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Interviewee: Kasey Sanders

Interviewer: Gillian Demetriou

Transcriber: Rev.com

Editor: Gillian Demetriou

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Gillian Demetriou:

Okay. No more questions from you? Are you good?

Kasey Sanders:

No, I think I'm good.

Gillian Demetriou:

Okay. When it goes up on the website, I'll send you the link so that you can see it. It'll have your name, your job description, probably a little blurb about you, and then eventually the transcript of this conversation will be there, I think.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay.

Gillian Demetriou:

I'm not sure, but website is out of my jurisdiction.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay.

Gillian Demetriou:

So yeah. If you don't have any more questions, I will start with my questions.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay, go ahead.

Gillian Demetriou:

Can you tell me a bit about your early life? When and where were you born?

Kasey Sanders:

I was born in Asbury Park. I guess the hospital we went to was Fitkins Hospital back then. I was born in 1970. I was born actually ... my house is still there. My mom still lives there. It's on Prospect Avenue next to the basketball courts. Everybody knows the basketball courts on the west side or whatever you want to call it. I believe I had a really good childhood. I'm the youngest of four. My whole interest growing up was about music. The two things that I do to this day is music, and martial arts was one of my saving graces.

That could be either a separate interview or something. It helped me get a better mindset about what I wanted to do with life itself. Growing up, especially where I grew up, was a challenge. It was a challenge for youth, it was a challenge for teenagers. Back then, I don't want to say it was a care free life, but we knew when and where to go, at what time we needed to go. We were more street smart than anything. My brothers and sister taught me that, how to be street smart, how to just be aware of my surroundings.

The couple streets that we lived between were not as affluent, I should say, heavy drugs, alcohol, things of that sort. There were groups. We didn't really call them gangs. I think that's more of a modern term, but there were groups. Hold on one sec. I just got to ... I hope we can still do this while I'm walking. I've got to move my car.

Gillian Demetriou:

Sounds good. Whatever you need.

Kasey Sanders:

Yeah. So growing up was fun, it was a challenge, it was educational. It was a blessing to grow up the way I did. I had a lot of family that supported me. I had a lot of friends that gave me a chance to express myself musically, artistically. There were opportunities that really weren't offered like they are today, I would just say without a cost. A lot of things that I learned, I learned for free. Knock on wood that I was grateful to get a lot of my lessons for free, no matter what it was... I don't know if that answered your question, somewhat kind of in an roundabout way, but I had a good childhood. Again, it had its challenges growing up in the way I did. I'm so glad. [inaudible 00:05:11] gotten into anything that could have changed my life in a different way. I didn't drink, I still don't smoke to this day. I never got into drugs. My saving graces were music and martial arts.

I remember, at six years old, I got bullied for my first time. My parents already told me to respect people and be nice and things of that sort, so I didn't know this kid was bullying me. He's pushing me around, pushing me around, pushing me around. He kicked my backpack, he snatched my backpack off. My sister came over. She was coming to pick me up and walk me home. So when I walked back home my dad was there and he was like, "What's wrong?" So I just busted out crying and said this guy was pushing on me, this kid was pushing on me. He's like, "Don't ever let anybody push on you." He said, "You know what? I'm going to sign you up for martial arts."

That was the changing point in my life because I had that opportunity to express myself through whatever means. If I was going to ... If there was anything that could have changed my life, it would have been there. It either would have been pushed away or pushed around, or I would have been able to stand up for myself. So my dad gave me the best gift ever, and it was something that no one else did. It was something that no one else did in my family, so it was unique for me.

I also grew up around music. My brothers and sisters are musicians and singers. My uncle actually ... one of the pioneers in Asbury Park, as far as music is concerned. Everybody knows Dorian Parreott.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah.

Kasey Sanders:

Music teacher and things of that sort, but he was my uncle, so he taught me a lot. He gave me an opportunity to also express myself through music. That's where it comes up to today. If those things weren't in my life ... I dreamed of having an academy school to be able to not just teach martial arts, but to express myself musically and things of that sort and it came to fruition about 20 years ago. I had my own academy in Long Branch, done a lot of programs around Asbury Park, Long Branch, Neptune, Ocean Township.

To have that opportunity to be able to teach others and to help people learn about self-awareness, self-respect, discipline, and also learning how to protect themselves when it's necessary. So that to me was my saving grace, to be able to teach others and to be able to give back to not only myself but to the communities as well.

Gillian Demetriou:

Cool. That totally answered like 17 of my questions. Just backtracking a little bit. You talked about your uncle Dorian.

Kasey Sanders:

Yes.

Gillian Demetriou:

Do you know anything else about your family history? Because you guys have been Asbury for a while, if I understand correctly.

Kasey Sanders:

Well, my grandfather was one of the first African American patrol men, James Parreott. His son, my other uncle, was also a lieutenant, sergeant in the police force. His son, Derrick, was also on the police force as well. I believe he got up to maybe lieutenant, patrolman, things like that. Lieutenant or sergeant at that point. My mom worked for ... A long time ago there was a company called Walter Reid. She was kind of a homemaker, but she worked at that establishment.

Walter Reade was kind of a ... I don't know if it was a movie theater. It was business related. My mom was young in that age. She worked for Walter Reade as well as Pepsi Company for about 20-30 years, my mom worked for. My dad worked for the Asbury Park Beach, which he did janitorial services for as long as I remember. He was also on ... He did sports as well- track and things of that sort. My brothers and sister will always establish themselves in sports. My oldest brother was not only a basketball player, but he was also a champion hurdling ... not hurdling, but running, the 400, the 200 speed races. That's my oldest brother.

My sister also was a sprinter from Asbury Park. The brother that's next to me, he held I think the long jump and the high jump record for years until one of the people from our classes in 1980 broke his record. He was also a musician. He was valedictorian of his class. He was the first in our family to go to college, which he went to Stanford University, simple engineering degree. But he came out and worked for certain Bell Labs, AT&T, and all those. So he decided he

wanted to work for a natural gas company as an intern. So back and forth, him being in California and coming back, he decided to continue this path with New Jersey Natural Gas.

Long story short, he's now the vice president of New Jersey Natural Gas Company, from intern to vice president. My oldest brother was also the mayor of Asbury Park for one term. My sister [inaudible 00:12:34] a famous singer. Everybody knew her from being in bands and performances, and things of that sort, so she was well known in Asbury as well. Kelly Sanders is her name. Kevin Sanders is the mayor and Kraig Sanders was the valedictorian and current vice president of New Jersey Natural Gas.

Gillian Demetriou:

Cool.

Kasey Sanders:

Yeah. Then there's me.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah. So can you tell me a little bit about your own educational background? Like high school-

Kasey Sanders:

My educational background, I went to all the schools in Asbury, which was Bangs Avenue Middle School and High School, of course. After high school, I went right into technical school. I graduated at 17 and went right into technical school after that at Union Technical Institute, which was close to me, so I got my certification in electronics. I worked ... As soon as I graduated, I got hired at the *Asbury Park Press*, which I was the field technician for them. I was also learning ... what do you call it? I was learning a phone program in administration.

After a few years, actually a year and a half, they had layoffs, so I ended up working for another company... I left there. I went to MicroWarehouse in Lakewood, which they actually sent me to school for Nortel Technologies, which I became a PBX phone administrator at the company. When that company started to fold, I actually just walked out actually before they even folded. I decided that this wasn't a place for me because of a lot of red tape, so I decided to walk out and I told the manager at that time ... I said, "I'm leaving." She's like, "Well, can you reconsider?" I was like, "No. I'm not being treated fairly, so I'm going to leave." She's like, "Well, you'll never find a job." She told me, "You'll never find a job out there because the market is bad." I said, "In three weeks I'll find a job. I guarantee you." So three weeks came and I found ... I worked at Monmouth University. I'm here for almost 22 years since then. I came in hired as a PBX administrator, but I also had my background in CPU repair as software, graphic software, music software, anything that had to do with the Macs or the PC. So I was a specialist in that. I also did training, training two of the technicians that were there.

What do you call it? At that company... We built what they call MDFs, main distribution frames and intermitted distribution frames for the networking, for phone connections, things of that sort. When I came to Monmouth University, I did a lot of that first. Revamping of the network connections, phone connections, things of that sort. After a while, they had contractors come in and took over the position I was in and now I'm a computer technician. So we do installations of hardware and any things that have to do with connectivity.

Gillian Demetriou:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Cool. You also went to Monmouth, if I understand correctly.

Kasey Sanders:

I did go to Monmouth for a certification in literature and linguistics. They call it literature and language. So it was just a certification degree because my time was kind of limited, so I decided I wanted to go into that. So I speak Spanish fluently because of this particular certification, but I also speak Portuguese fluently because of one of the arts that I teach, which is Capoeira.

Gillian Demetriou:

How were you first introduced to Capoeira?

Kasey Sanders:

I was first introduced to Capoeira ... Actually, my brother that's next to me, he kind of got me onto the culture because of some of the jazz musicians that were playing- Sergio Mendez, Tania Maria. Let's see, Antonio Carlos Jobim I was listening to a lot of this music and I started to get into more of the Brazilian culture. So later on, through my martial arts, I started discovering this art. I think it was 1996 I started discovering the art. But after a while, I decided that every art that I practiced, I wanted to find out the culture, I wanted to find out where it comes from, the language, the mannerisms and things of that sort.

So I decided to take myself to Brazil. I was part of a group actually here in Long Branch that I got introduced to a person in the early 90s who was my first teacher. His name was Joao Martins Leite or Didi (pronounced GiGi) He started teaching me privately. So he would introduce me as Baiano. Everybody would say, hey this is Baiano, this is Baiano. He didn't speak English. I barely spoke Portuguese, so we would practice and we would go to lunch. He would teach me Portuguese, I would teach him English.

I learned how to speak Portuguese fluently because I didn't want to be hungry. I just kept ordering the same thing every time, every time, so I got tired of ordering the same thing. So I started learning about more stuff. When he left here to go to Brazil in 2004, we had established a group in early 2001, 2002. [inaudible 00:20:30] group of United States. When he left, he made me promise that I would keep the group going. So in order to do that, I had to contact the headmaster, which is Mestre Romeo Francisco do Rego. I decided in 2005, 2006 that I needed to go to Brazil.

I was trying to push and try to make money to do this. Everybody was telling me no, don't go because you're going to get kidnapped and all this stuff. So it took me a little while. Finally, in 2008, I said I'm going to go. So I went by myself with some knowledge of the language. I went there with the intention to find the master. So long story short, I end up finding him. It was a two or three day trip to find him. I started training directly with him.

I was in Brazil in 2008 for about 10 days, two weeks, but then I started frequenting Brazil almost every year. Once we started establishing contact, I would try to get him here. We had some issues with that. I ended up going back to Brazil, I believe in 2011, 12, one of those, to train with him again. I think the first time he was here was in 2012. I established to get him here and then he would come every year. But I frequent Brazil. I've been to Brazil five or six times already in my lifetime.

The start of my training started in 2002 to today, which I'm the US representative of the Capoeira Sol Nascente group under Mestre Romeu.

We've done a lot as far as the groups are concerned. I've done a lot of lectures at Monmouth University and other establishments, talking about Brazilian culture, Afro-Brazilian culture, self-defense history. I've done a lot of presentations. I'd say more than 50 to 100 presentations over the years, and Brazilian festivals and cultural festivals. Natural Gas Company, I've done things with the Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Boys Club... Monmouth University but [inaudible 00:23:59], Rutgers, Montclair University, William Paterson, Columbia University. I've also traveled to Spain and taught workshops there for another group.

I've never done so much traveling. I've been to Florida, I've been to California, Virginia, Carolinas, all through just this art. I've never traveled so much with the art, and to be able to establish so many friendships with an art that really wasn't even mine culture-wise. To be able to learn how to speak the language fluently, I'm so grateful to the opportunities that I've established in, not only the communities here, but also abroad, Brazilian communities in other places that people know who I am. I'm proud to say that. People know who I am around the world and that's crazy, just from one art, just from standing on your hands, doing certain things and being able to sing and perform in Portuguese.

Wow, I'm so grateful to the things that I've learned, all coming from that one opportunity to learn martial arts when I was seven years old. This has taken me many please around the region and different places in the world, and I'm so grateful.

Gillian Demetriou:

You mentioned the name Baiano. Does that have any sort of meaning or anything?

Kasey Sanders:

Baiano means ... I did have dreads at one time. Baiano means a guy from Bahia a typical person from Bahia Brazil. When people met me, well my first teacher met me, he thought I was Brazilian, so he started speaking to me in Portuguese and I'm just like, "I don't understand." But then he started ... The guys we were training with, one of the guys said, "Hey, he looks like a Baiano." So he was like, "Okay, that's going to be your nickname." In [inaudible 00:26:32] people get nicknames.

Historically, they would get nicknames to hide from the authorities. I got that nickname and, every place I went, everybody introduced me as Baiano. So I got kind of thrown into the culture quickly. I learned to speak fluently. I had to learn how to speak fluently because it was just like I was just in. Everybody is talking and I'm like ... eh. So I started asking questions and learning and pushing.

I have to explain to people that I'm not Brazilian a lot of the times because I speak fluently. People would never know. The people that had known me before for most of my life, when they hear me speak Portuguese, or Brazilians that know me, they say, "Hey, where are you from?" I say, I'm from here. They say, "No, where are your parents from?" They're from here. "Oh, where are your ancestors from?" They're from here. They say, [inaudible 00:27:37] speak Portuguese, all that.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah, definitely. So could you just, for a little educational purposes, just explain a little bit of the history of Capoeira?

Kasey Sanders:

Okay. Well, Capoeira was a martial art that was hidden within movements and dance. It was used for defense, but it's also masked into dance to prevent the slave owners from seeing the enslaved at the time learning how to defend themselves. So it's hidden in music, it's hidden in dance, it's hidden in slight acrobatics to ... it kind of looked like a presentation. But it was being taught as a martial art.

Gillian Demetriou:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). In my research of you-

Kasey Sanders:

Research of me?

Gillian Demetriou:

I had to write up all these question, so I kind of internet stalked you a little bit. Only a little, I promise. [laughter]

Kasey Sanders:

[Laughter] That's all right, that's fine. I don't mind.

Gillian Demetriou:

So you are ... I apologize if I butcher anything. Please correct me if I'm wrong. Your title is Contra-Mestre?

Kasey Sanders:

No, actually I graduated in 2018 and I went to Brazil for the last time. I am now a mestrando estagiario, which is next to the mestre. So basically I'm a mestre but in "training." The stage of mestre. So there's different stages of mestre, mestre [inaudible 00:29:52], and then once time comes I can become a mestre of my own.

Gillian Demetriou:

Got it. I'm taking some notes.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay.

Gillian Demetriou:

So at what point in your own study of Capoeira and Brazilian culture were you inspired to open your own studio?

Kasey Sanders:

2004 when my master left. The one who taught me, the first one who taught me, not Mestre Romeo, but the first one that taught me. Didi was his nickname. I decided to continue the academy running from 2004, which was a challenge in itself because I was really a new instructor and I really knew I wasn't that fluent in Portuguese, but I started going to different events and going to Capoeira events, which I was challenged a lot verbally, physically, mentally challenged a lot to see if I can actually...

I guess the people who were opposed to me teaching were just trying to see where my head was, just trying to see if I was qualified to teach. So there were a lot of challenges that I had to go through, like I said, both mental and physical challenges that I had to uphold to show that I was worthy of teaching.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah. You just talked about ... Obviously you just talked about the obstacles you faced, but did you face any obstacles specifically as a non-native Brazilian in Capoeira?

Kasey Sanders:

Oh my gosh. I've gotten threatened because of me being American, that I wasn't able to teach this art, that I shouldn't be teaching this art because I know nothing about struggle. I shouldn't be teaching this art because I don't know anything about movements. But I've been a martial artist all my life, from the ground up. As far as music, I've been a musician all my life. As far as the simple acrobatics, of course I knew that stuff. But it wasn't about that. It was about really learning about the struggle through myself, learning that my struggle wasn't any different than anyone that was born out of this country.

I had my challenges, I had my issues, I had my things that I had to go through, violence, drugs, adaptation, all these things that supposedly people have suffered through. Simultaneously, I was going through the same exact thing, trying to find out what type of person I would be to the community. So yeah, it was a challenge. It was more of a challenge because of the language barrier for me than people ... Capoeira is a very particular art. I would say it's more patriarchal and to challenge people of status, of establishment was always a challenge.

Different people come up with different rules for different times in their lives. You can't say this to this master, or you can't do this because of this. You are not able to, for example, play an instrument without somebody knowing either you or you being part of their group, or part of their clique. So it was a lot of going to events, paying for events to be at events and just sitting around. Or going to an event to play Capoeira and being pushed out, or being told, hey you can't go in.

So there was that challenge in trying to establish who I was as a person, as a non-Brazilian playing an art, that innately was part of my culture. So the Afro-Brazilian culture first was African, which was adapted in Brazil. To know that my history had a lot of do with the creation of Capoeira, I really took a stand on that as far as me establishing who I was and who my group was as established in the United States.

Gillian Demetriou:

Has it gotten any easier since you've risen through the ranks?

Kasey Sanders:

It has. It has. Respective has been shown and displayed through headmasters, people who have known me and seen me grow. I've had respect of them. I've had respect of new masters coming through, as well as some of the older masters knowing who I am as far as what I do and how I translate the art to others.

Gillian Demetriou:

What sort of classed do you offer at your academy? [crosstalk 00:36:30].

Kasey Sanders:

I do group classes, but as of now I'm not at an academy because of the pandemic. I'm still working with the company Ten Pearl as far as using their space, but I've been establishing more of my own and teaching them out of my backyard. I also teach other martial arts as well. I'm currently a Muay Thai instructor at South Paw Gym in Neptune every Tuesday. I have backgrounds in Filipino martial arts as well as kung fu, wing chun boxing, kick boxing, Taekwondo, which I held two masters ranks, Indonesian martial arts, Brazilian jujitsu, and wrestling as well.

Gillian Demetriou:

I would not want to get in a fight with you. [laughter]

Kasey Sanders:

No, that's why you learn things. I know how to cook, so that's how I keep the peace.

Gillian Demetriou:

You've got everything down. You don't need anything else. So when you teach these classes, is it more focused on the physical aspects of Capoeira? By that, I mean do you also discuss and offer information about the history of the practice and how it fits into Brazilian culture and society?

Kasey Sanders:

How it fits into not only Brazilian culture but the culture that we are in right now. How do we utilize the "art of Capoeira" to become better humans? How do we do that and become better citizens? Oh geez. Hold on one second.

Gillian Demetriou:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[Interruption; break in the interview]

Gillian Demetriou:

All right. I just have a couple more questions. We were, like a couple more, nothing, too much. You had said before that, because of the pandemic, you're kind of working out of your backyard and like, do you have any plans or aspirations to reopen things once the pandemic sort of?

Kasey Sanders:

I did leave, I left my academy for many reasons besides the pandemic and, the space wasn't conducive of our energy. Let's just put it that way. But also, rent wise, it was astronomical. And, I ended up moving over to next door, which is 10 Pearl, which is an art event studio. That's, it's like the top-notch in long branch, but I gave up my space because they have renters that are taking that particular time slot that I was teaching. I went back to, I was teaching only one day a week, cut down from three days a week, and doing presentations on a weekend and traveling and things of that sort to having just dedicated one day a week. So Mondays is usually my classes. I have kids in adults classes, so, just trying to re-establish, because a lot of things got lost in the situation, because people couldn't come out and social distancing and all the different things.

We're just starting to come back to something established on Mondays. But I've tried to limit it because of the energy. I put a lot of energy and a lot of time and a lot of blood, sweat, tears, and money, into grow in this group. Again, traveling, promoting, websites, all of a sudden stuff. So I decided to just take a back seat and see who's going to come back. It's more manageable if I'm doing it one day a week.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah.

Kasey Sanders:

If you have a class and it's overfilled, that's the only reason you get another class, you have a cup of water, the only reason you get another cup is because the overflow. And so right now it's not, it's just, I don't want to say half empty, but it's satisfying.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah.

Kasey Sanders:

And manageable.

Gillian Demetriou:

Definitely. And what do you do with your spare time? Do you have any hobbies?

Kasey Sanders:

I'm a songwriter. I'm a keyboard player actually. And actually I'm working on my spare time. I'm working on trying to release an album. I'm a jazz musician, as well as like RNB, artist. So I've been working with a group, to try to produce some of the music. Yeah...so that. Plus I'm a, I want say avid, I don't know if I can use that word, but I'm a gardener as well. So I grow like basically all my own food. Yeah. So, ranging from tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, onions, garlic, cilantro, all that stuff, corn, all types of greens, fruits like strawberries and raspberries, all my own herbs. I make teas out of the herbs, I mean, I'm kind of a forge or two, so I'll make dandelion tea. I make things that are from the earth, from the land, but also like everything that I have, I am kind of self-sufficient, so I make everything from scratch. Which includes, sauces, pasta, let's see, any type of vegetables, stock, soups, might also fish. So I make like, the other day I made crab cakes from the Creek in my backyard.

So I'm really, trying to be super, super-duper self-sufficient, besides like, if there're proteins or anything like that, I don't have to worry about any vegetables or herbs. So that's my spare time.

Gillian Demetriou:

And if you don't mind me asking, where do you live that you have like a creek in your backyard?

Kasey Sanders:

I live in Long Branch actually.

Gillian Demetriou:

And you said you still have family that lives in Asbury, right?

Kasey Sanders:

I do, my mother still lives in Asbury. My brother lives right next to her. My oldest brother lives in Asbury as well. My sister is the only one that lives in Brick. And I live in Long Branch, not far away.

Gillian Demetriou:

Okay. Yeah. No, it's like 15 minutes. So you've been like in and out of Asbury your whole life right?

Kasey Sanders:

Yes.

Gillian Demetriou:

And, would you say... no, that's not how I want to phrase my question. Give me a second. Have you observed, any changes in Asbury Park since you have lived there? Like throughout your life?

Kasey Sanders:

Yes. I've experienced dramatic changes, from the deconstruction of old buildings and recommissioning of spaces for reached, for gentrification. I've experienced the, what would you call it? The changes in the demographic of the places that I grew up. Believe it or not, my mother lives right next to an Airbnb in Asbury Park, and when I grew up there would never, ever, be something like that. Especially from outside, it was from people that are not from the town. So, there's a lot of, they call redevelopment, that has changed the look of Asbury Park, and I can also say for, in some ways the better, but sometimes in some ways it could be, not so good.

Yeah. I've seen Cookman Avenue from, having pawn shops and just regular shops, JJ Newberry's, I remember I just signed that building, being up. When I was growing up, we had, what do you call it? The fun boats out in Deal Lake. We had the...let's see, the palace was a place that we could, go that had the Ferris wheel. The casino had the merry-go-round. I remember there was a little train, a train like that would go around in, it was like for kids basically, it was a train, the train system that they had in there. But I also remember growing up in Asbury, there was the only, before they even built the train station. I don't think the train ran through here, went through, well, it did go through Asbury, but there was no platforms or anything like that. But, I

remember the only way you could get to New York was a bus. You had to go downtown in order to get the Amtrak and then leave the bus or Greyhound bus to get, to get to New York.

So a lot of things had changed a lot of things. Like I said, the modifications of buildings, the induction of other nationalities and people in Asbury park that wasn't really known for a multi diverse group of people. And as I said, the changes that have happened are ridiculously, like they're disheartening, but also they are enchanting because people have come in and seen the value of Asbury. But when you value something, you make it luxurious, and you forget about the people who helped build it, to help actually found the town, establish the roots in a tree. A lot of us now we just see the fruit, and people go and grab the fruit, the shiniest fruit that's there, instead of really looking at that trunk, that base of where the roots of Asbury come from. There was, again, there wasn't a lot of diversity in Asbury growing up.

My dad was the reason that I'm so open to everyone's cultures and lifestyles. My dad established a friendship with different people, and he knew the value of comradery. He knew the value of connection with people. Didn't matter where you were from, who you were, lifestyle, color, race, religion, he always had a smile for someone. Everybody knew my dad in Asbury Park.

You just say –“ Hey,” if I said my dad's, my dad's nickname was Chubby or Brunswick. They knew who I was and I got a lot of places because of my dad, just his name alone, just saying, “Hey, I'm Chubby's son.” “Oh, okay, I remember when you were little, dah, dah, dah. Okay. Come on in.” And he made sure he instilled in me respect in people, as far as being a man of your word, always being a man of your word.

I remember going into- I had to get my car repaired, the car that I bought from my dad, he didn't give it to me, so I had to buy my car from my father. So he wanted to instill values in me. He also, said, just being honest, be honest with people. So I'm willing to go get my car fixed and I couldn't afford it. So I told this guy, I say- well, he's like, “well, just talk to him and see what you can work out.” So it was like, “Hey,” I told him who my dad was and all this stuff, and I was like, you know, “what can I pay you in installments to get my car out?” And he was like, “no, that's not a problem, that's not a problem at all.”

He said, “I value the respect that you have for asking me that, because some people would just say, hey, you know what, forget it, it's yours.” You know, it's like my car, so I wanted to show him, and I paid him every paycheck until I got my car out. I remember just being able to go to my dad for anything and just ask him questions, not like annoyingly, but just being in a place to say, hey, you know what? I'm not afraid to speak up about something. Even if it was private, if it was something that had to do my personal life, I was never hiding it from him. And the same thing with my mom, but my dad, as a man, as a male figure, I was able to go to him and talk to him about issues that men experience. It's hard to talk to your mom about something about puberty, about growing up. And I was able to talk to him about that, and not have not feel like, oh my gosh, I got to hide this.

Something profound happened to me when I was, 18, 19, years old, I ended up having my first child. And the one thing that I remember, I remember being nervous about telling my dad. Cause I was like, “oh, I think they're going to think that I'm a bad person,” and this and this. And when

I talked to my dad about it, he was, I remember him laying there, coming home from work. He was laying down on his bed and I came, I'm going to say "I gotta talk to you." And his nickname for me was Bub he'd say, "what's up Bub?" So I told him, I said, "well, I've got someone pregnant," and I said, "you know what? I decided that I'm going to move out of my house and I want to take care of, I want to take care of what my responsibility is."

And he said, "you know what? I'm very proud of you for saying that, because most people at your age, would just say, don't worry about it, it's not your responsibility." So I took that on my own, even though the relationship didn't work, I took the responsibility, because, it was, two parties that are involved. And I took that as a blessing from my dad to also see the brightness in his eyes and say, "hey, I raised you well, I raised you to be respectful, I raised you to be disciplined and to own up to your responsibilities." So I think that was a proud moment in his life.

Soon after, six months, my son was six months old. He got home with him before his birthday, actually before his birthday, well, no, it was on his birthday. We had a party for him and everybody came together. And I remember him saying that this was such a great time that he had with everybody here. And, everybody was around like all of our family members, we came, we celebrated, we ate and he held my son for the first time and it was great. The next day he passed away. That really threw me for almost, I would say almost for a 25 year loop of losing that best friend, that person, that I can actually talk to about my issues and who understood me better than anybody else. It really put me in a state of change.

And through that, I learned a lot. I learned a lot about dealing with life and depression and, and how to get out of it. I would think about the things that would say, and it would make me laugh. And I would think about the things he would teach me, and I would try to hold onto those memories.

And, till this day, he was the best influence in my life. And I wish- I know spiritually...people are with us when we speak their name, they stay with us, and, my past father's day, I wished wish that he could see my son now, the oldest one and my kids today. I wish he could meet them. I wish he could talk about me, and joke about me, like he would say, "when he was your age, he did this." My mom still does that, but it's like, just to have it from my dad, that would be the greatest thing. To see that I was his influence as well, and it made me feel good.

Gillian Demetriou:

That relationship definitely goes both ways. So back and forth, I have a similar experience with my mom. So, it's completely like a dialogue back and forth. I think that's kind of it for my, oh, wait, actually I have two more questions.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay.

Gillian Demetriou:

This is a question that I ask everybody, just to get some perspective. What historical event that has happened during your lifetime, would you say had the greatest impact on you? And it can be anything, an invention, a moon landing a sports game, an election, whatever.

Kasey Sanders:

Wow. Throughout my lifetime. Only one?

Gillian Demetriou:

If you want to pick a couple, go for it.

Kasey Sanders:

Me playing at the Stone Pony.

Gillian Demetriou:

That's cool.

Kasey Sanders:

My brother, becoming a mayor of Asbury Park.

Gillian Demetriou:

How did your brother becoming mayor affect you? Like, just tell me a little bit about that.

Kasey Sanders:

I was so proud that he got elected. I was so proud that he had the influence to move people, and to meet people and to do all these things. Now, I guess now he's still close friends with Bruce Springsteen. He actually, him and my uncle who was a councilman, we've met Tito and Jermaine Jackson. They actually painted my mother's house and hung out and we ate and things of that sort. To have that influence and be like, wow, how did these people? How do people just like, how has it...people are normal. It's like connection maybe. I also met Danny DeVito when he was here. When we played, our band, our high school band played for the opening of "Throw Them Out For The Train." So I met him there. I met the... I forget the lady who was there, but we met the people who were in the movie, it was great. It was awesome.

Gillian Demetriou:

Very cool event. You got to play the Stone Pony?

Kasey Sanders:

Yeah. Yeah. That was funny.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah. Those are both really cool things. Little jealous, but I'll keep that to myself. Okay. One last question. So what are you most looking forward to as we are hopefully emerging from this pandemic?

Kasey Sanders:

To be able to show people that it's not where you're from, it's where you go. So, because I'm a native of Asbury Park, in the past, people look down to that, because of our environment, urban environment, full of drugs and gangs and poverty, that people never think that someone from Asbury Park would be established in this, and known throughout the country. In different parts of the world. I'm hoping to be able to teach people who look at themselves as their environment, to look outside of that. To take a trip out of the country, even if they cannot leave the country, like going to different places. To be open, to learn about people's languages, cultures, foods, because you can travel within, you can travel in an hour to, many places, the world just by what we have right now, the technology.

And if you limit yourself to, just that, at least knowing about a different country, if someone wanted to go to Chile, learning about the language, the culture and things. So when you go there, you are adapted to it. The same thing I learned for Brazil, it's like, when every time I've done lectures and I've talked to kids from as very nice, I try to explain to them where I grew up. And they said, "oh, you grew up there?"

I say, "yeah." It's like, "how'd you learn all this stuff?" And then he asked me questions and he wants to talk. And I was like, you don't understand the power that you have in not only your thoughts, but when you speak, when you say something, you bring it out, you bring it out of your mind into the world. And if you don't speak positivity, if you don't take that initiative of the law of attraction and speak positivity or life, you will never be the places that you want to be. Yeah. So I want to establish that to be able to speak out in existence of what you want, but also not just talk about it, be about it, walk the walk. Actions definitely speak louder than words, or TikTok.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah, so many people just live in their own little bubble, and experience one thing for their entire life. It's like, there's so many different things out there for... Could just learn about it and keep learning.

Kasey Sanders:

People are afraid of the world. People are afraid of their neighbors. People are afraid to even talk about issues to their families. You know, maybe they able to, maybe they're not, but the internet has taken over as our, our psychologist; it's taken over as our sex therapist, is taken over as our, in many aspects of our lives that we can't even communicate to people about.

We got therapy online. We got food online. You don't have to leave your house because you can order things. You can order food. You got Grub Hub, you got, Hello Fresh. You don't have to leave your house. You don't have to talk to a person at all. You can order a soda, a dollar 50 soda for \$5 delivery fee because you don't want to talk to anybody. I mean, psychologically, maybe, someone has anxiety or that has that issue. But there has to be someone that has to be people in order to help the people who are going through these things. But it all comes from themselves. It all comes from how we see the world. And hopefully people see the world differently when they step outside of their comfort zones.

Gillian Demetriou:

Well, that's it for my prepared questions. Is there anything that you want to talk about that we didn't discuss or anything?

Kasey Sanders:

I don't know about mentorship, about what can we- with this, is what you're doing right now. Is it going to reach the right people? Can it be put in a language that people understand? Accessible to people? I could say I'm part of the community. I'm part of a lot of communities, but what is this going to do for not only Monmouth University? What is it going to do for your research? How is it going to help people hearing these stories from Asbury Park?

Gillian Demetriou:

Well, the goal of the oral history is to, sort of get the story that you can't get by like some generalized textbook. And by hearing people's individual experiences because, courses and classes are so generalized and promote sort of a stereotypical view of certain events, it doesn't really provide the full picture. And as we can see throughout US history, we need the full picture. And often the full picture doesn't get addressed. And it's an obscured, little snippet of the full picture. You're getting like this much and you should be getting this much of it. So the goal in getting all these oral histories and listening to everyone's individual account of different events of your own lived experience of Asbury Park is to round out the story and provide context and provide insight into what, an *Asbury Park Press* article from 1970 can't necessarily tell us, does that make sense?

Kasey Sanders:

Yeah. Yeah. You want to get organic, you want organic history.

Gillian Demetriou:

Exactly, exactly. Yes. So I think once all we're- I don't think we'll ever be done collecting people's oral histories because, obviously things keep changing, things keep happening, time goes on. New things start to happen. And then there's just so much history to go through.

Kasey Sanders:

It's the same as native American language, how it got lost because no one did that world history.

Gillian Demetriou:

Exactly.

Kasey Sanders:

Yeah. We don't want the culture to get lost either.

Gillian Demetriou:

Exactly, and with those particular oral histories, with Native American oral histories and how, a lot of oral histories have been done by the United States government, but they were all done in the fifties by like old white men, going to these people and like, "tell us about yourself." Just being in that context, it wouldn't be, not even safe to talk about it, but you're not going to tell some old man from the government, the same things as you would tell your neighbor. So it just

depends on the context of when the oral history was taken and then the entire history of erasure of native American culture.

Kasey Sanders:

Native American culture, Latin American culture, Chinese American, Asian American culture. You know, a lot of these things got lost.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah. So our goal is to try to fill those holes and help in any way that we possibly can.

Kasey Sanders:

Good. Good, good. The language I'm looking at your last name. Demetriou, are you Greek?

Gillian Demetriou:

I am Greek. My dad is from Cyprus actually. [foreign language 00:31:45]

Kasey Sanders:

I'm not that good. That's good. It's established...

Gillian Demetriou:

I can order ice cream and ask where the bathroom is.

Kasey Sanders:

That's how I learned Portuguese. I stopped, I didn't want to eat the same thing, so now it's your goal to continue your history and make their story your story.

Gillian Demetriou:

My dad always tries to teach me and sometimes, cause he's, he's got like his own dialect and everything, so it doesn't necessarily translate to actual Greek or modern Greek. When I'm around the family, I can understand, but speaking it is a little difficult. I get what they're saying, but I'll like respond in English, which I know I should definitely work on.

Kasey Sanders:

Practice, practice, all it takes is watching shows in Greek and respond and you'll be good.

Gillian Demetriou:

Yeah. My favorite thing is listening to like Greek music. That's how I get all my like sounds correct.

Kasey Sanders: [foreign language 00:33:07] doing all your stuff.

Gillian Demetriou:

I can do all the food stuff [foreign language 00:33:14] anything you want. I can order us food.

Kasey Sanders:

Nice. Starts with food. That's where the heart is, and the stomach is too.

Gillian Demetriou:

Exactly. Cool. Thank you so much for speaking to me, it was really great.

Kasey Sanders:

How do you say that in Greek?

Gillian Demetriou:

[foreign language 00:33:44]

Kasey Sanders:

[foreign language 00:33:46]

Gillian Demetriou:

[foreign language 00:33:46] for speaking with me. [foreign language 00:33:53] since you do Spanish. I don't know Portuguese so I can't say it.

Kasey Sanders:

[foreign language 00:33:58]

Gillian Demetriou:

Thank you. In any language possible. I'll definitely send you along the link when it's on the website. So you can see, and you can show all your friends or whatever, and just get me back the form whenever you can. Literally whenever. And if you know anyone else who would want to have their oral history done, let me know, let them know.

Kasey Sanders:

Dr. Taylor has already done his. Yeah. So we grew up together actually. We'll definitely let you know.

Gillian Demetriou:

Cool. All right. Thank you again so much.

Kasey Sanders:

No problem.

Gillian Demetriou:

All right. Have a good day.

Kasey Sanders:

Okay, you too.