



**MORTON GROVE  
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## **Pamela Fullerton**



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**Interview Location:** Morton Grove Public Library

**Interviewer:** Chad Comello

**Duration:** 47 minutes

## INTRODUCTION

Pamela Fullerton has lived in Morton Grove since 1983. The daughter of a Puerto Rican mother and German father (who she says has a “Puerto Rican soul”), she has fond memories of weekly family dinners at Maxwell’s, frequent visits to Oriole Pool and the Morton Grove Public Library, and enjoying birthday cakes from Chicago’s now-closed German bakery Dinkel’s.

She was an excellent student with a love of literature that inspired her to pursue a career in education. After working as an English teacher for 15 years, she decided to transition into the mental health field to better serve underrepresented and minority populations, while also equipping other therapists with the tools to support multicultural communities.

When starting a family with her Jamaican husband—whom she originally met as a 12 year old after sneaking into a Niles West school dance—she decided to stay rooted in Morton Grove to stay close to their families and take advantage of the community’s rich cultural and ethnic diversity, especially in the schools.

In this conversation, she talks about her experiences with discrimination as a kid that inspired her passion for advocacy, how important healing trauma is for individuals and communities, and navigating the COVID-19 pandemic while supporting two kids, juggling multiple jobs, writing a book, and starting a professional counseling and consultant business.

*This transcript has been edited for content and clarity.*

**PF: Pamela Fullerton**

**Q: Question asked by interviewer Chad Comello**

Q: Well, I figured we could just start at the beginning. Tell me about where you were born and describe your upbringing a little bit.

PF: Sure. So I was born in Chicago in St. Joseph Hospital. And on the day I was born, my dad walked into the room and told my mom, *I bought a house in Morton Grove*. [laughter] And that is our Morton Grove beginning. My mom's originally from Puerto Rico and her family were all raised there, and then they came here to Chicago. My parents met at Lake View High School. So a lot of history in Chicago and the North Side—Chicago Cubs fan, of course. And then, my dad bought a house on the day I was born. So moved into Morton Grove and my parents' house is still there. They still live there 39 years later.

Q: That's great. Can you talk about what inspired them to move from Puerto Rico?

PF: You know, there's a lot of history in Puerto Rico, especially in its connection to the United States. I remember learning about my grandfather, who was born in 1900, and my uncle, who was born similarly, right around the turn of the century. They were 5–6-

year-old boys working on sugar cane plantations owned by the United States. They were getting paid a penny to work as little kids on a sugar cane plantation. Life was hard. During that time they were promised certain rights to the United States, like getting their citizenship and things like that. And it took an awful long time for Puerto Rico to finally get some rights that they were promised and deserved.

And then when they finally did, it was like OK, now it's an easier transition to get to the United States where there is just more economic opportunity. Very similar immigrant story. I had uncles that were already here, so my grandfather and grandmother felt comfortable picking up their life and moving it to the United States. They're a very large family. My mom is number 17 out of 18 children. [laughter]

Q: Wow.

PF: So a very big age range. My mom has very older brothers, so they were the ones who were here. So it was a nice mix of family here in the United States, in Chicago, and then in Puerto Rico.

Q: So it was family in Chicago that brought them specifically here?

PF: Yes.

Q: And then once they did arrive, what sort of work did they do?

PF: They did not work. My grandparents were already older when they came to the United States, so they didn't need to work. But in Puerto Rico, like I said, my grandfather worked on sugar cane plantations and my grandmother was a domestic worker, so she cooked and cleaned people's homes and things like that.

Q: OK. Have your parents talked at all about their experience growing up in Chicago?

PF: Oh yeah. My dad is not Puerto Rican, but we say he turned into a Puerto Rican. Because at like the age of seven, he met his best friend who's a Puerto Rican man, and they've been friends for nearly 60 years now. And really, that was the home he really grew up in. My dad used to talk about going to the Cubs stadium, and they wouldn't have money to buy the tickets to the Cubs game, but they would look in... There was a time when you used to be able to see the game on the outside. He'd talk about that and, you know, joyriding with his friends.

My mom is from a very traditional Latina family, so as a girl she wasn't really allowed to do much. But she had such a huge family that really what they did is they spent time with family. And I think that's obviously been passed down, right? Because even when I grew up and had the opportunity to live where I wanted to live, go where I wanted to go, I stayed in Morton Grove because of my connection with my family and how strong and important that is to me for family to be close by. My brothers live close by too.

Chicago has changed a lot since they were kids in the Lakeview area. And they talk about that all the time. You know, how different Six Corners is, and that's kind of the

area they were in. But yeah, we went to Dinkel's. Dinkel's just closed for the last time on April 30. Dinkel's has been a Chicagoland bakery for, I don't know, 80 years or something like that. My dad used to go with his grandmother. She was from Germany and they came to the United States during... I want to say World War II if I'm not mistaken. They immigrated to the United States from Germany during that time. Dinkel's was a German bakery, so it was kind of very comfortable for them and they learned that was an area that they liked and grew up around. I had birthday cakes from Dinkel's for the last 39 years. [laughter] I don't know what I'm gonna do with birthday cakes anymore. It was absolutely heartbreaking. I cried when they announced that they were going to close, 'cause it's such a nostalgic place. The places in these areas are very nostalgic for me.

Q: So talk about that sort of mix of cultures you grew up in, between some German and Puerto Rican. What was that like? And what are some either similarities or differences between those?

PF: Well, the German side is really covered up. My great grandmother came here with my grandfather and that was the end of their German history and ancestry. They never wanted to talk about it because of our ill relationship with Germany during that time. My grandfather was bullied. He was beaten up for his German accent, for not speaking English, for wearing lederhosen. And I think it put a real dark twist to his life. You know, I'm a therapist, so I understand how these kinds of young experiences impact somebody's present. So there was no talking of Germany. No speaking German. My

dad never learned it. I think that's why, when he met his best friend in second grade, that Puerto Rican family was world of difference to him, right? They were loving and open and connected to their history and their culture, and I think my dad was drawn to that. So he tries to speak Spanish, he says he's Puerto Rican... [laughter] And then when he joined my mom's family, it was like it was meant to be.

So we really grew up in a Puerto Rican household. It was very similar to the way my mom was raised. I had two older brothers, so very protective family, that kind of a thing. But always very loving, always connected back to our whole family. I mean, our parties are enormous. [laughter] I could only invite first cousins to my wedding, because otherwise it would have been like 700 people. To this day, I just recently published a book and my cousins are all telling everybody on social media and buying my book. We just had a Sweet Sixteen together and they were talking about it. It's such a beautiful thing to have a large, loving family like that.

Q: Do you know how your parents met?

PF: Yes. My mom and my aunt were walking down the street, either to go to school or leaving from school, and my dad and his best friend Jesus were in the car together. And my dad saw her, and that was it. Pulled the car over and was like, *Do you want a ride?* [laughter] And that was it. They've been together ever since.

Q: Wow! He took his shot.

PF: He took a shot, yeah. They got married after high school, so they just celebrated their 44th wedding anniversary.

Q: That's great. So what early memories do you have as a kid in Morton Grove?

PF: When I think about Morton Grove, I have to say I think about this one restaurant, Maxwell's. It was where the new Moretti's is, right on Dempster and Narraganset right there. We used to go there once a week. It was like our family treat to go to the restaurant. It had a candy area with glass jars filled with candy. [laughter] I don't know why, but that memory has always stuck with me. I would take handfuls of red licorice from the candy jars. That's one of the best memories I have is that Maxwell's restaurant. I couldn't even tell you what I ate or anything. But my family, we were always big on making sure we had family meals together and things like that. So that was one of our weekly family meals, and I thoroughly enjoyed the candy jars. [laughter] Enough to make an imprint on my memory.

The pool. My parents live on the west side of Morton Grove, so Oriole Pool was our pool. I remember going there. My mom would take my brothers and I. Oriole Park, the old Oriole Park, when there were no rules about parks and they had terrible accessories that like hurt children. [laughter] I broke my arm on one of those. I was swinging and I got stuck in the middle and fell and broke my arm. I remember that too, so now I'm overly cautious with my children. *No, you're not swinging on that...*

I went to Washington School, which is on Golf and Washington. I don't think that's Morton Grove though. Morton Grove or Glenview? I don't know, but that's where I



went to school. I got a love to play sports there. I ended up playing volleyball and soccer and basketball and gymnastics in high school. I went to Maine East High School. I have beautiful memories from there. I went to Gemini for junior high. I'm always a Demon. I always felt proud of my Maine East past. I have some very best friends that came from Maine East.

Q: What kind of a student were you?

PF: A great student, Chad! [laughter] I mean, do you know anything about Puerto Rican households? There is no room to make any kind of errors in that department. So no, we were very good students. My brothers and I never got in trouble. You know, not that my parents knew about at least. My goal was always to work hard in school so I could go to a college of my choice. That was always in my head. I ended up playing soccer in college, so that was really important to me. Making sure I got scholarships, you know? I wouldn't have been able to attend a four-year university right away if I didn't get enough scholarships, and I knew that, so I think at a young age that was really instilled in me to make sure that I did my best and tried my best.

Q: What sort of subjects were you interested in at that time?

PF: English. And then I eventually became an English teacher before I became a therapist. I had a teacher at Maine East that gave me a love of literature and reading

and writing. That spawned a love for education. So when I went to college, I majored in English.

Q: So you planned on becoming a teacher?

PF: I did, yes, and I was a teacher for almost 15 years before I transitioned into mental health.

Q: Talk about your early career in education. What was it like being an English teacher?

PF: Yeah, I was 21 in my first teaching job. So I had students that were only three years younger than me. [laughter] That was interesting. I am a lifelong learner, so education is so important to me. And as a Latina, you know, a minority in the field, I always believe and I still believe to this day that education is the key to support underserved and underrepresented populations. So that love, that belief, that value that I have, I did everything I could to transition that into my students. So I was a Hispanic parent liaison. I was an adviser to the cultural awareness group, discussing culture, discussing diversity. Those are things that are very important to me. Supporting other minoritized populations, supporting BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color] students. I helped to start an equity coalition in the school that I worked at because there was unfair treatment of students of color not getting access to the same resources. So that was a love of education and advocacy, and I found a way to combine those two. And

when I felt like education wasn't doing enough to provide for advocacy, I transitioned into mental health because I figured that was an area that I maybe would be able to support BIPOC and minoritized populations on an even deeper level.

Q: Talk about that transition too. You said that education was only going so far for that, so what other things sort of inspired you to make that jump?

PF: When I was younger, I worked for a Police Neighborhood Resource Center. They call them PNRCS. They're in underserved, low-income communities usually. And it's like a police officer stationed there so that they can support the community, and then there's always some kind of a mental health clinician there. So a therapist, social worker, or something. The social worker who worked there—and I worked under her—I saw what she did for the community, for the members of the community, supporting them and everything that they need in order to achieve their goals and make the best life for themselves, their families. And I was like, *I want to do that one day*. So it was just a matter of time before I said, Well, I feel like I've come to do what I needed to do in the education field and now it's time for me to move on to another institution that I felt like I could make a difference in.

It was a difficult transition leaving a career after so many years, but you know, I teach career counseling. I give career counseling development workshops, and I talk about how our life is really long and you don't have to do one thing for 60 years of your life that you're going to be working. You can start your journey in one place and then make plans to get to the next journey of your life, right? And so mental health was

always in the plans. I just had to make a decision about when I was going to make that transition, and it was about at the 15-year mark that I did that.

Q: How long ago was that then?

PF: 2018. I started the journey earlier because I was working full-time, so I had to slowly go to school. But I completely finished my degree in 2018 and then went bye to one and started anew—just took a leap of faith that things were going to work out, and they did.

Q: What are some things that you've learned since that transition? Either about the things that you're working on or other themes?

PF: Yeah, you know, we've got a lot of really important changes to make in our community. There's a lot of hurt. I'm a trauma specialist, you know, so there's a lot of trauma, a lot of pain. I think one of the biggest areas that I try to teach about is that if we don't heal ourselves, all we're doing is passing that pain onto the next generation. Whether it's our children or the people that we're around or our community even. So my mission at this moment and stage in my life is to provide mental health awareness training to as many people as I can possibly do that with so that we can begin as a community to heal.

Q: So what opportunities do you see, specifically in Morton Grove or just the general community, to offer those things and for people to be able to pursue that?

PF: Well, there's nothing like that around here in Morton Grove. I've tried to find it. I've even had people from other neighborhoods reach out to me and say, *There's nothing like you in my neighborhood*. And I'm like, *Yes, it's hard to find*. I don't know why that is. I think mental health is still very much a taboo topic. But the pandemic has really highlighted and exacerbated the need for people to start thinking about and putting their mental health first.

We see an increased rate of anxiety and depression amongst our youth and our schools, so I definitely think that's an area that in Morton Grove we need to start to tackle a little bit more. There aren't enough mental health clinicians in the schools or supporting the schools. I'm currently supporting a school in another district nearby, and for an entire school, they had two school social workers for an entire school! How are they going to meet the needs of these children that came back after two very difficult years? And we're still in the mix of some very difficult years ahead of us. So we're seeing increased fights at school, we're seeing increased truancy. We're seeing students talk more about suicidal thoughts and acting on them. We need to do more.

And it's not just our children. Our parents have been hurting too. It's been hard on parents. I know, I'm a mother too. I had my kids during the pandemic that I had to watch and take care of while I was working, while I'm going to school, while I'm trying to do all the things in my own individual goals. I had to worry about my family too. It's been stressful on everybody, and I think that we need to begin to talk about that and find relief for that.

Q: I did want to jump back to your family and personal side, in terms of how you started your family and met your husband.

PF: Yes, I met my husband when I was 12. [laughter] I was snuck into a Niles West school dance. [laughter] I was in junior high at the time and I went to the dance. Sorry, Niles West. [laughter] He was there 'cause that's where he went to school. We caught eyes on the dance floor and became very good friends from that point on. But we didn't have cell phones back then, so there was no way for us to really communicate. So he would call my house phone, but if my brothers or my parents picked up, he would just hang up. [laughter] We had a secret phone code. It was after college, when I graduated from college, I was celebrating in the city and he happened to be at the same bar that I was at. He came up to me and was like, *I know you*. And I'm like, *Yeah, nice pickup line, buddy*. [laughter] But in fact he did know me! And within the next year we started dating. Six months later we got engaged, and that was it. We are celebrating our 15-year wedding anniversary this June.

Q: Congrats! That's great. So you hadn't stayed in touch in between that time?

PF: No. Maybe like a friend of a friend would be like, *How's Pam? How's Craig?* and we would kind of keep up that way, but we didn't have cell phones and AOL was just a thing and I didn't really use that messenger that AOL had. I'm still terrible with technology, Chad. Trust me. I blame it on my childhood, not having any of it. We had a Wang computer at home and a typewriter! That's how I wrote my papers in high school.

So yeah, there was not really a way to communicate like that. But fate put us back together, right? So it was very natural for us to look for a home in the Skokie/Morton Grove area. And that's how we ended up on the east side of Morton Grove, because we're right next to Skokie, we're right next to the 94, which could take us to the city, which we love. The city is still a big part of who we are.

Q: So he's from this area originally as well?

PF: He was born in Jamaica and he came here when he was younger. His culture, the Caribbean culture, was very similar to Puerto Rico. I think that's really how we connected. Very similar childhood stories, very similar childhood mothers. [laughter] Very strict Caribbean mothers. So we had a lot in common and I think that's really what connected us. Then from Jamaica he came to Evanston, which is a very similar case for many Jamaicans. Evanston has a very large Jamaican community. Then his mother didn't want him to go to Evanston High School, so she moved to Skokie and that's how he ended up at Niles West.

Q: Wow, that's awesome. And then you had kids at some point?

PF: Yes, we did. After five years of being married we had our first child. At that point we were actually living in Palatine because I was working out that way and I don't like driving too much. But when we had our first kid—very similar to my own story—within

six weeks we bought a home in Morton Grove. [laughter] I wanted to raise my kids out here.

Q: You've already talked about a few appealing aspects of Morton Grove, but wanting to raise your family here is important to you. So what is it about Morton Grove that sticks out to you, given the opportunities you said you had to maybe be other places?

PF: I think that there is a nice amount of diversity here. It's important that my children see people that look like them, that they're in school with people that look like them and are diverse like them, that they learn about diversity, about other cultures, other people, other lives, other opinions. All types of differences. This area, it does a nice job. It can always do better, but it does a decent job. My daughter came home from school yesterday and she's like, *Mom, there were only nine kids in class yesterday.* I go, *Yeah, why? Well, 'cause it was Eid.* I was like, *Yes, it was!* That's great to me that she's learning about that and that her class is very diverse with different students. I think Morton Grove provides that. And obviously there's a sense of familiarity that is very comfortable for us.

And it's an area that I think maybe we can help to grow and change too, a little bit. There is on the back of my alley a very hateful sign posted on somebody's pole. And I think, see, there's an opportunity to try to make things better, right? Whatever the issue that person has, feeling bold enough to even put a sign up to profess their hatred towards certain things. It doesn't make me want to run away; it makes me want to stay and fight. And even this opportunity, I was like, *Yes, I want to interview for this because*



this is an opportunity for me to talk about things that I'm passionate about and so people in the community know that there's somebody they can come to that they can talk about these things with. That we can maybe set up some kind of support system so people can learn from each other, about each other, so we don't have to pass that trauma on to other people. Whatever hurt that person feels that they need to put that sign up, it's like, you're just passing your hurt and your pain on to other people. I always tell my clients: *Hurt people hurt people*. So instead of doing things to hurt each other, let's heal so we don't need to pass that hurt on to somebody else.

Q: Right. You mentioned advocacy and community building are really important to you, and leaning into those challenging experiences rather than running away from them. Were there any experiences that you went through that maybe inspired that sort of aspect of your personality?

PF: For sure. In sixth grade, one of my teachers at Washington... We were taking one of those standardized tests and you have to put your demographic information on there. So I put Latina. And she was like, *You should change that. You should put White. It's better for you*. And I was like, *OK...* and I went home and I told my parents.

When I was little, the school told my mom in kindergarten not to teach us Spanish because it would hurt our English acquisition, which we know language acquisition doesn't work that way, right? So my mom had always taken that and kind of like stuffed it, you know—*OK, I'm not gonna rock the boat, I'm not going to do this*. But my dad, on the other hand—and I think this just comes from him being a white man with

privilege [laughter], with a Puerto Rican soul—he never allowed them to do that. So my dad marched into the school the next day was like, *Don't you ever tell my daughter she's not Puerto Rican. We are Puerto Rican. We are Latino. It will be that on the demographic sheet and I don't want to hear about this again.* And I was like, *Yeah dad...* [laughter]

I felt like a bus driver was being really racist to me once and my dad like nearly beat up the bus driver. Not that I condone violence [laughter], but he made us feel proud to be who we are. That really showed me like, OK, I'm not a man and I'm not a white man, but I could still be an advocate for myself. And I have to be because there are people who feel like they don't have a voice or they can't have a voice. And despite any repercussions that I may have from time to time for having the voice that I do, they're all worth it in the name of advocacy and social justice.

Q: That sounds like a very powerful impression that your dad's actions made on you, and that's great that it was instilled in you as an adult as well.

PF: Yes. It made for a difficult childhood because I never shut my mouth. [laughter] As an adult, I feel very empowered. When I was in education, I wanted to pass that empowerment onto my students. And in mental health, I want to pass that empowerment onto my clients, because I think that is really essential for people being able to turn into the people they want to be is that they feel empowered to do so.

Q: Do you see those characteristics showing up in your own kids?

PF: Yes. My eldest is difficult. She's a difficult child. [laughter] I always tell people she's a difficult child but she's going to make an amazing adult, because she's not going to take any crap from anybody. [laughter] She certainly doesn't take it from her parents. She's a wonderful student. She'll be 10 in July. Her teachers always tell me, *I wish we had more students like her*. She's an avid, voracious reader and learner and I love that about her. She definitely gets that from me. But she is really independent, really feisty. She is very proud of who she is. She always talks about being Puerto Rican and Jamaican and German. Her culture is very important to her. But yeah, she's feisty. [laughter] I have grey hairs because of her, Chad. [laughter] I didn't have them before children, I'm gonna say that.

Q: And she's not even a teenager yet.

PF: She's not. This is scary, very scary. And my little one, I have a four-year-old. Still very independent but a lot more chill. There's definitely a chill side to her. But she doesn't take anything from her 10-year-old sister. She's like, *Nah, uh-uh, I'm in charge here*. [laughter] So I love that about her too. My kids are great. And you know, I think they really thrived during the pandemic because luckily we knew what we needed to do for them, and we were privileged enough to provide everything that they needed. Somebody to support them when they were doing online learning, finding ways to still be outside. We got a trampoline and a swing set, things to just be active during that time still because exercise, activity, sports are very important to us. And allowing her to

Zoom with her friends so she can still have that social development that's very important during her age. So we were able to provide all of that, and I think that really helped to help her thrive. So she didn't lose anything like many students did during that time. I'm glad for my kid, but it also hurts to see that other people in the community weren't able to have that same thing for their children.

Q: Right. Speaking of the pandemic, tell me about the things that came out of that for you, in terms of the consulting and then the new book.

PF: Yeah, so the pandemic hit and I was working like three different jobs. Because I knew that I would want to transition onto my own at some point, and I knew that financially that was going to be a terrible thing. [laughter] So I had to kind of prepare for that and be a little bit more fiscally responsible. But yeah, that pandemic hit and I went, It's time for me to start my own therapy business, my own counseling consulting business to be able to support the needs of the community that I care about and that I want to help.

So I did that, and I provided counseling services, group therapy services, to under- and uninsured clients and communities. I went and looked out for grants and applied for grants to be able to do that, so that my clients can continue to either get free services from me or sliding-scale services—so like, pay what you can. Many people lost their jobs. A typical counseling session is like \$125 an hour. Who can afford that when those kinds of things happen? I was luckily able to just provide those services and then I worked teaching. I teach at the university, so I can get a little bit of income doing that so

that I can continue to support the communities and what they needed to do. So that's kind of how I started things.

I do trainings and workshops for counselors on how to work with communities of color, best practices, therapeutic practices for communities of color, immigrant communities. I specialize in working with undocumented communities. I offer career counseling. I'm doing that this summer through the Morton Grove Park District. I'm offering career counseling services because the pandemic hit people in that field really hard. Either people lost their jobs or they quit because it was too hard, right? The Great Resignation they call it. I want to help people figure out what their next journey is going to look like. So I developed these four-week virtual sessions so that people could still be comfortably at their home if they have to multitask, but then learn how to do career exploration and development

And then I got another ambition in me to write this book about mental health awareness, because like I said when we started this, mental health awareness is like my big focus. I want people to understand what it is and why they need to focus on that today and not wait anymore to put their mental health behind something else. If somebody went and broke their arm, they wouldn't wait to go to the doctor. They would go to the doctor and get their arm healed.

Mental health, people continue to put it last, because they just want to keep pushing through or they were told somewhere along their life, *That's not a big deal. Just keep going. Just keep working hard. Keep working hard. Go go go.* And that's not a way to look at our mental health. We need to look at our mental health like our physical health. If we had a heart attack, we go to the doctor. If we broke our arm, we go to the

doctor. If we're having distress, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, an overwhelming mood of feeling—we need to start looking into that. What's that about? What's going on with it? What can I do about it?

So the book that I wrote—*Distress Tolerance & Mindfulness Tools: A Brief Guide to Stay Present and Grounded*—is all about that. I teach them about mental health awareness and I give like 10 chapters worth of strategies to start figuring out how to put our mental health first.

Q: That's a great accomplishment and a really valuable resource. Congratulations! I know writing a book and getting it out in the world is a challenge.

PF: It's a challenge, yes. And that's like my life. I like to take on some very large challenges apparently.

Q: Yeah, you sound like a very ambitious, hardworking person. That seems like a throughline throughout your life, taking on big challenges and accomplishing them.

PF: Yeah. I'm in the midst of a PhD program right now, so I just took my comprehensive final exams this week. I hope I pass. [laughter] That was a very hard time, but I'm excited. So hopefully, as long as I pass, fingers crossed, all I have left is to finish my dissertation.

Q: Do you know what the specific topic will be?

PF: Yes. This is gonna sound crazy to anybody listening if you're not in the research world, but I'm doing like a quasi-experimental analysis on training for working with undocumented immigrants. So I'm going to give some kind of a pre-test—in counseling we call it a cultural competency or multicultural competency. So it's like the level of competency a clinician or a therapist has on working with like BIPOC communities or underserved communities, multicultural communities. So there's lots of scales that you can do to test somebody's cultural competency, and then also their attitudes and beliefs about certain populations different from themselves.

So we're going to do a pre-test to assess that. I'm going to provide them a training on working with these particular populations, and then I'm going to provide them with a post-test to see: Did they increase their competency as a result of my training?

Q: That's great.

PF: And that's a big thing that I want to do, nationally if I can, is to provide trainings to increase counselors' cultural competency, because our clientele is different. They look different, they think differently. Every year we're learning about new identities. People are coming out. I don't know if the identities are new, but they're more willing to talk about them and they're willing to be who they are. We need to learn about all these things. We need to embrace them.

What happens when we have a whole bunch of Ukrainian refugees coming to Illinois or Chicago? Are clinicians prepared to serve that population, you know? We are

seeing an increase now in especially refugee and immigrant populations, because globally there's just so much war and civil unrest, limited economic opportunities, so we're going to see increase in those populations. Who's going to be able to support them? How are we going to best support them? That's the kind of work that I want to make sure that we do and we do it right.

Q: Right. That sounds like amazing work that is very needed.

PF: Very needed, yes.

Q: Is there anything else that you wanted to share?

PF: I don't know... I miss Maxwell's. [laughter] I love the library, Morton Grove library. I did spend a lot of time here when I was a kid, studying, reading, getting away from my parents, whatever the case may be.

Q: What did you like to read, then and now?

PF: Oh, I love historical fiction. Books like *Memoirs of a Geisha*, oh man, that thrilled me when I was younger. Anything like that. I love historical fiction. I love history. Now what do I read? Therapy books. [laughter] I'm actually in the Mother-Daughter Book Club with my daughter. I've never really liked adolescent literature, young adult literature, but I love what we're doing together. I'm like, *Oh, some of these books aren't so bad.*



[laughter] Like we're reading *The Tale of Despereaux* now, and I remember reading that when I was a kid, but it's more enjoyable now that I'm doing it with her and we get to talk about the topics in the book. So yeah, that is good.

She *loves* the library. Both of my girls *love* the library. They want to be here all the time and they never want to leave. I'm like, *We gotta leave because they don't have snacks here anymore*. You guys need to bring the vending machine back! [laughter]

Q: Noted.

PF: So yeah, I wanted to say that too. I appreciate the library. My eldest even did a paper for her school this year on how the library is so important and impactful to the community because it's a free resource, which means it's equitable and people have equal access to everything that the library offers. And I was like, *Look at my little social justice advocate!* [laughter]

Q: Making Mama proud.

PF: Exactly! And I love that. And I hope that the library continues to thrive everywhere. I hate to see libraries closed for that reason because sometimes this is the only place that there are those equitable access to resources. I even think, *How can we do more of that?* There are libraries, like I think in Elgin, that started to hire therapists, because they know people come to the library for free resources, and so that's a free resource that they can get. Even a couple sessions. So that could be something that the library and I

connect on. I'd love to be able to provide that kind of counseling resources for patrons of the community. Maybe like having a food pantry here, something like that. Because again, people feel comfortable coming to a place like the library, so if you had additional support and resources for the community, they wouldn't feel ashamed coming here or they wouldn't feel scared coming to this place because it is very familiar and very welcoming.

Q: Well, thank you for saying that. We definitely understand our role in the community and really value it and value the people that do use it. So, thanks for your time.