

Report on *Voices* of NEW Leadership Nevada

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Voices of NEW Leadership Nevada

This oral history project aims to capture the experiences and impact of our program on alumnae, community supporters, and staff at the 10th anniversary of NEW Leadership Nevada.

Kristin Guthrie is responsible for the design, production and post-production of *Voices* and its accompanying digital archive. She collaborated with 2012 Program Manager Alma Castro and WRIN Director Dr. Joanne Goodwin.

This project is part of the greater Las Vegas Women Oral History Project.

The full archive is not available online. If you are interested in accessing the full digital archive, please email WRIN to schedule a research session at wrin@unlv.edu.

Methodology

The *Voices* project consists of 24 oral histories, which include 11 alumnae, 7 staff, and 8 community supporters.

Since the inception of the program in 2003, over 211 women have graduated from the NEW Leadership Nevada program. So, interviews of alumnae represent just over 5% of the population. Alumnae were selected to be interviewed on the basis of availability foremost, as all were invited to participate in the project. Nevertheless, we paid keen attention to diversity when selecting alumnae for the project as a great source of pride for the program is its goal to include students from varying backgrounds and identities.

With over 100 regular supporters and donators, individual and corporate, the 8 community supporters we interviewed represent just a fraction of the passionate supporters within the NEWL Nevada Network. Community supporters interviewed include founding members of the Community Advisory Board, politicians, corporate philanthropists, mentors and grassroots organizers.

Likewise, over the years WRIN has had numerous NEW Leadership program managers and assistants who each have contributed something fresh and new to program design and execution. Of the 7 staff interviewed, 5 are graduates of the program. This is an accurate representation as the vast majority of staff derives from the program itself, in part due to the passion graduates hold for providing others with the rich experience they claim.

Because this project is principally an oral history collection, we did not preoccupy ourselves with sample size but did ensure uniformity in interview technique and questioning.

Alumnae, community supporters and staff were each posed different versions of the core question set developed for the *Voices* project – with the logic that each of the groups would share different experiences and perspectives of the program.

Please find the question record and list of archival materials collected per narrator in the following PDF:

Voices of NEW Leadership Nevada Question Code

Every interview was filmed by question into clips. The clips are organized into archives by narrator, and the narrators by group. A metadata archive accompanies the clips for ease of navigation by researchers.

We encourage those interested in Nevada history, women’s history, women’s studies, gender studies, leadership studies, civic engagement, advocacy and more to utilize our archive.

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Analysis

Of the 11 alumnae interviewed, all attribute a degree of success to participation in the NEW Leadership program. Some claimed that it helped them discover their purpose while others asserted that it simply opened their eyes to inequity in the world. Both of these impacts undoubtedly make for the development of strong leaders.

While experiences vary, none of the alumnae interviewed had discouraging words to say about NEW Leadership, quite the contrary. All eagerly request strong community support for the maintenance of the program in coming years as a consequence of the positive experiences they themselves had. So much similarity exists from interview to interview that it becomes difficult to distinguish the “*Voices*” from one another on the subject of experience of the program alone – as most mention networking as the most valuable skill gained from the program and share positive internship experiences after graduation. However, every alumna possesses very unique characteristics and backgrounds that make her impossible to confuse.

Examples of diverse backgrounds and obstacles are Jennifer Carr and Maria Luisa Parra Sandoval. Jennifer Carr participated in NEW Leadership class of 2003, a young mother in college with dreams of attending law school. She explains in her oral history that without having gone through NEW Leadership she may not have become as aware of her capacity to overcome obstacles, to achieve her dreams. Jennifer, now a mother of several children, ultimately attended the Boyd School of Law at UNLV and now works as its Director of Academic Success. Maria Luisa Parra Sandoval similarly pursued a law degree, but hailed from an underprivileged, high crime area in North Las Vegas. She attributes her success to constant encouragement and the work ethic she admired in her family members, who supported her academic goals. Upon graduating from NEW Leadership, she participated in the creation of the first Latin American sorority at UNLV, as well as in grassroots organizations and attended the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. NEW Leadership, she said, encouraged her optimism, to see past her obstacles and to embrace them instead as strengths that legitimize her as a person of experience. This legitimacy enables her to be a strong advocate for those she seeks justice for in the courtroom – which helps her reach her professional potential.

Obstacles alumnae, community supporters and staff mentioned include all aspects of identity: race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality and institutional barriers/stereotypes.

While only community supporters were asked specifically about 'women's issues,' several alumnae and staff mentioned pay equity, domestic violence, and healthcare inequities as persistent obstacles for women. Several community supporters pointed to awareness as the immediate method of rectifying inequity. Women themselves must remain aware and vigilant of the need to advocate for continued and expanded opportunity for the next generation of women. To these supporters, NEW Leadership provides just that – awareness. It educates women about the risk of inequity if they forget their pasts, and become complacent about their futures, while providing instructional workshops in leadership theory, practicum experience, internship opportunities and, most importantly, exposure to women in power.

Conclusion

While this project is an oral history, we tangentially aimed to capture the experiences and impact of the program on participants, community supporters and staff. We found in all cases that these experiences were positive and impacts were measurable. Alumnae claimed the development of crucial skills, greater awareness, and actual networking relationships that led to jobs – attributable to NEW Leadership.

Discovering the perception of the program's impact on the greater communities of Las Vegas and Nevada were an unexpected outcome of the project. All narrators agreed that the program is an asset to the state, as well as to business interests. Many mentioned the economic impact of good leaders on state governance and policy. Awareness of this might have been sparked by the current economic environment and a growing need for knowledgeable, diverse leaders.

Narrators asserted that inability to sustain NEW Leadership in coming years would be a great loss to Nevada and to the generations of women who benefit from the awareness and education it provides. Overall, the interviews were positive in tone, which is very encouraging. We hope to amass more testimonials of experience from those within the NEW Leadership Nevada Network – for generations to come.

Recommended Citation

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