connection away, which makes it a lot easier for jurors to convict and judges to sentence. So, our job really is to, you know, call forward that this is a human being. This is someone's, you know, family member, someone's loved one or sometimes, unfortunately, they don't have any loved ones and showing that impact on to the court and to people in the system.

NF: Yeah, so those are kind of the routes that you would take, kind of making them more, I guess, to an extent, like relatable, I guess, to like a jury.

JL: Yeah, it's, you know, it's bringing forward, you know, this isn't a criminal defendant, you know, this is a this is a human being. We don't even, we try not to use "defendant" ever in jury trials, we just try to use, you know, their names. This kind of really shows them that we can't, we shouldn't just be compartmentalizing when someone's, you know, not only their life, even just a few months in custody changes their life, so.

NF: Thank you. I'm, so now, sorry, I lost my spot. Can you tell me about your current job, like what does that entail?

JL: Of course. So, I work for the LA County Public Defender's Office. I'm in a misdemeanor trial rotation, which means that, you know, pre-pandemic – the pandemic has kind of messed a lot up – but pre-pandemic, we have our own caseloads that can be upwards of 100, sometimes more. And it's all misdemeanors that come in certain parts of the county. So, depending on what courtroom, you're located in and what courthouse depends on what cases you're getting. So right now, I do Beverly Hills and West Hollywood cases. But it's any misdemeanor, so, and that ranges that can range from something as simple as driving on a suspended license, to domestic violence, and some sex-related charges and stuff like that. So, you know, we get them when they first come in for an arraignment, meet the clients, and then we'll see them all the way through to either a negotiation for a plea agreement or a diversion or a full jury trial. Right now, I'm starting to do some felonies. We're, you know, the public defender's office, is getting a little backlogged with COVID and everything. So, you know, we all help out where we can, so just depends on what comes your way in the courthouse.

NF: Yeah, so it hasn't been like a pretty tough transition with COVID?

JL: I mean a little bit for us, mostly for our clients, because instead of having, you know, a speedy trial, right, and having their cases resolved a lot quicker right now, especially the, for the first eight months, the pandemic halted everything, so the cases are going up. But that means our clients are dealing with open cases much longer than they should be and than they're used to.

NF: So as a lawyer, what are some ways that you judge, like, the guilt or innocence of your clients?

JL: I think it depends a lot on what job you have. For the Innocence Project, you know, there's certain qualifying criteria they have, you have to meet in order to be a client, and you have to be, you know, alleging your innocence. And we have to investigate, that takes years to really parse through all the witnesses and all the evidence that was used, to get somebody to re-do what already happened in criminal court. And so there is a big focus on innocence, obviously, at the Innocence Project, but as just a general criminal defense attorney, it's not necessarily, you know, I don't look for, you know, differentiating who's guilty and who's innocent. It's more of, you know, what are the police alleging, you know, understanding what they're trying to say, explaining that to the client and getting their side of their point of view their side of the story. And then

from that, you know, when you talk to the client, more and more about the case and you investigate the case more you start realizing, you know, which cases that you really have an innocent person on, and which cases are just kind of over-policing, or a lot of it lately has been excessive force, police misconduct comes in a lot. And so, it becomes less of, you know, I don't really look through who's innocent, who's guilty, but you know what's the story here? How did we get here? And what are these, what are the defenses? You know, who is being truthful. Who was abusive situation? A lot of the times you find out, you know, our clients are mostly minority members, they're being targeted for things that, you know, frankly, white people wouldn't be targeted for. And it's kind of just breaking down, well, you know, maybe my clients allegedly had this thing on it, maybe he had drugs on them, maybe had the gun on him. But why, why this guy? Why did he get stopped? Why did he have this on him? What can we do to fix it or to help him if it was him that had it on him? And if it wasn't or there was an excessive use of force, what can we do to fight the system to show that this isn't okay?

NF: Yeah, so it sounds more of like a process rather than kind of going in with this, like, two-dimensional outlook, you kind of just take it step by step.

JL: Yeah, exactly.

NF: Okay, thank you. So how does one go about reopening a case to prove innocence or to even like reduce a sentence?

JL: So that gets really tricky. It takes a long time at the Innocence Project, unfortunately, because our system is built that once there's a conviction, that is final, and so tearing that finality down takes a lot of time. For a few reasons. You know, the court system, the judges want it to be final, because they're overwhelmed, they don't want to start the process again on something that was already finalized. Also, that means that you're calling multiple people out, saying that they messed up, basically. So, you know, once the Innocence Project is able to take on a case, which typically means that, you know, it was in the county that we kind of oversee, or that, you know, like for instance Loyola's Project for the Innocent, they can only handle LA County cases and so just immediately disqualifying, unfortunately, people that weren't convicted in LA County. And then you have to really break down, you know, not only what the client is saying went wrong, but you have to start reviewing transcripts of what happened at the trial. You have to start looking at all the evidence that came out, and then from that, you also have to start looking at all the evidence that didn't come out, and why it didn't come out. Whose fault was it? Was it, you know, police that were lying and hiding the evidence? Was it that the prosecutor that was helping them do

that or the prosecutor that was hiding the evidence? Was it the defense attorney that, you know, wasn't competent enough to look for that evidence or decided for some unknown, not good enough reason to not pursue certain witnesses? You know, and so it's just kind of setting up this huge, crazy map of everything that happened and everything that went wrong. And then building that case again, like it was coming to me like initially, so starting that investigation, talking to witnesses, tracking them down, trying to show if there's any like bias in the evidence that was collected, you know, researching experts that testified at trial, even people like the coroner's office, researching them to see, you know, was this coroner competent? Was this coroner incompetent and wasn't doing his job fully? So it's breaking on every little piece and then hopefully comes out where you have all of these reasons of everything that went wrong. And then at that point you have to convince the judge that it's enough to question the conviction for hearing.

NF: Okay. And is it ever, because like it's such a long process, like do you run into issues with, like, you know, tracking down witnesses again or finding the necessary evidence to bring about a hearing?

JL: Definitely. We've had, you know, a huge array of different outcomes where some witnesses have passed away. Some witnesses have come forward and said, you know, another witness that testified I know, that testified about this, was lying and that they knew that that person was lying. Other witnesses, we find out never saw the crime, and they were just covering for someone that they love that saw the crime. And so, and then some witnesses will just refuse to talk to you or we just can't track down. And you know, it happens a lot, and so it's what can take so long as just trying to find all of it, all of these pieces. And sometimes, unfortunately, you can't.

NF: So, what is the common type of new evidence that's brought forth that leads to a re-evaluation of the case? Is it just one thing or is it like a factor of multiple things?

JL: It's a lot of things. From what I've seen, at least on the cases we've worked, there's been a lot of witness issues. We had a few cases with some serious police misconduct. You know, you also see issues with eyewitness statements, and with confessions, so it's kind of like everything you learn in a, you know, in the wrongful conviction seminars, what you're going to see, going to see a whole array of it, you know. You'll see a lot of ineffective assistance of defense counsel too. You know, we've had full cases built on that alone. So, it's really a case by case and a lot of them, you'll see little bits of everything.

NF: What would you say, I think, you know, like you kind of mentioned this a couple questions ago, but what would you say are some of the biggest challenges in these kinds of cases?

JL: I think, at least for the Innocence Project cases, it's just the amount of time that goes by between the conviction and when the actual incident occurred and the conviction and then when we're brought on board. Because at least for the Innocence Project, I think, I think the shortest amount of time might have been 10 or 12 years in prison for a crime they didn't commit and the longest was 36 years. And those are for exonerees that have been exonerated by LPI. So, you know, there's a big range but, you know, even a decade goes by and you're going to lose some witnesses, you know; three decades go by, and it's really hard to find them.

NF: I mean, I could just imagine, like you said, like so many, just, things become so much more difficult when that amount of time has gone by.

JL: Especially, you know, people's memory. Because even if you find your witness, you got to deal with memory issues. Oh, it's enough, if in my job right now, you know, a case happens, and I get it with, sometimes within a couple days, sometimes within a couple months, and it's still hard to track down a witness and have them remember what happened. So, you know, you add 10, 20, 30 years to that, even if you find them.

NF: Infinitely harder. So thinking about some of the more structural or philosophical issues, how do you motivate wrongly accused individuals to go to trial, even when they risk a harsher sentence for refusing to make a plea deal if they lose their case?

JL: You know, for the Innocence Project purposes you don't have to give it to your clients. You know, I think even a day in prison for something you didn't commit takes this massive strength for a person to survive it. I've never had a client through Loyola's Project for the Innocent where we've had to convince to try to revisit it, and that, you know, could be in parts, not only that they're innocent. If they're truly innocent, you know, most of the clients that we have are never going to admit that they did it, because they didn't do it, you know, and they are already suffering through so much. You also don't really risk having a harsher sentence if you're going through that process. In real, you know, in the everyday life pre-conviction with our clients at the office, you know, that becomes a huge struggle because depending on who your prosecutor is, you'll either have, you know, a really bad offer, and then it's not so hard to be like, if you go to trial, it's unlikely, you're going to get worse than this offer. But when you have, you know, prosecutors that are willing to listen and work with you, and

they give you good offers, sometimes it can be really tricky, because you know your client, you know, didn't do it, and you want to fight it. But then you have to explain that you could be giving up, you know, a great offer and putting it in a juror's hands and juries are 50/50. You know, you can have the best case in the world and a jury could convict, and you could have, you know, the worst case in the world and the jurors could acquit. You just don't know who's showing up for jury duty. You can do your best to, you know, to voir dire them and make sure you're picking out the right jurors, but the prosecutors are doing that same side, on the same, doing the same thing. So jurors are just inevitably going to be a gamble. And it's kind of just explaining that to your client and seeing the strengths or weaknesses of the case, but the longer you do your job the more you know how risky a jury is. And the more you know about what how well you connect with the jury, because a lot of it is, do the jurors like you as an attorney, do you come off credible? And then at that point, if they do, they're more likely to believe you. And so you have to have that experience and confidence to be like, you know, I know you're innocent, this is a great offer, but I'm ready to go for it and fight for you. As long as the client knows, it's still going to be up to a jury, which can be really tricky and really devastating for a lot of our clients.

NF: Yeah, no, I can imagine just kind of, like you said, like you could have really all the evidence there. But I mean, depending on who you have in that jury, it's all kind of contingent on that. So this is kind of something, I was like, thinking of hypothetically, do you ever run into this? Maybe not for like the Loyola Project for the Innocent, because you mentioned there's kind of like that process of where you have to, I guess, get approved. But are there any, is there ever any situation where, like, a client like claims they're innocent, but then they're, and they are like for the most part, but maybe they're like partially like implicated in whatever they're being brought to court for?

JL: Yeah, those, you know, cases are rarely kind of straightforward, especially, you know, if you're researching and finding evidence that say your client might not be guilty of what they're charged with. But then you can see, you know, maybe the prosecutor is not aware of or decided for some reason not to charge these other things that they might be guilty of. And then it's kind of just figuring out how worth it is it to fight, maybe, the charge that they're not guilty of with the risk of adding charges that they are guilty of. You know, there's been trials where they can add charges middle of the trial if it comes out. And so it really depends on how bad the conduct is that they're charged with, versus how bad it is that they're not charged with. It's definitely is a fact case-by-case situation. And normally, a lot of it doesn't come up unless you're going towards trial. Fortunately right now, I think our system is turning a little bit towards more diversionary programs. And so, you can flag these issues and, you know, explain

them to your client, but if they're getting offers that are diversion, like if you complete these obligations, your case gets dismissed the charges get dropped, then that's something that might be worth just, you know, getting the obligations done so the charges are dropped than going to trial and risking new charges getting added.

NF: Yeah. This is just like a little bit of, I was just curious, because like I do an internship that works with diversion for like youth – it's Teen Court – but like what kind of diversion, I guess, conditions have you like run into?

JL: So, you know, I'm in a courthouse right now and in a department where my prosecutor is, fortunately, very reasonable. And so all of this depends on, you know, first thing which courthouse you're assigned to, and second thing which prosecutorial agency is in that courtroom, that you're with. And so, at least for right now, a lot of my diversions, there are typically three different types. There's a mental health diversion which the court oversees. Typically, if there's some type of mental health conduct going on underlying the facts or the behavior, then we can get a report and we find, you know, counseling services. And then if they do their mental health counseling and stay out of trouble for typically a year, so no new criminal cases, and then the charges get dropped. Then the prosecutor can offer two types of diversion. There's informal or formal: formal requires a plea, but they're not sentenced on it until, hopefully, they complete everything; if they don't, they get sentenced. An informal is just pre-plea; typically, a lot of what you see is anger management classes, mental health classes, or drug classes like AA or NA meetings.

NF: Yeah, that's what it's like in ours too. It works with youth. So similar diversion, in addition to, like, community service.

JL: Yeah, we'll see some of those, not as much lately because the pandemic.

NF: Yeah, not, not as not as feasible right now. And so the next, what are the conditions under which you advise a plea deal?

JL: Do you mean like physical conditions or legal conditions?

NF: I guess probably like physical as like per case, right?

JL: So you know, in most cases, when they're coming into criminal court, in or out of custody, they're going to have a plea deal. That plea offer is going to come, usually at the first court date. And so in every case that we get one, legally, we, you know, have

to relay that to the client. And so typically, I'll have a plea offer from day one. So, it's going only do you then arraign a client and go over all of their, you know, charges and the alleged facts and the legal consequences and the trial options, but you go over the plea options. And, you know, by law, that's something that you have to relay them on when you get it. So, it's not something that there's like a long discussion of, you know, this is like what I have to tell you about, it's just that I literally have to tell you the plea deal. We'll get into, you know, whether or not you should take that when we get into a little bit more of the facts and sometimes when we investigate more. And then you know as investigation proceeds and the client wants it further investigated, then it really sheds light a lot on whether or not that plea offer is a good offer or not. And the more you get to know your client, the more you know whether or not there's any wiggle room with that plea offer, because the prosecutor is just reviewing a police report reading the facts and typically giving what's in like a chart of what the standard plea offer is for that office. And then if you, that's why it's really important you have a good prosecutor, because then you can go back and explain certain issues with client's approval. Like if it's mental health or if it's drug related or alcohol related and explaining to them, you know, we don't need this, let's not do probation and conviction with anger management, why don't we try diversion with, you know, rehab and see what happens? And so a lot of it's more of a conversation back and forth with your client first and then with the prosecutor second. But some clients, you know, a good amount of them just want to take the deal, they want to move on and just move on with their life and get it over with. And that's ultimately their call, you know, I've had multiple, many pleas where, you know, I might not agree with the plea but if client wants it, I can't force them not to take it.

NF: Yeah, like they kind of don't want to be, they just kind of want to get the process going, kind of. So you, you've kind of like, also, like, I guess, you're part of your position is when you're working with, you know, if they're a good prosecutor to make sure that they kind of understand where this this client's coming from, so you kind of, you spoke to, you know, having to humanize your client to the jury, but I guess, to an extent, you're also doing that in relation with the prosecutor, right?

JL: Yeah, you're, you're basically doing that from day one. You know, sometimes you have to remind yourself to do it too, you know, because you can have like, I can have 70 cases in one day. And, you know, eventually, you have to start doing things efficiently, but you have to constantly be reminding yourself, you know, this isn't just like a case, this is a human. And so you have to slow down a lot, and then you have to force the court to slow down and the prosecutor to slow down because people want to get in and out. But you need to constantly, it's something that we're doing every single

second. I feel like. And it, you know, it's not just personalizing your client to the prosecutor, it's also something that we do to the judges. Because the judges, you know, they see 100 people a day, if they're hearing the same what they think are excuses over and over again, they're just assuming this is another defendant trying to cheat the system. And so, it's constantly learning as much as you can about your clients in a rapid situation and then making sure that the judge and the prosecutor see them as a separate individual coming into court, not just like another defendant that day.

NF: Great. Yeah, it sounds, it sounds like a very, you know, like something you have to just be very active in every step. All right, should imprisoned individuals be able to make appeals, even when guilty of their crimes and properly sentenced?

JL: Definitely. I think it's one of the most serious things that we do in our society, which is to strip someone of their, you know, freedom and their liberty. And from what I've seen, at least in my time as a lawyer, you know, there are those serious ones where I understand the severity of a sentence. And I understand, you know, that some people, I guess, would need to have that aspect of incarceration placed on the sentence. But you see, way more often than not that cases are being filed that should never be filed or cases are being filed as something that's way more severe than what should have been. And so although their sentence might correlate with the charge that doesn't mean that the charge should have been charged. And you just, you see that so often, I think, that it's worth it to allow people to have that appeal and have that way to have someone review and check it than it would be to ignore the problem, because I think it happens more often than not, that someone should be reevaluating it. We just see, we see so many times, so many, so much pettiness coming from everybody, because people get worn down in the criminal system. And I get that, you know, there's obviously bad apples everywhere, but people get really worn down, especially prosecutors and judges, and so they just start, I think, issuing harsher charges and punishments. And they don't need to be, maybe from something that happened that day or, you know, maybe they were, just had 100 clients that week, then they were sick of it and then it gets taken out on one person that shouldn't have been. And so I think that risk entitles everybody, you know, to that appeal process.

NF: Great, thank you. How would you, how would you, assess overall the criminal justice system? What kind of reforms like would you say are needed?

JL: I think a lot of reforms are needed. And I think our, our society is starting to realize that. You know we have a DA getting, a new DA getting sworn in today at noon, and so hopefully that, you know, starts that process. But it needs to start basically, I think,

from, at least criminally speaking, from the ground up from the people that are getting stopped more often, from training police officers about, you know, stopping people, about why they're stopping people, about bias, about prejudice, implicit or explicit because you see a lot of both. And then, you know, training prosecutors, you know, some, there are a good amount of things that just don't need to be filed and don't need to be made criminal. And we make a lot criminal that shouldn't be criminal. And so it starts so simple. I see a lot of cases that I didn't even know where crimes until I was a public defender. You know, a lot of our cases that we see right now are individuals being brought to criminal court for operating a gas-powered leaf blower Beverly Hills. It sounds so stupid and apparently, you know, and, and so a lot of people would think, you know, it's just, it's a stupid misdemeanor case, and they were doing it, you know, they should pay a fine or something. And you would hope that that would be maybe the situation, but they're not paying fines, they're being charged with criminal conduct. And so now we're taking people that I don't think should be criminal conduct and giving them criminal convictions or making them pay hefty fines to get the criminal charges dropped over stupid things that shouldn't be criminal. And then that trickles down because then if that person takes the offer, maybe because they're scared of trial then next time something happens maybe they get stopped for driving on a suspended license, which is a misdemeanor, now the prosecutor isn't pleased, reviewing it, because this person has criminal conviction in their past. And that adds up, and that, you know, tallies up. And so now when, if they ever pick up a felony, it's like, oh, well, they have five misdemeanors, and no one stops to realize that these misdemeanors should never have been misdemeanors in the first place. And so they're not viewed as this new person in the criminal system, they're viewed as, you know, a recurring criminal defendant. And so it just, it starts so simple and so quickly, and I think that's where the reform needs to start.

NF: Yeah, it seems like just on a basic level, like so inefficient too, like you're you talked in like previous questions about how the system's, you know, burdened when you may have a judge hearing like 100 cases a day like to, you know, decriminalize, like you said, the leaf blower thing just seems like at a base level like it would help, maybe to a small degree, but hey, it's still better than nothing, remedy some of these issues.

JL: Well, little things that we, I think, we need to do. Because we also, we waste a lot of, you know, court resources too, and if people don't care about the impact that it has on our clients then they shouldn't care about the impact that it's having on their tax dollars, because it's spending a lot of money criminalizing the homeless to put them in jail over the weekend for sleeping outside. There's a lot of issues going on and a lot of different aspects, that's all started from criminal charges.

NF: Coming to the last question here, what is your, what is the main takeaway for people from your experiences?

JL: You know, I think the main thing is just that if you're going to talk about criminal justice or work in criminal justice, you have to remind yourself to be compassionate. Because you'll see a lot that people just aren't anymore. And maybe it's because they don't fully understand the system or maybe it's because they've been working in it too long. But we'll even see it from our clients, where, you know, more, I've, I've seen a lot of clients, both with me and with my colleagues make a point to say in court, you know, for once I felt like my public defender was listening to me, for once I felt like they cared. And they've gone on tangents with judges, being like, I've had, you know, so many defense attorneys in the past that didn't listen or care about me. And that happens, you hear that in court a lot more often, I think, than people realize. And then that brings the judge to realizing that this person has gone through a lot. And it's those moments where people are forced to see this compassionate side that I think is the most important. And I think that would just solve a lot of problems that people just really thought, you know, about the person that this isn't impacting and if they were compassionate towards them.

NF: Thank you. I would agree with that. And that pretty much wraps it up for us. Thank you so much for, you know, sharing your time and your experiences and your thoughts. I really learned a lot, and I'm really, I was really excited that I got the opportunity to interview you today.

JL: Thank you Nathaniel. If you have any other questions, you can always reach out to me.