

Transcript of Oral History of Merilou Salazar

Interviewee: Merilou Salazar

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: April 15, 2021

Location (Interviewee): Los Angeles, California, United States of America

Abstract: Some of the things talked about included; Maintaining optimism that we could come out of this pandemic better than how we entered it, inequitable access to health care, bereavement and COVID related deaths in the family, imposter syndrome, unlearning fight, flight and freeze responses, unstable housing at the beginning of the pandemic, the ending of her 9 year relationship and changing ideas about “closeness” in friendships, diving into new passions during the pandemic: tech and design work, using the word “love” more often, getting in touch with the body, meditating, and gratitude.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Ah, would you please start by telling me your full name, the date, the time and your location?

Merilou Salazar 00:06

Merilou Salazar April 15 at 7:06pm Pacific Standard Time or daylight time, PDT.

Merilou Salazar 00:16

Thank you. And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Merilou Salazar 00:26

Yes, I consent.

Kit Heintzman 00:28

All right, I'd like to start by asking you to just introduce yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this, what might you want them to know about you, Anna, pleasure talking to you.

Merilou Salazar 00:38

My name is Merilou Salazar. I'm a queer artist musician out here in Los Angeles, I front a band called WASI. I- Just queer activism has just been part of my whole life since I came out in high school. So it's something that's just, you know, dear to my heart, as like time goes by always making sure to just, you know, stone pride for like, all the struggles I've personally had to go through, you know, for people before we had had to go through to, you know, give me the privilege as I have today. And yeah, I'm just excited, like I said to be part of this.

Kit Heintzman 01:20

Can I start by asking what the word pandemic means to you?

Merilou Salazar 01:25

Pandemic means to me, the word pandemic means to me. There's so many angles to this. But I guess if I just wanted to talk, like, from a personal standpoint, like, I'm an optimist, and that's just kind of how I've always lived my life. So I don't think like, ooh, end of the world, you know, I think like, okay, like another, like, a really big, dare I say, just really big, like, hurdle that we can all go through together to come out stronger. On the other side, like another challenge. That's how I see the word pandemic.

Kit Heintzman 02:05

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your experiences of health and healthcare infrastructure prior to the pandemic?

Merilou Salazar 02:13

So, um, well, I've gone through, like, just state health care for a little bit, but I was married. And fortunately, I had like, health care through that. So I can't really speak to any, like, true hardships compared to what I've seen and heard. I've always, like, you know, even when I was younger, looking for a therapist, I was able to find like therapy. While I didn't have like, health care when I like, at the time, that would have covered that therapist, like, he was willing to just work with me at a rate that like a flexible rate, you know, for me as a teenager, because I was queer and, like, needed somebody to talk to, and didn't have that, like such a young age. So, I mean, I, I can't really say like, personal experience, you know, in regards, like hardships or anything like that, in regards to like health care, but yeah, I've seen I've seen it firsthand, like through other people, and then had to be rocks for other folks for that, but I have, personally.

Kit Heintzman 03:25

And pre pandemic, what was your day to day life looking like?

Merilou Salazar 03:29

Um, so pre pandemic, I was married. I was, you know, doing the music, like writing, recording, producing, but hustling and doing all the different hustles hustling was just kind of my day to day, it's just what I knew. And I can say, like, through the pandemic, I've just done this, like complete deep dive to wear coming out the other end I've Yeah, definitely, like, my whole mentality on everything is different. In regards to arts, my day to day, you know, life, the future love, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Kit Heintzman 04:10

Would you tell me about some of those differences? What's changed?

Merilou Salazar 04:14

Yeah, um, specifically. So um, I can start with my day to day. So my day to day before, like I said, was hustling and just the mental space of like, I'm gonna hustle, just so I can do music, then through the

pandemic, and with everything changing so fast and no certainty in anything. I've always I started diving more into my passion for like technology and design. I wasn't like the best designer or like, you know, the most like tech person there was but I was like, oh, you know, I was a problem solver and curious about it and just being in music, technology and music has always played like, you know, like what held hand in hand through the years Um, so at the beginning of the pandemic, I was like, you know what, I'm just gonna, like, spiritually, I've completely just, like, surrendered and was like, I'm just gonna go with the flow and do whatever comes my way. And, yeah, so then design come, came my way, I fell into a role as a product designer at startup. So I've been doing that full time, while also still like writing, writing music, especially the startup is catered to creators and artists. So, you know, that's let me even just see my world and my past and my love for music and arts and like, a whole new lens. So back to like that day to day hustle. I get to still like, feel like the artist and not have to hustle, you know, and that and it's not like, because of, you know, yes, of course, the external stuff like the change in industry, the change in the stranger map, but like, I think even before all of that, it was like the change in myself. Like how, what, like, what would feature Mary Lou, thank me for I'm going to live that way. Especially everything was so uncertain, like a couple of months after quarantine here in California, like Los Angeles, I had a close family member passed away from COVID. So you know what, like, I, I was just like, I'm just gonna go and live my truest, most beautiful, best life. Like, what would feature merely thank me for, I'm going to live that way and to see what happens. So that's definitely how I've been living. And you know, with my ex, like, we're still like, best friends. I use the word love every day, which I used to not use, you know, used to be scared of that word. Now, it's just like, such a part of casual conversation. I, like I said, I'm very spiritual now more than ever. So I kind of just like, whatever comes my way. I, if it feels right, I go with the gut, I go the intuition. I used to be like an over thinker, you know, and try to plan and now it's just about like, surrendering and trusting that everything is going to be okay. If I, you know, just be a kind person, a good person and a person with integrity, then, you know, life life will happen. And that's how I live my day to day now.

Kit Heintzman 07:17

I'd like to follow up if you're willing, but feel free to say now, are you willing to talk at all about the experience of the death and mourning?

Merilou Salazar 07:25

Yeah. Um, so that was really hard. Because it was someone that I grew up with, like, in my household, she was an aunt, she is an odd, and yeah, so she was still roommates with my mom, when she passed. And that was, like I said, that was just hard, because, like, you're really close. And I'm really close with my family in general, and all my cousins, so like, to go through that two months in no certainty and what's going to happen in the future, you know, go into my funeral and not being able to hug anybody. And then her two siblings, passed a couple of months after that, and then a couple of months after that, all California, all Los Angeles, all like, you know, so to go to going to the same funerals, the same family, and, you know, having a routine to that by the third time, it kind of just, like, obviously, very sad, but also on the other end, like they my aunt, and uncle taught me, especially my aunt that passed

first, she was very big on just living and loving with all your heart. Like, she was an immigrant, you know, came here from everything and started over to like, live in the cruise most beautiful life. So all of that happening at the same time. It was just like, You know what I'm going to, I'm going to just go big in every moment, whatever it is no idea where it's gonna take me but I'm just gonna go big and trust that it'll be fun. And that's again how I've been living my life since like that time.

Merilou Salazar 09:02

I'd love to hear a little bit more about the trajectory deeper into spirituality. How did that unfolding look like?

Merilou Salazar 09:10

Yeah, um, well, I've always been spiritual I, you know, I've always believed in like a higher power and like, you know, the whole thing. But I didn't really understand it, and the feeling of letting go and surrendering and trust and molding until like, the end of 2020 things were just happening where I added that there was so much before then, right, but so many questions and so much like, you know, after leaving like a nine year relationship, like spending, like quarantine on my own. There was just so much I learned about myself. But anyway, that's all prior like, I just remember the end of 2020 and having this like spiritual awakening, where I just, were seeing things that I couldn't explain with my logic mind, and I'm very logical. And then I was like, you know, what, what if I just leaned into like intuition and gut and started asking the universe, like, what should I do next? This or that. And that's literally what I started doing, should I do this or that I would email myself universally do this or that this or that. And whatever came my way, I would just do it, even if I didn't want to do it. And that took me from, you know, like that hustling mindset who I was a year ago, where I kind of gave myself those limiting beliefs to like, Yeah, I wanna I was hustling, I was like, you know, I was working at a coffee shop hustling, like, random, like low paying web design jobs right at the beginning of the COVID of the pandemic, like, was post-mating and then, you know, quarantine, I stopped post-mating, and I was just selling stuff, like things were just, like, whatever I needed to do, you know, to get by I was, I've always been a hustler. And I think that's kind of also something I've just learned through from being in a band. So it was just like, second nature. But, uh, yeah, I'd say the spirituality kicked in, when I just started seeing things that I just couldn't explain with my logic mind. And it was things were okay, I could pretend I didn't see that, and move on with my life, but then part of me will die. Or I could just lean in and see where this takes me. And after a crazy freakin year of 2020, it was like, you know, what, I kept out on anatomy, I'm just going to live, I'm just going to live the magic. And, and I've just dived in, and it like, I think it just come to a point where, like, things you just can't keep explaining. And you just, you just let you just let go and surrender and everything just happens. And in a way life starts to become easier. You know, and I think, you know, as a queer person who didn't have like, money, and, you know, like, like, with all the internal struggles growing up and everything, like I'm just used to, like being hurt. So I think the biggest fight was, how can life be easy. And, you know, spirituality helped me understand, like, damn, like, if I believe that my soul came here with a purpose and had to go through all the hard things that had to go through to to then understand, like, you know, life in a new lens, I've also like,

There's this quote I have on my wall right here. And it says, when everything burns, only the truth remains. So it's just so much about, like, letting go saying goodbye to everything, you know, everybody, you know, and let it all burn. And whatever comes on the other side, that's your truest, most beautiful self. And that's the self I want to live with.

Kit Heintzman 12:54

I wanted to go back to what you had said earlier about the word love being more integrated into your daily life, would you talk about sort of kinship changes and whether or not those are changes in the behavior of like you and other people or about like, the way one affects towards?

Merilou Salazar 13:14

So kinship changes, like how that has affected like my day to day relationships?

Merilou Salazar 13:20

Day to day relationships, but also how something like using the word love more often might change the way you see relationships?

Merilou Salazar 13:29

Yes, yes, absolutely. I think, yeah, I used to be scared of relationships, like romantic for our friendship. You know, like, any sort of intimacy, I don't even know what I was scared of. I was just scared of it. And I think, now, I can love it. Because we learn so much about ourselves, when we feel that uncomfortability right. And like, when we feel that, like, I feel like there's the fight flight or freeze, right, like, we freeze, we run or we fight, like the fight can be like, this competitive feeling in a work atmosphere, right? Or the flight could be like, you know what, I'm just gonna shut down and quiet and put my head down and do my job, no one will notice, and then the freeze is where you just kind of go numb, right? Like, I feel like when you start using when you start feeling this like universal love and let it like go beyond all boundaries of what it could be and just let it be one with who you are. Like fight, flight or freeze. Like that's not even a reaction anymore. It's just like, you know what, like, I'm just gonna love and that's so scary. Because like, that's not a pattern we're we've grown up to understand you know, like we we grow up to under like, especially in school as a little kid you grew up with a fight flight or freeze like you you're at least I was never taught to like, hey, like just stop read, like, you know, feel what this person might be feeling. Understand it, empathize with it, know who you are, and then, and then meet them with love. And since I've been doing it that way, and I've been using the love regularly, there has been so much love in my life, some of the hardest, most awkward like moments and situations just, like went out the window and just became like these awesome moments of change and love and like love for myself. And, you know, I think I'm sure love that other person felt that too, because then I would see them like reacting in a new way like this is something very recently were in a work situation, because I'm new to this tech. And so of course, like impostor syndrome is gonna kick in, right? And I'm working with this other like badass woman who's from the tech world, like, that's her thing. She knows it. And she and I have been working together every day. And she's badass. Definitely

intimidating. Because like, again, I have that impostor syndrome. And I could feel like this because she's already been in this industry. Like, we were both you coming from two different jobs, like she was coming from a different job. And I was coming from music to do this. She, like had this energy of like, like, this is assumptions, but this was just like, what I felt like, okay, like, I'm gonna show up and be a badass because like, I need to, like place myself here, right? Like, that's a normal, like corporate behavior. And I felt it and I can I was I felt myself reacting and I would get anxious. But my, my reactions were more of like, Oh, my God, imposter syndrome. Oh, my God, I'm not as bad as oh my god, like, you know, how to okay, how do I overcompensate for that? Okay, I'll just, I'll just like, so much of my job is like bringing ideas to the table. So I'll just hold my ideas, make sure everybody knows my ideas. And then, I don't know if that just felt shitty, right for like, two weeks. And then like, the second weekend, I was like, you know what, like, I'm not growing from this, like, I just feel like, anxious. And now I'm like, I'm gonna try this. And this wasn't a conscious thought, this is just something that happened. So when I, you know, again, my job is like, based around ideas. So like, I present ideas like three to five times a day to different meetings, me and her together. So since I had started a little bit before her a lot of the things I was bringing to the table were things I've had done by myself. But when I would show up to the meetings, even if like she hadn't seen what I was working on yet, I would, I would start saying, Wait, like, this is what we as a team did, this is what we did. This is what we did not, you know, I will slip here and there. But I've been intentionally using that word week, just to like, let that inclusivity and love, like think and write. And towards the end of the week, but she started bringing her ideas to the table. I, I remember, specifically the moment we were in this meeting, she brought out this new design she brought up that was like this beautiful design I hadn't even seen yet. She was presenting it to the team. I haven't seen this design yet. And when she presented it, she said we said this is what we've been working on. And I was just like, yes. You know, and like they were like best friends like so. Yeah, I think it's just it's just, you know, we think like, we're we've grown up with, we are told to think that we're just like individuals doing our thing. Right? And [audio spikes] it's parents, and love and intimate and the whole thing.

Kit Heintzman 18:29

I missed everything after you became best friends. That's, that's my computer cut out.

Merilou Salazar 18:36

Oh, no, no, it's probably my internet. My bad. Oh, I was just saying like, I believe in a world where everybody's connected. You know, where, and this is not how I used to think I used to think I used to overanalyze, like, if I'm doing this, that person doing that, because I'm gonna do this. It's like, no, like, this is how I feel. I know. Like, that you feel it, too. I know, you're feeling this, like, egh- anxiety to like, how can we meet in the middle, you know, instead of just like fighting it, it's like, like, let's just like own up to it in our own way, the way we know how and like, because, because we're all connected. And if we we acknowledge that and we feel that then you know, will I feel like it's made me just a better human being like day to day moment to moment being conscious of that.

Kit Heintzman 19:24

Would you tell me a bit about what you remember about the sort of like, early days of the pandemic when you first started hearing about it initial reactions, those kinds of things?

Merilou Salazar 19:34

Yeah, I was, um, I mean, like, there was so much going on. I was leaving my relationships. I was already crashing on a friend's couch. And then No, I was crashing out my cousin's floor in her house. It was a floor because like, it was an extra room she had but she didn't have a bed. So she was like on the floor. And she was out of town. And she was coming home with a newborn, and I was gonna be able to stay there. until the newborn got there. And then the pandemic and quarantine hit. Well, I just remember, you know, reading the news and, like, you know, feeling sad and a little anxious. But I was also just going through my own personal stuff. So I tried not to, like, absorb a lot of the external, so. But when it started hitting LA and those numbers started going up, and they were like quarantine, and she was coming home with a baby, I was like, I have no idea where I'm going to live. I don't even know. Like, what this means, you know, I'm so grateful because she let me stay there for a month and a half with her newborn. Like, I'm forever grateful for that. Because I remember that night just being so terrified. Yeah, so there's a lot of fear. But I think we were all in fear. So I tried not to just like absorb it all because it's like, once you do, it's hard to work it out. And at the time I was in, okay, how am I gonna set up my life? Oh, my God, a pandemic? Oh, my God. Everything's crashing. Oh, my God, like, you know, dying, deaths, and, and, and the whole thing. So? Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 21:09

But what are some other ways that your reactions have changed over time from the beginning to now, from the beginning of the pandemic?

Merilou Salazar 21:15

I was in a lot of fear, but, and now I'm just in a lot of trust. I mean, third comes and goes, you know, but it doesn't drive my decisions. I can say it doesn't. When it does, I try to stop myself and go, Okay, right now, I'm reacting to fear right now I'm reacting anxiety. I just want to like, not do that way. And it's, that's intentional. It's because like, what would I want? Do I want to build my life, my future, from moments and decisions based on fear? Or do I want to build my future for moments and decisions based on love? I personally think those are the only two options for love, right? Are we doing this love for ourselves? or fear? Love fear? Am I eating this because of love or fear? You know, like, self love? Right? Like, I think fear was a big driving factor. And while it was not something I felt every day, I think it was something just subconscious. You know, like the fear of intimacy, and the fear of showing up and the fear of getting like, success and the fear of money, you know, the fear of everything.

Kit Heintzman 22:21

2020 and 2021 are pretty big years and shaping up to be, I'm wondering what some of the big issues have been on your mind across this period of time.

Merilou Salazar 22:32

So much, so much, I don't even know where to go and start with that. And I think, like I said, I am an optimist. And I think because there was so much like self work I've done, I also tried to limit how much on social media and use I absorbed, you know, I would do what I could, and then shed the tears show up to the rallies I could show up to, you know, support, donate, like, talk about it. I don't even know where to start with that. But I would say like Yeah, I mean, I think, I don't know, I just feel like, overall, the energy of the world was just like, there was just so much fear. You know, and I don't really know how to answer that, because I don't know, because I did so much like, seclusion to where, like, I just felt like detached from so much as well. And like I said, I wasn't really on social media really tried to live with the news, because everything was just so heavy. And everybody on social media was so was so heavy. So I just did a lot of writing and my own spiritual journey. But yeah, I would say just overall, like, fear, and hate and fear, which manifests into hatred, into anger, you know, into all the terrible things, but fear was definitely like the big writing, writing energy of the world, then.

Kit Heintzman 24:11

May I ask what the word health means to you? Health.

Merilou Salazar 24:14

Health means to me, like not healthy, but just health. To me, it's how much how fulfilled we are in our mind, body and soul. So healthy would be like the ultimate fulfillment, you know, or to a certain degree unhealthy would be the otherwise right and we feel we feel that weakness, you know, manifests into our body. But I think it starts like deeper than that, right? It goes deeper than that. But yeah, health I think, to me, it's just how we hold how we how we can hold our selves in this world.

Kit Heintzman 25:04

Thank you so much for that. Would you tell me what safety means to you?

Merilou Salazar 25:09

Safety means to me. I mean, I, the first thing that comes to my mind is safe space. Because I think I've felt I've had, we've had the black and white, like the world where I just didn't feel safe. And I had to pretend everything, but you don't know you're pretending until you feel like until you find a safe space. You're like, wow, I was pretending the whole time. So safety is crossing that line, right? Going from that unsafe space to the safe space. And you're like, Well, I can breathe. But again, you don't even know what that line is. Because you don't even know you don't know it exists until you feel safe. So safety is that moment of like fresh air, that moment of freedom. Like, well, this is what it feels like to be alive. That's safety to me.



Kit Heintzman 25:57

But so we have this very narrow view of what, what safety means within the confines of the pandemic itself. Thinking inside that limited space, would you say something about the way that you've been negotiating your desires for safety with those around you?

Merilou Salazar 26:19

The way I've been negotiating my desires for safety? Can you clarify that?

Kit Heintzman 26:22

Yeah. Um, so if you are thinking of interacting with someone, what are the things that you think about internally, but also like, what are the conversations with that person look, like?

Merilou Salazar 26:40

Interacting with someone? That's such a good question. I know, like all of us social norms are axed. So like, I, it's so like, even like, I have seen a few friends like in the past, like, month or so and mid April, so in the past month, like one at a time. And it's so like, whoa, hi, I haven't seen you in six months, a year. This is weird, but also, we're both experiencing the same thing. So it kind of feels like yesterday, you know, it's not like I left came back. Hey, tell me how life has been. It's like, well, we've both so there's like just this unanimous knowing that we both don't know how to act in this situation. Like You I like, you know, hi. Like, how are you? It's such a weird question, you know? Yeah, so much. And even, like, even like, this is exactly the social norm of like, touching or, or like, oh, do you want do you want? Like, you know, do you want me to open the door for you? Or like, hey, like, I don't know, I like sharing something is also very, like, okay, like, I want to, but I shouldn't, but like, you know, like, there's just like so much thinking now of like, what close this is. That's definitely been resonating with me, as I see folks like, one by one like, whoa, like I'm thinking very conscious of this, like interaction, it's very interesting. And that zoom and zoom in included too, because like, catching up with people on Zoom is like, so awkward. And it's so real and so awkward at the same time. And that's interesting that it's like so normal now like, wow, like, this is like a relationship could still feel intimate like this.

Kit Heintzman 28:33

I'd love it if you would say a bit more about how your relationship to touch has changed over the pandemic?

Kit Heintzman 28:37

Absolutely. I'm just gonna turn on this light because the sun went down. So, relationship to touch has completely changed. I do recognize now when there is an accidental touch. It feels like I acknowledge it. Like I'm like well, like it's something like that skin to skin touch is like a definitely a conscious moment now more than ever, but for me, like growing up having been so scared like intimacy, it kind of brings back those those ages feelings, you know, like that scared that fear because I for me, I have had to conquer that like that fear of touch. And now that I kind of like let that creep back in and try not to let it

like you know, as the world opens up, and safety becomes, you know, more normalized, like not let it run. Read my life. But yeah, definitely like intimacy and touch is something that's like so I'm so conscious of now. It's, it's very, very interesting. To say the least.

Kit Heintzman 29:53

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Merilou Salazar 29:55

The immediate future um, well for mice, I think just because of my spiritual, like set ladders I, I've just completely surrendered. So, you know, I'd say like, I feel like I've surrendered and I'm just gonna see where it goes. That being said, I guess I feel good. You know, it's just a detached feeling, if anything, like a distract and, and just to go back on the touch thing to like thinking about shows which has been such a minute like shows where like, touch was just, you know, like friggin doing whatever on a stage, you know, like, I just remember like some of the craziest shows people like handing me whatever, and I would just be throwing shit in my mouth. I don't even know, like, I kind of forgot about that part of myself in this conversation because it's been so long, you know, since to feel that sense of freedom and closeness. Sorry, that just like came up. And I think

Kit Heintzman 30:58

That's beautiful. Go with it.

Merilou Salazar 30:59

Yeah, I think like that, that's also just shows like, well, that fear of touch has come up because I completely forgot about those moments. Until right now, so yeah, you know, like being on stage, like I said, jumping on people's backs, people handing me random things. And just like hugging everybody, 1000s and 1000s of people, like, you know, crowd surfing, like, doing whatever, changing clothes on stage, you know, like, just the whole thing. Like, there was like the sense of freedom from my body. And I think now, during all this, it's like, okay, like, I guess in a beautiful way to like, I'm back in touch with the body. And now, you know, when things open up, let's see who that person becomes. But it's interesting to think about that relationship to body and through everybody during that time before before COVID.

Kit Heintzman 31:59

What are some of your hopes or desires for a longer term future?

Merilou Salazar 32:04

Hopes and desires for the world? I hope for I mean, there's just so much sadness. So I guess I just hope for peace, your sadness will probably will definitely just keep happening. So I just hope for peace for those who get for the families, who are losing people, you know, for the peace, for peace for people who just feel unsafe in their areas. Like I'm very grateful. I'm where I'm at, in Los Angeles. But yeah, I, I

hope for peace. And I hope that, you know, people can find peace externally and internally as well. A peace and freedom, you know, freedom that like, I think being going through this pandemic also opened my eyes to like, everything's made up, you know, like, of words are made up, like, everything. I mean, I already knew that, right? Like, everything's just a social construct, but like to have introverted and then come back out. It's like, to see that like dichotomy, you know, it's like, wow, like, everything's made up, you know, and I hope that people can feel that and start to live as their most truest, beautiful selves, and not within, you know, random societal norms.

Kit Heintzman 33:20

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last year?

Merilou Salazar 33:25

It's definitely just being conscious of the way I wake up in the morning, that would be a big one. So try to get in a pattern where just like, naturally wake up at the time I want to wake up instead of by an alarm. So that way, I'm letting my body kind of run me, instead of like, technology. I, I tried to just I just been hell bent into meditation and writing every day. I go more with my intuition more than I've ever had before. Like that I used to be an over analyzer and I'm just go with the flow, go with my intuition. Go with it. Go with the flow, but to the sense of like, I'm gonna go what feels right. And maybe like, right now this is gonna be the most awkward thing to do. But I know this is where the most growth is gonna happen. So I'm going to do this go you know, trust that everything will be okay and like be intentional with living the biggest best life because we only have one life and anything can change. We can lose our jobs tomorrow, we can lose the people you love tomorrow, we can lose you know, we can go tomorrow so just be very like, like intentional with every moment like I'm gonna be doing 150% This thing I've no idea where it's gonna take me tomorrow and a year from now, but I'm gonna be fit 50% present for this conversation. For this meal. For this thing I'm writing for this work. I'm doing 150% present for it and grateful Gratitude is the biggest thing to just gratitude. Yeah, and, and just try to like be be as present, present as you can friggin be. I am at my

Kit Heintzman 35:13

We are at my second to last question. So we know we're in this moment of a flurry of biomedical and scientific research, all of that stuff is happening. I'm wondering what you think people in the humanities and the social sciences could be doing right now, to help us understand this moment as we live through it.

Merilou Salazar 35:31

What? So? Humanities, sorry, humanities and social sciences can do, right now to understand this moment as we work through it. I would say. I mean, I think even just talking to people, like what you're doing right now is beautiful, because there's been so many internal experiences, like, and, but I guess, because I don't know what they are doing right now. But if I like just to go out on a whim over over here, I would say... That's a good question. Um, can you give an example or anything?

Kit Heintzman 36:27

I will say that this is like the question that, like, every one has the reaction that you're having the reaction you're having is perfect, like, like, all of us are in this given moment. So I think, like for me the answer as you've given, it is perfect already. I can try and come up with examples. But I am thrilled by where you are. So you let me know.

Merilou Salazar 36:59

Okay, okay. Yeah, yeah, well, I guess I would just say, like, you know, talking to people, because, you know, we don't know where we're at, like, even like, yeah, like just this idea of love, right? Like, for me, like, I'm just, like, the way I see myself is so different. I don't even know how to imagine how that's gonna be the social context. I can't even imagine what that's gonna be like. So I yeah, I guess the main thing, because my head is just talking to folks, which is what you're doing, which is amazing.

Kit Heintzman 37:33

And this is my last question. So this is an oral history interview. And I'd like to invite you if you could imagine talking to a historian sometime in the future, who's never seen this time, what kinds of stories would you want to make sure that they knew you valued? What do you want to be sure doesn't get forgotten?

Merilou Salazar 37:55

For me personally, I would say the spiritual stuff, because it took me from that like, hustler. Like, like, very low, sat myself, like from such a low place kind of mentality to like, this world of like, anything is possible, and I'm living it and everything is also real, you know, and, and everything's made up at the same time. And when you feel that you literally can just like manifest whatever your heart desires.

Kit Heintzman 38:32

I want to thank you so very much for everything that you shared with me today. And at this point, I just want to open up some space. If there's anything you'd like to say that my questions haven't given you the space to say here it is.

Merilou Salazar 38:46

I think I said like the things I really want to get out and I just appreciate talking and it's been really fun.