FHS Oral History Project – Ania Martynuk

Description:

Ania Martynuk was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 2006. A daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, Ania recounted her young life experience, especially navigating her dual identity as a Ukrainian and American living in Florida. She remembered her visit to Ukraine when she was ten years old. She recalled her childhood growing up in Palm Coast, Florida, all through her UCF collegiate experience (at the time of the recording). Ania's mom, Roksolana Cisyk (part of the FHS Oral History Project collection), serves as one of the central members for the Ukrainian Project Incorporation—the same organization that created and hosted the Annual Ukrainian Festival in Orlando (where the oral history took place). Ania described her observations of the four-year festival and its cultural significance. She also expressed her thoughts about the Russo-Ukrainian War, the state of Florida, and the US (c. 2025), and their futures.

Transcription:

00;00;00 - 00;00;16
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: This is Sebastian Garcia interviewing Ania Martynuk on February 16th, 2025, at the Fourth Annual Ukrainian Festival Vatra Orlando for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Before we begin, can you please state your name, date of birth and where you were born?

00;00;16 - 00;00;25
ANIA MARTYNUK: My name is on your Ania Martynuk. I was born December 7th, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois.

00;00;25 - 00;00;35
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So I spoke with your mom earlier, and so I know a little bit about you. You were born in Chicago, but you really grew up in Orlando, correct?

00;00;35 - 00;00;46
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah, I grew up in Palm Coast area, up north. But we moved down here before I was even a year old. So I'm basically raised, not born, but raised in Florida. Yeah.

00;00;46 - 00;00;51
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Can you just talk to me about your experiences growing up, like your childhood growing up?

00;00;51 - 00;01;44
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah. It was pretty quiet just because my parents were immigrants. So they didn't really connect a lot with our neighbors or a lot of the Americans that were in our area. We had a couple of friends, but most of their friends came from like my sisters friends' parents, they didn't really have their own American friends. It was only Russians and Ukrainians in the neighborhood or in the area. And there were a lot of them. And then we would always go to church in Apopka, which is how she met all of these people that started this organization and [this] event. But it was pretty quiet. I played tennis. I did dance, where I met a couple of my closest friends. It wasn't anything crazy. I went to high school. I played high

school tennis, and I'm on the club tennis team at UCF, and I really enjoy it. But it wasn't nothing crazy.

00;01;44 - 00;01;55
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Your mom shared with me that, talking to you in her native language in Ukrainian, that as a child, you weren't so receptive to that. Talk to me about that dynamic.

00;01;55 - 00;03;05
ANIA MARTYNUK: I just I never really wanted to because growing up I wasn't very vocal. I couldn't really get words out until I was like, three or four. And then my parents were asking me to speak an entirely different language than the one I was speaking at school. And I was like, there's no way. And then my mom was like, if you ask for something in Ukrainian, I'll give it to you no matter what. So I just remember learning ice cream, how to ask for ice cream. I think that was it. That's the only I could ask for in Ukrainian. I was like you have to give it to me. But that's as far as I went with that. But then I went to Ukraine when I was ten, and I was kind of forced to really learn and speak it, and I knew the basics. But once I came home, it took me like a couple months to really process it. I came home and my Ukrainian really wasn't much better. And then two months passed, and I was almost fluent, it was very strange. I don't really know what happened there. It just took my brain a second to process. The same thing happened with my Spanish classes in high school where a year later, I was like, now I kind of get it. Now I can read stuff. I'm like, oh, there we go. But yeah, I'm not very good. But I'm getting there.

00;03;05 - 00;03;08
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Talk to me about that experience going to Ukraine at ten years old. What was that like?

00;03;08 - 00;05;47
ANIA MARTYNUK: So I was ten and my mom sent me there alone. She sent me. She made me fly with her friends who were flying there. But I was staying with my grandparents, who I had met once before, I think, or maybe twice when I was younger, because I went there when I was like a year old, so I didn't really go there. But it was scary just because I flew there and then they're speaking to me and my brain is comprehending what they're saying. I'm kind of scared too. I'm ten years old. I'm in an entirely different continent. It was very scary. I remember being super homesick, crying every night for the first week. I was there for three months, so I was there for a while. But then I started going to tennis there and it was really fun because they were really good. Slavic coaches are very tough on you. And I had a Russian coach growing up here and it was just, "Oh, this is familiar to me, you know?" So it's nice. And it was really nice to live in a walkable city. [In] Palm Coast you cannot walk anywhere versus there, I could go to the store, I could go alone, they didn't really care. I also went to Kiev, which is where my dad was born and grew up, which is the capital of Ukraine. And that was super cool to see because it was a really big city versus like Lviv, where my mom grew up, it's smaller, it's still like a major city, but it's smaller. It's very quaint. The buildings are really pretty, but there's no like skyscrapers or anything. And it was really cool. I really enjoyed it. And then my sister came halfway through the year because I think I was so homesick. And my mom was like I have to do something about this. So she sent my sister over and it was super fun being with her because my grandparents were like, "okay, you have to walk with her to go to

tennis." It was very far. And she'd be like, "Okay, I'm going to go to this coffee shop. You go alone." I was like, "Okay!" So it's fun to be independent for the first time in my life. And that was the first time they would leave me at home alone. And like, when I was, like, living. Sorry. I say like a lot. But when I lived at home, my parents wouldn't let me cook or do anything. They would just be like, "sit here and don't die" versus there it was a lot more lenient. I was a lot more independent. And we also had this thing. It's like a *dacha*. It's almost like a country home or farmhouse. So we got to take a bus over there. And it was a long, long walk. But it was a nice little countryside home where they grew a bunch of vegetables. And that's kind of how they fed themselves with the three of us with that produce. And then they had a bunch of little kittens there that would come, they would feed them. And it was super cute. I loved it so much, really. I wish I could have gone back, but then COVID happened so we couldn't go. Yeah. But it was a really good experience. I think I definitely needed to go and do that.

00;05;47 - 00;06;00
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what did you learn about Ukrainian culture when you were over there that you didn't or hadn't learned yet from just living with your parents?

00;06;00 - 00;07;26
ANIA MARTYNUK: I think it's almost a sense of community too because here we had a couple of Ukrainian people that my parents knew for almost forever, for their entire lives or they kind of came together because they were Ukrainian versus when I went over there they were all so accepting of me. I didn't expect that. I was kind of scared because I was American. I didn't speak very well, but they were very, very sweet. And they invited me to a lot of things. They're very nice. I didn't expect them to be so kind. So I would say the sense of community runs deep. If you're Ukrainian, you're Ukrainian, they're going to be almost your friend. I'm trying to think if there was anything crazier. I know my sister got to go out a lot more because she was older and she went to a Ukrainian school there versus they didn't let me go to that, which is understandable. I definitely learned more about the food. Food is a big, big thing there. I learned how to make *borscht* and all that. My mom never wanted to teach me when I was younger. I mean, I was like ten, obviously, but I had to learn there. I don't think there was anything super crazy that I learned. Sorry, sorry, I wish I could say something more interesting.

00;07;26 - 00;07;54
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: No, not at all. No worries. You mentioned, of course, you know, your experience growing up here in the States and being a child of an immigrant. And I could relate to that too. It feels like there's a moment in your early life that you sort of realize that you have dual identities, like you're an American, but you're also Ukrainian, in your case. For you, when was that?

00;07;54 - 00;09;35
ANIA MARTYNUK: I think kind of growing up it was always like that, and to the point where I felt more Ukrainian than American, where it was very difficult for me to relate to my American friends or, I don't know, I just felt kind of awkward with them because my parents are not so much of their parents. My family's not so much their family, like our standards are a little different. I just felt like I didn't really belong here, which is very strange. I was born here. I should, but I felt more at home in quotations in Ukraine with them, because we all kind of have

the same things to relate to about our families and that whole situation. When I would bring my lunch to school and it's a lot of cabbage—although I don't like it, I was forced to eat it growing up, and it doesn't smell very good, I'll be honest—and the other kids whose parents are from America were just a little bit like, “what is she eating?” But it was always a divide. I think I got a little bit more comfortable once I got into high school, almost where I was like, you're fine. You belong here. You were born in America. You're fine. It just took a while. I don't know why, but I always felt more Ukrainian than American. I think it's just because my parents don't really have American friends. Growing up, we were the only Ukrainians until I went to school, and I was homeschooled for most of it. So I was like, I'm really not surrounded by that, if that makes sense.

00;09;35 - 00;09;45
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you mentioned how you went to UCF or you're currently at UCF. Talk to me about that experience from high school to college.

00;09;45 - 00;11;22
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah. So I started dual enrollment in my freshman year at Daytona State and I really loved it. And then my sophomore year—so I took AP Statistics my freshman year and I just fell in love with it. I loved it so much. I thought stats was so cool. And then my sophomore year, I started at UCF, and I started with stats too. I remember sitting down there and being like, I don't belong here. It's so hard and so scary. And then I think I finished the class with over 100. I was being so dramatic. And then after that, it was a lot better. It was really hard because I was 15. I couldn't really make friends, but, I mean, I think that was good. I needed to stick to my school, but I think it was really hard for me to speak out in class too because I felt so much younger and I was like, if I get the answer wrong, then it's really embarrassing. But it was good. I really enjoyed taking challenging classes. And now that I'm there full time, I still have some friends that I made as a dual enrolled student, when I was 16, 17. It was more normal for me to talk to people. But I think I'm happy that I had an extra year that I was outside of high school during college, because I did not have this many friends as a dual enrolled student, especially now that I live in Orlando with my grandpa, it's really nice having friends that I can really call true friends that I talk to every day that I hang out with every week instead of people I just see when I go to class.

00;11;22 - 00;11;26
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And your experience at UCF as a stats major, what's that been like?

00;11;26 - 00;12;55
ANIA MARTYNUK: It's been good. The stats department is pretty nice. There are a couple of professors that I love so, so much. I'm going to butcher his last name, but Worchester—Donald Worchester. He was one of my favorite professors of all time. He wrote me a letter of rec that got me into grad school. He is phenomenal. He made me really enjoy it, and I really like his class. The way he formatted his classes you knew exactly what you needed to know. He taught very well. If you put in a little bit of effort, you would have been fine. As well as Nathaniel Simone here. I actually have class with him right now. And I took Stat Theory II with him, which is a hell of a course. Sorry. Can I say that? I'm sorry. They're so supportive. And then some of the other faculty members are not as supportive, but I feel like that's just with any

institution, you just kind of have to go through it. But it was nice. I also was taking my pre-med courses, so it was kind of fun having experiences in both math classes and STEM courses. So I really liked having that diverse coursework, but I really liked the stats program there. And I'm in graduate courses right now, and I really enjoy that. So I'm really excited to continue with this.

00;12;56 - 00;13;00
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you mentioned grad school. You're wearing a Johns Hopkins sweater.

00;13;00;06 - 00;13;01;14
ANIA MARTYNUK: I am.

00;13;01 - 00;13;03
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: So talk to me about that. Are you excited?

00;13;03 - 00;14;37
ANIA MARTYNUK: I'm so excited. It's been my dream school since—actually we went to Washington, DC for the Ukrainian Festival there that my mom wanted to go see, and I was like, oh, you know, there's like a university here that's pretty nice. It's called Johns Hopkins. Can we go check it out? And she was like, sure. So we drove over there, it was a half hour drive, and then we walked around. I was like, this place is pretty nice. But my heart was dead set on Columbia. When I was in high school, I really wanted to go to med school at Columbia. And then I was looking at this place and I was like, wow, it's really nice. And I was like, what if I did a master's here and then I went to med school at Columbia? And that's when I started researching a masters in statistics. And this was before I even thought of biostatistics. I didn't really come up with that idea until early last year. And then I was like, that would make the most sense if I want to go to med school after. And then I visited New York, and I did not love the place, so maybe Columbia's not the way to go. So after that, Johns Hopkins has been my number one school. I think they're really amazing. Their sense of community within the biostats program is also incredible. They do weekly meet ups and lunches. And I remember even my interview was very informal. She was like, I don't really have any questions, I'm just going to tell you about myself, tell me about yourself, and then we'll talked about the program. It was very nice. I'm very excited. They're very highly regarded in this field too, so I'm excited. I want to do a lot of stuff with clinical trials and statistical consulting with that. And they have really good coursework and professors with that.

00;14;37 - 00;14;51
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And do you think your experiences in college being exposed to other cultures, especially at UCF, that is so big, you think that sort of helped you navigate your dual identity as Ukrainian American?

00;14;51 - 00;16;04
ANIA MARTYNUK: I do, and I think it also it's made me more interested in—like I'm interested in clinical trials, but I'm really interested in creating a diverse group for clinical trials because I feel it's very widely known that most medical concepts and studies are done on white

males. So it's very difficult because everybody is different, especially between genders, between races, ethnicities. So I think it's really important to do stuff with all the groups so you can get the most information possible because we know for a male a heart attack is a strong sharp pain versus for a woman, it is not, it does not feel anything like that. So I think it'd be really interesting to do stuff with more diverse groups and focusing on how we can get more diverse groups for these types of clinical trials. And I think at UCF, it's very diverse. And I think it kind of opened up my eyes to how much work has to be done to get to something that's really going to benefit minorities and other communities.

00;16;04 - 00;16;17
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: You mentioned to me earlier today that you've been involved with the Ukrainian Orlando Festival since it started. I know the answer, but how did you get involved with the Ukrainian Orlando Festival?

00;16;17 - 00;17;05
ANIA MARTYNUK: Well, my mom runs it, so she was like, don't book anything for next weekend. You've got to come down to Orlando with me. And I was like, okay, I wasn't really excited the first time I remembered, but then I went, and it was really interesting because we had these performances. They were really good. I met a lot of interesting people. So then the next year I was a little bit more excited. The next year I took my friend Carly with me, and that was super fun because it was kind of like a staycation. We got to go stay in an Airbnb for two days, and then we got to come here, and we got to I mean, it was hot, and we were sweating, and it was froze at the end of the day. But overall it was a pretty good experience. And then the next two years we had a ton of fun and it's just our little thing now, and I'm really happy I got to incorporate one of my friends into it.

00;17;05 - 00;17;09
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And how has the festival, from your perspective, changed in four years?

00;17;09 - 00;17;57
ANIA MARTYNUK: So I think the first one happened right when the war started. So it was more like fundraising for the war. It was more, I don't want to say, it was just kind of sadder, I don't know if that's the right word, but it was not a very exciting place to be. It was more this is a serious topic that we have to talk about, this is almost to bring awareness versus now, although the war is still going on and all these donations are going towards it, it's more of a celebration of Ukrainian culture and talking about that in a brighter sense. It was so dark before and now I think it's move towards something a lot brighter.

00;17;57 - 00;18;05
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What examples from your four years being involved that the event would make you consider this successful?

00;18;05 - 00;18;06
ANIA MARTYNUK: What examples?

00;18;06 - 00;18;06
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah.

00;18;11 - 00;18;12
ANIA MARTYNUK: What do you mean by that? Sorry.

00;18;12 - 00;18;20
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Like if there's anything that you've seen throughout your four years here that would make you feel like, “oh, this is why this festival is important. This is why it's a success.” Share a specific example.

00;18;20 - 00;18;21
ANIA MARTYNUK: Oh, okay. Sorry.

00;18;21 - 00;18;22
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, yeah.

00;18;22 - 00;19;26
ANIA MARTYNUK: I would say my second year when I first brought my best friend Carly with me. She wasn't really into the idea, but I was like, you're coming with me. And then she saw the performances and she was like, wow, this is really cool. And it was really fun seeing other Americans see these kind of performances and get to learn more about Ukrainian culture and being genuinely interested in it. I think if we can make teaching about culture interesting and fun and having other people be engaged in it, I think that makes this festival a success. And I can see that with Americans coming and asking us, like we run the liquor stand, but they ask us about the Ukrainian beer and where it comes from and the history behind that or the liquor my mom makes. And they're interested and obviously it's fun to be interested in alcohol, but it's cool that they want to learn more. And I think that's an indicator that we've been successful in our mission.

00;19;26 - 00;19;33
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What were your initial reactions when Russia launched the attack on Ukraine in 2022?

00;19;33 - 00;20;56
ANIA MARTYNUK: Well, the war had been going on there for so long at that point. It was a big deal because it was such a big attack. I remember feeling sad because we had planned a trip in 2020 to go, but then COVID hit. And then we planned a trip that year to go, but then the war started, so it was sad, obviously, and I was scared because my grandparents were there. I was scared because I had a lot of family there. I'm on the phone with them and you can hear bombs going off in the background, it's terrifying and I'm not even there. It was so sad to think about all the kids and the families that were there that did nothing wrong with their lives, and this horrible thing is happening. And now it's sad that I'll never be able to go back and experience it the way I experienced, like how my sister got to experience when she was 17 [and] I was ten. I'll never get to go do that. I'll never get to be a teenager there and experience the city from an

older more independent point of view or even go and see my old friends from tennis or stuff like that. It's just sad. I don't really know how else to put it.

00;20;56 - 00;21;00
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And you didn't go when your mom went in 2024?

00;21;00 - 00;21;15
ANIA MARTYNUK: No, I did not. I had school starting up, and I knew it was going to be one of my last summers in Florida, so as much as I would have loved to go, I needed to stay and focus on school so that I can slowly make my way out of Florida as well.

00;21;16 - 00;21;27
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I'm curious, did your friends circle or other people around your life besides your family, sort of—what were their reactions when the war started?

00;21;27 - 00;22;29
ANIA MARTYNUK: I remember posting a lot on my Instagram story about it, and one of my old best friends who I hadn't spoken to in months reached out and was like, this must be so scary. And I remember, like, we reconnected over almost—I just remember almost them pitying me. It was very strange to have that feeling. And it was like guys like, I can be upset, but I can't be super upset because it's not me. I'm not the one that's fighting on the front lines. I'm not the one that's worried about my home being destroyed. But it was kind of strange to be looked at in that sense, even though there wasn't really any imminent threat or danger to me or my life or my direct family. But I remember being very supported. And then, I guess, they were just really nice to me. It's very strange.

00;22;29 - 00;22;35
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: What do you hope to see in Ukraine's future?

00;22;35;05 - 00;23;09
ANIA MARTYNUK: Peace. I think it's just so hard seeing so many innocent people's lives be ended just because of some guy, literally just some guy who just wanted to do this. It's just so upsetting. I just hope, even if it's not a super prosperous country, I just hope there's no more war, you know, because they've been at war for so long. It's just I don't think they even know peace and it's so sad.

00;23;09 - 00;23;34
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I want to circle back on something you've mentioned earlier about sort of that dual identity between American and Ukrainian. If you could share with me some specific examples of how you navigate that, navigated, you know, so past tense, like whether in your childhood but still present day, especially with the current climate?

00;23;34 - 00;24;35
ANIA MARTYNUK: Let me think about that. Sorry. Even in interviews when people ask me for examples, I blank. This music is stressing me out too. Sorry. This is exactly what it feels like in my brain right now. I would say, once again, Russian and Ukrainian, those were all my

friends growing up, especially through tennis because I had a Russian coach. But once I got into middle school, I started having American friends, and I started hanging out with them and seeing their traditions. And it was very strange to me, but I'm just trying to think if I ever like combined anything. Sorry. I'm blanking. Oh.

00;24;35; - 00;24;39
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Don't worry about it.

00;24;39 - 00;25;06
ANIA MARTYNUK: Sorry, I can't come up with anything right now…. Can we circle back to that one? Sorry. Pardon.
00;25;06 - 00;25;24
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: It's all good. How would you describe the Ukrainian community in Central Florida? In any way, maybe changes since you were born. Just talk to me about the Ukrainian community in Central Florida.

00;25;24 - 00;27;22
ANIA MARTYNUK: So I went to church here when I was younger, and we were all very close knit because all of my friends their parents were born in Ukraine and immigrated over here, and then all my friends were born here. So we all kind of had the same situation where I also think most of them were homeschooled as well. So we were all kind of in the same boat where we didn't really feel normal, if that makes sense. It's kind of sad to say, but like, we just didn't really fit in. So it was really nice to have kids to really relate to. And then once the war started, there is definitely a shift as more Ukrainians came over here. I would like to say we grew closer, but I'm not sure that's quite true. I think they were very almost—this is kind of mean and maybe don't put this in—but they were very almost segregated us away from them, even though we were trying to help them and provide for them because it was obviously hard. I understand there's a lot of trauma coming from that, but I remember one time I was in school, and I was trying talk to this girl who came, and she called me a Ukrainian defective. And I was like, "Oh, I was like, girl, I'm just trying to talk to you, just trying to help." But, after the first year or two, I think they definitely warmed up to us almost. And I think after that we grew a lot closer. But it was definitely tougher for a year or two because I think they were just upset that they had to come here instead of be at home, you know, so they're in a new place. They're obviously unhappy, like I would be too. But it was just a little strange. But now I think we're all getting along just fine. I think they're getting used to the idea of living in America.

00;27;22 - 00;27;33
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Is Ukrainian culture, at least from your experience, also very divided generationally or not really?

00;27;33 - 00;27;42
ANIA MARTYNUK: I would say yes, but do you mean divided like…can you…

00;27;42 - 00;27;49
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: In terms of, like, are the generational differences pronounced among the culture?

00;27;49 - 00;28;54
ANIA MARTYNUK: You know, I wouldn't say as much as, I don't know if this is really what you mean, but in America right now, we have the rise of iPad kids. We don't have that in Ukrainian culture. I don't think especially in Ukraine, there aren't these huge differences. I remember we all had phones, obviously, but we weren't on them 24/7 like kids are now. Like my baby cousin didn't get a phone until—actually he's about to be 13 and he still doesn't have a real phone. I think they're a lot more wary about technology too, just because they didn't really have a lot of that back there. And I think they want us to grow up the same way they grew up almost. So I would say, compared to Americans, it's a lot similar generationally. But I mean, obviously there's always some generational gap. I mean, we have TikTok now, like there's going to be differences, but I don't think they're super extreme.

00;28;54 - 00;28;55
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Yeah, that's what I meant. That's exactly what I meant.

00;28;55 - 00;28;57
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah. Okay. Awesome. Perfect.

00;28;57;08 - 00;29;00;19
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How has Palm Coast Central Florida changed since as long as you could remember?

00;29;07 - 00;30;07
ANIA MARTYNUK: I remember being a kid, just like in the general sense, [and] it was very underdeveloped, like there were a bunch of forests around. It was super fun to go exploring. Although I was always scared I was going to get bit by snake, but it's okay, my sister made me go anyway, but I think now there's such a big rise in developments, that there's no forest anymore. It's just all concrete. It's just sorry to say it, it's getting kind of sad like environmentally. But community wise, maybe it's just cause I'm getting out more, I'm becoming friends with more diverse people instead of when I was little, it was all Ukrainians. But I think that just might be me. But I definitely have more friends from different cultures. And I like learning about their stuff. Their families invite me over dinner. And it's super fun now. Instead of the same old *borscht* every night.

00;30;07 - 00;30;14
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: From your perspective, what challenges does Central Florida face today?

00;30;14 - 00;31;36
ANIA MARTYNUK: Central Florida, I'd say traffic is pretty bad, but I don't think that's what you're talking about. Maybe it's just UCF, but it's gotten very, not hateful, but almost like they're always judging you. Like at UCF, we always have these people protesting stuff. And they'll put up, sorry this is a little graphic, pictures of dead babies as an anti-pro-choice, pro-life movement. And they'll be all over school and I'm just trying to go to class. And they're trying to talk to you. You walk past them, and you feel such negativity. And it's always outside the library

where they're preaching about God. And then I walk into the library and it's the same guy reading his little Bible, and it's just like, this isn't the place for it. And it needs to be place and time type of thing. But I feel like it's just gotten so negative that way. And I think, you can preach, just don't judge people when you're doing it. Like, don't say that everyone's going to go to hell, maybe come out of the more positive light perhaps. I think everyone's gotten a little negative.

00;31;36 - 00;31;45
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: And what ways do you think Orlando or if it helps the US, will change in the next 25 years?

00;31;45 - 00;32;32
ANIA MARTYNUK: I think, sorry this is really sad, but I think there will be no forests. There's so many developments happening right now. And they're always building something. In the next 35 years, I hope it becomes a much more loving community. I don't get greeted at Publix anymore. Sorry, I do in my hometown, but not in Orlando. I hope people still smile when you're on the street. I feel like that's what differentiates the South from the North is you'll smile at strangers. I hope there's nothing tragically bad. I haven't thought that far into the future. Oh my goodness.

00;32;32 - 00;32;34
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: I mean in your defense, you're very young.

00;32;34 - 00;32;37
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah.

00;32;37 - 00;32;39
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: But that's what makes it interesting to ask too.

00;32;39 - 00;33;02
ANIA MARTYNUK: Yeah. I don't know, I have thought about that. What year will be it? 2050. Oh my God, 2050. Well, I hope we still have rights. I don't know, I can hope for stuff. I don't think I can say anything definitively.

00;33;02 - 00;33;12
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: In what ways has your Ukrainian heritage influenced your perspective on life generally, but also living in Florida/U.S specifically?

00;33;12 - 00;35;01
ANIA MARTYNUK: Okay, here. Especially with my parents who grew up in the USSR very communist, I remember going to school and, especially in Florida, there were a lot of political conversations even when we were in the sixth grade, which is when I went back to school and I think—obviously your parents are going to influence you—my parents had a different perspective because they came from a communist country where you had to wait in line for toilet paper and bread, it was all very normal for them, but it's very strange to me so I think it definitely affected my political views for sure, because I would say I'm much more left leaning

than right. But I go back and forth almost just because it is so…gray. And I think it definitely influenced how I view certain political subjects. And I think it has sparked a lot of interesting conversations between me and my friends as well.

In Ukraine and in Slavic countries, you're never rude to your parents versus I remember going over to my sister's friend's house one time, and she was talking back to her mom, and I was like, "What are you doing right now? Like, watch out." So there is also that perspective. And I think I have gotten more American in that sense where I'll joke with my mom, I won't say anything rude to her, but I'll joke with her a little bit. But I would never dream of that five years ago.

00;35;01 - 00;35;09
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: How will you continue to carry your Ukrainian heritage and culture throughout your life, and why is it important to do so?

00;35;09 - 00;36;41
ANIA MARTYNUK: Okay. Whenever I call my sister, we always talk in Ukrainian just because we want to keep our language up. But also she likes to talk about people who are right in front of her. So she's like, we have to talk Ukrainian. So definitely that. I definitely love learning the different recipes for food. It's fun to learn how to cook different things and be able to make stuff without a recipe is also really cool. I think if I have kids, I would definitely want to teach them Ukrainian before English, which is kind of what my parents tried to do with me. It didn't really work out because I was out of the house before I was fully into the language. You're in America, you're going to learn English eventually, even if it's not going to be very good. I still make grammar mistakes all the time, my friends have to tell me when to use t-o versus t-o-o, like that. But I think it's important just because right now the state of our country is so unsure, we don't really know what's going to happen. And although I don't want to say it, this could be the end of it, like the end of new Ukrainian culture. And so keeping that up in the States I think is really, really important because culture is important. It gives people an identity. It is the reason why we have different perspectives on the world and why people have different personalities. I think it's important to celebrate history as well.

00;36;41 - 00;37;03
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Well said. If someone is listening to this recording 50 or 100 years from now, what would you want them to know about your culture and the state of Florida or the United States? Which 50 years from now, you'd still be alive, so maybe 200 years from now, point is someone in the far, far future.

00;37;03 - 00;38;28
ANIA MARTYNUK: Let me think about this for a second. I'll start with Florida. I think I would want them to know about the US—maybe like five years ago, it was pretty lit actually. It was pretty nice for most people, I mean, obviously it was never perfect, and I don't think it ever will be perfect, unfortunately. But I think we kind of hit the peak of how far we're going to get progression wise. Hopefully we continue, but we've definitely taken a couple steps back. So I hope they know that. Maybe it's really bad in the future, maybe it wasn't so bad before, and maybe if it's a lot better in the future, I'm happy they took those steps.

And then about Ukrainian culture, I think I just want them to know that they were always so accepting [over] there, like, if you're blood, you're blood. And they'll take you in like we did here with the Ukrainian refugees, like we took them in, even if they were rude to us, we didn't care, they were our blood. We have to take care of our own. And that kind of sense of community and family is, I think, really prevalent in the Ukrainian culture.

00;38;28 - 00;38;35
SEBASTIAN GARCIA: Well, thank you for taking some time out of your day to talk with me. I really appreciate it.

00;38;35 - 00;38;37
ANIA MARTYNUK: Thank you.