

Interviewee: Renee Yoelin-Allen (Hyphenated her name with her husband's in marriage)

Interviewer: Daphnee Chabal

[Intro and consent] *Could you give me your last name please?* It is Yoelin-Allen. *Is it your last name? Would you give us the context of your last name choice please?* Yes i was born Yoelin and then I was getting married and my husband's last name is Allen. I knew I couldn't be Allen, that this was not me, I couldn't be Renee Allen. So I had to decide if I wanted to be Yoelin-Allen or just Yoelin. I wanted to keep Yoelin because I had a difficult childhood but the good thing about it is that I had this family name, that name is from Russia and three generation, they immigrated to the united states so that was important for me to keep that. My brother, sister and I had this thing, we were going to be this whole new Yoelins, that we were not gonna be the people who came before us but we were going to be healthy and that is why I kept it. That was who I was and I didn't want to change who I was getting married.

*Ok, so it is for personal reasons but do you think it was also for practical reasons? Did you like the sounding of your name or the spelling or the aesthetic aspect of your name, maybe its uniqueness?* Yes definitely I like how unique the Yoelin is and Allen is not unique and I didn't like that at all. It is a mouthful to say that I created Yoelin-Allen because it's one of a kind, i know there is no one else on the planet who is named Renee Yoelin-Allen so absolutely, those factors played in it.

*So you said your brother and you had a promise but do you think you had any other role-model for why you kept your name?* [long pause] *Did you want to show respect to your family name?* Well I guess that my role model was my mom, when she married she changed her last name and then when she divorced she changed her last name and then she re-married and changed her last name and I thought that was ridiculous. What I saw is that it was a long of work and it changes your identity and who you are and so it kept changing and i didn't think it was a good idea and who I was was Renee Yoelin and I didn't really change that. So I didn't fall into her foot step but I did through it off you could say.

*How did your family or his family reacted to this?* That's a good question. My husband wanted me to take Allen but he understood that was not going to happen. [laughter] It was important to him that it was important to be Yoelin-Allen, he thought it was important as a tradition and i made sure i would make the decision that i wanted.

*So at the start you wanted to have only your name or was it ok from the beginning to have both names?* I wasn't sure, i thought about it and that's what is interesting, i didn't decide until the last minute, people didn't know what my name was until it was done. *And his family? Do you know how they reacted?* When they write me a check or send me a birthday card in the mail, they send it to Renee Allen. They weren't mean about it, i just think my husband and I were married for 20 years and i don't think they got it from the beginning. [side notes about how recent the two names practice is]

*For your career, profession, for your work, you use both names when you publish for example?* Absolutely, yes, Yoelin-Allen absolutely. *And you don't have any regrets?* No. *Did it ever cause you any inconvenience?* Well nobody knows how to spell Yoelin but i am ok with that, I can spell it so... *Is there any other unexpected consequences of such decision? When you go to the hospital for example?* Not anymore, initially people wouldn't know what to do with it,

sometimes people would say: 'Ok Mrs Allen' and I'd say: 'No it's Yoelin-Allen' but it's just funny but i was accepting that 20 years ago, that was new so i do correct them but i don't make a huge deal out of it. Since then more and more people have done that.

*Does it make you regret any of the decision?* No, my kids' teachers call us: Mr and Mrs Allen and I don't make a big deal out of that. If i have lots of communication with them, i will let them know but usually i tell them to call me 'Renee' [laughter] But I sign everything Yoelin-Allen.

*So you have children? How many?* Yes, two. *What name do they have?* Allen. *Is there any background story to that decision?* For me, it's the name i started with and i don't need them to have that, that's important to me and they will do whatever they want later. It wasn't really a discussion and I think people say: 'Yes they are Allen'. I know it's important for some people to have both parents' names hyphenated but it wasn't for me.

*Also if people have two last names, people will tend to use only the last one, so it is also a practical choice isn't it?* Well I think it is even less common to have hyphenated names, people don't know what to do with that. *Did you know you could combine names? Were you aware of this at that time?* I wasn't then but i am now and i think it is a cool thing. *Would you have considered doing it or talk about it with your husband?* Yes, we would have, it would have been really cool. [side notes about another of my interviews] [long pause]

*Did you ever think about also being called 'Mrs Allen' and how it would make you as a woman invisible? Some people don't want to marry cause they don't want that to happen. Have you ever been called 'Mrs Gary Allen'?* Yes and I do find that offensive. Luckily, people don't do that anymore. Sometimes people call us 'Mrs and Mr Allen' but not 'Mrs Gary Allen'. *And so how do you react to it?* It doesn't happen often and usually it's people who don't know who we are and with whom with wouldn't have a long conversation with. I think it is a bit ridiculous.

*In your daily life, is your kept name acknowledged enough?* More and more, the five first year of our marriage people didn't really get it, some people thought Yoelin was my middle name but it is more and more accepted as it is more common now. Another thing we did is naming my son 'Taylor Ray Allen' and Taylor is my mother's maiden name and Ray is mother's mom's maiden name. So he has four family names in his name and we did that on purpose. *And your second child?* My daughter is named Mackenzi because the name Ray was actually McRay, Irish and the Mackenzi claim actually guarded the mcray claim.

*And you are happy with that decision? Yes. Do you think your kids will be influenced by your keeping your name?* Yes, i could see my daughter do that, she will actually think about what she will do and not let it be automatic. My sister got married and got a hyphenated name and i think that it's because she got influenced by me doing that and once again, we decided to keep our names in terms of redefining our family's history and yes, i think my daughter will have lots of funky choices to play with her name. I don't know what it will be but... [laughter] she is thirteen [laughter].