

Interview with Pablo Guajardo
CMU, MSUM Campus
April 23, 2004 - 11:00am

Interviewers:
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Vusa: Hi this is the first question we have. Where and when were you born, sir? Could you please tell us?

Pablo: Yes, I was born May 23rd of 1952.

V: Uh huh.

P: Uh, I was born in a town called Mercedes, TX.

V: Interesting.

P: Down in the lower Rio Grande Valley where the weather never gets above 70 degrees. The temperature doesn't get above 70 degrees in the winter. Oh, below I should say. But that's where I was born, and I was raised there all my life until I was 21 years old, when I decided to come to Moorhead to stay.

V: Did you come to Moorhead by yourself, sir?

P: I made a trip up to Moorhead in 1973 by myself in the sense that my parents were not migrant farm workers coming to this area. But I did have a sister, and as a favor to my Dad, he asked if I could up north with a younger brother of mine and I said, "Sure, why not?"

V: Interesting. Um, sir, could you please tell us about your childhood and first school, maybe to get an impression of what it was like to go to school there and...

P: I grew up, and in that area I would say over 90 percent of the people are Chicanos. You call them people of color. I call them Chicanos. I went to a school at the age of six. No, there was no such thing as pre, or pre-kinder or kindergarten at the time and when I went to school uh, my native tongue is Spanish, my number one language. I went in to school not knowing English. Period. I, to this day, I do not like the sight of a paddleball, with a little rubber band and a ball on the end.

V: Oh.

P: I do not like to see those little paddle balls for the simple reason that, that is what was used on my calves, my hands if I spoke the language of Spanish in, in...

V: Really?

P: In first grade, let's say, because that is where you started. And not knowing it, I had no choice; so I- I got my share of punishment I guess. But, what they were trying to do was for me to learn the language

V: So it was basically force, not the intrinsic motivation.

P: I had to. There was no excuse, but I had to learn it.

V: Could you please tell us how your family shaped your identity, faith and cultural values?

P: I come from a family of twelve. There were twelve of us with Ma and Pa. That is 14. At that time when I was growing up there was no State or Federal programs that my dad could apply to help raise a family.

V: Oh I see.

P: My dad was farm worker but he had not migrated north before '73 and he always stayed around at the same place, grew up at the farm and therefore my life or my values were shaped, based... watching and observing him. As far as work ethics, he was the one that taught me, because I had been working since the age of five or six years old. I picked cotton—so that is where people sometimes use the term “get you cotton picking hand out of my...” They don't know what “cotton picking hands” are until you have been there. And you get you fingers punctured because of the dry, of the, where the fruit comes out, the cotton comes out. And I did that kind of work knowing because that was the only work I could do at six, seven years old, and I knew coming from big, large family I had to provide as much as I could for myself—not for my dad, not for my mom, but for myself. And therefore I, during that time my dad had to work, so, at that time there were commodities, food commodities they were giving out thorough out the month, but he would not attend or pick some of those up because he had to work. The only time he did go was during a rainy day and then, yes, he would go, if it happened to fall on a Thursday, I still remember, on a Thursday, then we had the luxury of eating peanut butter, cheese, and canned pork or chicken. Man, those were a delicacy. Even though you read the label and the ingredients in it, you know it was just extra push. But that's how I... And my mother never worked outside the home. With twelve kids she didn't have to work outside the home. Just basically at that time she did all the washing and ironing because of at that time your Levis were the thing, and you had to have a straight line down the legs so you put starch and you iron them and then they have a crease on them, same thing with the shirts.

V: I suppose that was a big...

P: So it was a big part of our life. That is how I learn how to do, basically everything, from observing my parents. My mom, I could do anything inside the home and I can do anything outside the home. So if you were to drop me in the middle of nowhere I would survive.

V: Plus I think, you know, the places and the work ethics are different greatly because when I was, when I came here, down south, I don't know, everything. I had to iron everything, paid specific attention to my clothing, how you handle everything, but now when you come...

P: It is different; the life style is different here versus other places. But as time goes on areas change and basically nowadays you don't have to worry about the starch. You buy them already that way. But the work ethics come from my dad. I knew and he said... He was the best counselor I ever had, and he had no education.

V: Wow.

P: He had absolutely no education, but he was the best counselor I had. He said, "I got no problem if you want to quit school because I was raised in an era where you hit sixteen and you're out, if you want to." But he says, "I got no problem with you quitting school. I will welcome you if you want to quit school, but the next day after you quit school you are coming with me to work." Nobody at sixteen, nobody wants to work, period. Ten, twelve-hour days.

V: Especially harder work.

P: Yes, you didn't want to, so you stayed in school. And my mother's greatest desire was that all her kids would go through the twelfth grade. She got her wish every single one of them from the oldest one to the youngest one. And therefore as far as working, I knew I had to work, my Dad showed me how to work. Physically, that's all he knew, and he showed me. My mom showed me how to cook and everything else because I would help. No one believes me when I tell them that we used to go through over 35 pounds of flour a week, because we made tortillas. There was no such thing as buying them, because we couldn't afford them. I don't even think I saw bags of tortillas, flour tortillas at the store, because I never looked at them, because we knew we couldn't afford them.

V: Do you still remember how to make them?

P: I make them. I still do. My daughter, every time there is no school like summer coming up, every Monday we go together and make the tortillas.

V: It almost turned into tradition.

P: It's a tradition, but it's a tradition that is going to fade away because nowadays you go down to the store and buy. If you ask a lot of the young generation, no offense,

it's getting less and less. It is easier to go to the store and buy. More convenience whether you get for your dollar the most, I don't know. I don't think so because you get for \$2.79, I think it is, you get maybe 12 tortillas and for \$2.79 you can get 5 pounds of flour already pre-mixed and you don't have to worry about adding the ingredients. The only thing is you have to do them. And prepare them and if they don't come round.

V: That is the hardest part of our generation.

P: So, but times are changing. This society has become more mobile, people are moving all the time. You have to or else you are gonna starve.

V: Could you please tell us what main holidays did your family celebrate, and how did your family celebrate Christmas? Did your family attend the church often? Could you please give us that insight...

P: The holidays were celebrated...we always had...I grew up where the week right around Christmas we would kill a hog and you butcher a hog and you get all prepared, and you make whatever you are gonna make out of it. Whether it is tamales or chicharones. I don't know if you know about chicharones. Also you have a roast where you kill a pig, a hog. And you prepare it and it is one of the most wonderful, exciting things, you know, because at the time you don't think about it, but nowadays you go to the store and you assume you buy it. But when you kill a hog at the farm you have to have hot boiling water with burlap sacs to put on it and then get the water over so it can remove the hair off the hog and make sure you do a thorough job and that art is leaving us a lot of times, because nowadays you basically, it is easier to go the store and buy it. But I learned that. So we celebrated Christmas, it wasn't just a one day deal it was maybe three or four days because it was preparing yourself to do this, and then we put together, I don't know how many dozens of tamales, and then I always joked with my mother. I said, "Hey, every time you go visit somebody you take tamales." "Yeah, because it is a courtesy and it is one that I extend" and I said, "Yes, that is very true." I used to joke with her. I said, "But when you go visit someone and you take this plate of tamales, you bring back another plate of tamales. Are they the same they just took them from one plate put them on another put the foil paper and here you get some that I baked. Or that I put together." She says, "No, no they wouldn't do that." But, so, I always joke with her. So we had fun.

It was great because all of a sudden you had cousins and you get relatives you hadn't seen for maybe six or seven months and they were there. And especially some of the elders that were there because they had their own traditions from sixty years before that, so that came into your brain. And you learn from them and it was a fun time. We celebrated Christmas all the time. Don't ask me how many presents I got because basically if I got one that was one too many, because we didn't have the resources. With twelve kids and my Dad only earning \$30-\$50 a week you can't. But we did have an aunt that always gave us a present and she gave us pencils, paper, and crayons. That was it, every Christmas, but it was something. And that is how we celebrated.

As far as church activities, I was raised Catholic. My mom, in the tradition of the time, was the lady of the house. The Mother would be the, I guess, the spiritual guide

person that would intermediate between you and the Lord. But that's how I saw it, not until later on it was totally different. But my mother was a very religious person. Not a Christian, but a very religious individual. Which means that she would want to follow the Good Book to the letter. My mother never did anything wrong, bad to any other person. As a matter of fact she always extended her hand out to who ever needed it whether, any way, shape or form that she could help, and she taught us that and we had...I learned to appreciate that because she was showing me a total different world that some of the other people that I knew didn't have. And my dad, my dad all he knew was how to do work. That was his seven days a week. If you gave him work he would work seven days a week. Till the day he died. And so we went to church but usually the ladies were to go at that time and the man stayed out in the parking lot, to talk I guess. But we were very respectful. You never heard to...

As a matter of fact, I was just talking to...we were having a conversation at home with our son last Friday, one thing my older brother... I never smoked—I tried it once, I got burned and I said forget it this is not for me. I never bought a package of cigarettes in my life. But we were talking about it that there was a lot of respect. That, if you are the son or daughter you do not smoke, cuss, or drink in front of your parents. It is more of a respect. That you do outside of their outside of their eyesight, well, it is going to happen or else cigarettes wouldn't be so popular.

V: Actually it is very interesting I come from a Turkish culture-I am a Turkish. I am from Turkey originally and we have the same tradition that you can't smoke or drink in front of your parents. Or simply when you are, for example, sitting in a room with your husband or wife. If they enter, they have to get up simply as a sign of respect. But when I came here I kept doing that, and, like, "Why are you getting up every time?" I explained...

P: Different culture, different ways. But that is also being eliminated with time and moderation and with the new things that are available to the youth of today, so we were talking about that last Friday and I said that I hope I never see you drink a beer. Not that he won't, I am pretty sure, he is 22 years old. But in front of me, because I am going to have to tell him to please toss it out, and he said, "But there is nothing wrong with drinking a beer." I said, "No I didn't say that there was anything wrong, it is a, traditionally..." He said, "Well it's a tradition." I said, "Yes, I hope we can keep that tradition." And to this day I've got to be thankful that he doesn't, or smoke.

But uh, as far as celebrating, like I said my mom was a very religious individual and on special occasions she went to church during a birth, when they were to baptize an individual as a baby we had like a little party, I guess, that's when we had chocolate milk, basically that was the only time we had chocolate milk and sweet bread. You know, when we would buy, when we would, or eat it when we go to see Grandma, but that was about it. It wasn't something that you just, "Huh, we need some of this today," because we couldn't afford to put it up. But it was wonderful. But later on she became a Christian, not a religious person but a Christian. And there is a difference between being a religious person and a Christian. If you want to hear it I will tell you.

V: Yes, go ahead, I would love to.

P: Okay, a religious person is somebody that follows a ritual. A Christian is somebody that has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. There are a lot of religious people today. You see them in churches in the pews. And until you have that commitment or you have accepted Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior, then you are a Christian. Before then you are religious. If you look and you are, have ever read the Bible, it was the religious people that put Jesus Christ...that took Jesus Christ and brought him to the cross. It wasn't the Christian people but it was the religious people and today you have a lot of people that are very religious but yet are not Christians. And as a Christian individual myself, a person that has surrendered their heart to the Lord, I see that. You know, I deal with people everyday and they say, "Oh, I am a very religious person." Yes, there are is lot of religious people in this world, but Christians, there is not that many.

V: Uh huh.

P: So, that is the difference between being a religious and a person that goes to church seven days a week. And be a religious individual

V: So how do you think environment shapes your faith?

P: You have to take care of where you live. Whether it is the air or the water or your house, and if you don't take care of it, it is going to harm you. And you have to do it on a very small scale, because you can't cover the whole territory. To this day...the environment...the cleanliness...my wife is a walking trashcan. She is! Because our son and daughter will not throw a piece of wrapper on the floor. Or on the ground, so they give to ma. She puts it in her pocket, goes home, dumps it out, or goes by a trashcan. And as she said, it is good, because you are helping one of the environments. The only thing you throw away is what the birds are gonna be able to use. To build a nest or it will disintegrate in to the soil and then it is alright, like an apple core. You throw that in a trashcan as you go by and it will dissolve later on. But plastic and all that, no! Pieces of paper? No. With that, you know, you have a better environment, you have a better place to live. And you are going to basically feel much better.

V: I see. Could you please tell us how people, what do you think, how do you think people perceive diversity in Fargo-Moorhead?

P: It is hard. It is very hard to see the community try to change. They don't want to change. They are gonna have to. This is a very conservative area. You hear it everyday. One of the things that—I was at a restaurant, because we are bilingual, we without thinking, we speak both languages; you know you might start in Spanish and wind up finishing in English. And we were waiting in line to get to the cash register to pay and we were talking, we weren't paying attention, you know as to what were saying or how we were speaking and the gentleman in front of us turned around and says, "Speak American." What is American? But, I say, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, we can't understand half of what you are saying." I say, "I am sorry, but the

conversation was meant to be between my wife and I.” He said, “Well, if you are not going to speak English you better go back to where you came from.” I said, “Where did I come from?” “Well, probably Mexico.” I said, “That’s a good idea, but I didn’t. I was born and raised in the United States, you know, and I have a right to speak. As long as I am going to speak to you in English or in Spanish and you don’t understand me doesn’t do me any good.

V: I can say a lot too.

P: I am pretty sure! And so therefore it is hard for, and these weren’t young individuals, I mean older individuals that their mind were set down from previous years. But I have had good conversations with people that are in their seventies and eighties and we sit down, we’ve talked and I thought these were gonna be the hardest ones to get to. No. They were, it was easier to talk to an elderly than to a young one because of the way their mind is shaped at this time. But it is hard.

V: I suppose it depends on people.

P: It’s gonna depend on individuals. I am not going to say that every individual is narrow minded and only want it their way, but one apple can spoil the whole bushel. And but I chose to live here because this where I wanna be, is where I wanna...I think this is a good area. So...

V: I hope by, as the time goes on it will change. As far as we know over the spans of many years you have been actively involved in the Fargo-Moorhead area, and could you please tell about your job in Moorhead as a Migrant Labor Representative? What difficulties did you face in working with...

P: Well, uh, working for the state, I have worked for the state for twenty seven years, twenty two as a professional and the rest five years, going on five years, as a skilled laborer individual but that is a choice that I made at the time. I was working as a professional, even though you don’t work as a professional doesn’t mean you no longer know how to deal on a professional basis but I got to work with the community. Period. In general, every single business in town. And I believe that in the community in order for the individuals to...that I dealt with the majority of the time during the summer months those were...it was hard to get employment. But you had to do your legwork during the winter months. Knowing this area and this area is composed of; it was composed of two groups of people. You had the migrant farm workers, which came from May through let’s say late August or September. And then you had the students that were here form September till May. So that was, and the students bring in umpteen number of dollars. Every individual spends, what, about twenty thousand dollars a years, Roughly. And the Migrants farm workers do the same thing. They come in here and they buy. They buy their pick up trucks, they buy their – they used to buy their pick-up trucks, their food and their clothing and everything here because they felt it was, [one] it was cheaper, two they had the resources at the time so a lot of that money that they earn was left here. But in order to make money they had to go out and work. That is where I

came in. I tried to communicate with every grower in Clay County and Cass County. And I did, I visited with them, I'd talk to them, and to this day I have good acquaintances. I can, you can drop me in any part of the county and I'll have a lunch before I get home, because I know every...just about every single one of them. And we, but it took time, it wasn't like I just showed up and they welcomed me with open arms. No! I had to go back every single week, for three months out of the year, just make a doctor's visit, just ten, fifteen minutes and I am out of there. But little by little I was able establish a rapport with just about every grower in this area. To the point where if I was to walk by there, "Come on in, have a cup of coffee, have a cookie." And I have never drank so much coffee in my life.

V: Until basically they get used to who you are.

P: Yes, who you are. We would sit down and we would have discussions. "We can't afford to pay more than what were paying," and I say, "Come on, you know you can. You have limit." And many times, till this day we have people that we have placed in different areas that have finally called it quits but they stayed with that same individual for many years. But it was basically because we had built some kind of rapport and then therefore they continued building that rapport with that family and they kept them. But also in the community, I would go out and talk to the businesses whether it was Hornbacher's, whether was construction entreés, and we placed quite a few people there. I did.

V: Sounds like, to me, that you had kind of inflexible goals that, in helping people, you know, trying to facilitate them with whatever their problems.

P: That, I used to be basically the middle individual. I didn't get any money. I got my salary whether I worked or not, you know, I was going to get paid. But I knew that a lot of those people depended on me doing my job, and that is how I was able to justify. You know, I would spend- there were months that I spent over \$1300 in gas—the state paid for it, don't get me wrong. They had to reimburse me. But that was because I was moving I was going to- to spend \$1300 in gas.

V: Wow.

P: That is over what, about 1500 miles in two counties. And...but I would write everything down. And till this day we've got people that are still working construction versus agriculture, because agriculture, you are gonna die out there, you are not gonna make a living any more.

V: It's gotten that hard, huh?

P: It is not that it has gotten hard it is that basically, uh, the chemicals have basically taken over. So if you drink a pop you are drinking I don't know how many chemicals. Or you eat some food, everything's got sugar in it, and sugar's got chemicals, so.

V: I see

P: It taste good anyway.

V: Yeah, who is gonna look into the details of it. But although it is good always to be particular about things you drink and eat. You also ran on campaign, right sir? Could you please tell, what was the role here at--

P: I was going to—I ran for a city council person. I was... basically, there were two individuals, myself and another person. That ran for city council. And the reason that I ran for that is because I lived here twenty some odd years and I did not see a change. And it is hard to bring change. I did not have the time to invest in campaigning. I did everything myself, there was no other leg work as far as, “Let me help you, I will knock on doors.” I did it myself. And I thought... and then we had a strike going on so I couldn’t campaign for about two weeks right before the election, and we had a strike going on, and I had to be out there in the strike line. And therefore it tied me up and, so when I did that that’s when I got a chance to visit some individuals in their homes. And we forgot about what I was doing.

They wanted to talk, they were the elderly that whether they are shut in or they’re happy that someone is knocking on the door and gives them the time of day, sometimes we forgot what I was doing for them. We would sit down; drink coffee with them, had a cookie with them. And we would talk about something else, completely nothing to do with the campaign. But they had something in their mind that they wanted to get and talk to me about. I said, “Why not?” You listen to people. When you listen to people you going to see what their needs are. One of them, one of their needs was that they were worried what going to happen to them when they no longer—I mean, as a city council person I couldn’t do anything about it. I couldn’t, because we don’t make those kinds of regulations. But I was able to sit down and just hear them out. A lot of times all you have to do is sit down and hear those individuals in the community. And these weren’t Hispanic individuals or Chicanos; these were white Anglo-Saxon individuals that are getting up there in age.

And just by doing that—I did not win. I came close, but I didn’t win. And I felt that it was a very successful campaign considering that I only did maybe one week of campaigning. And I did it all by myself.

V: You have done a lot!

P: And in one week I covered lots of territory but I also had to spend a lot of time with people, plus my family. I did not get them involved, I did not get them involved at all. It was a project that I wanted to do and the *Fargo Forum* was endorsing me (heh). They did. They put all their money in one basket. But I think considering—I ran on name recognition because the people that I knew in the community and that’s how I got my votes, basically.

V: Um, so do you think over the time that you arrived to Fargo-Moorhead and now you live in Fargo-Moorhead. Do you think change is occurring, and in what aspects of living? In Fargo-Moorhead, do you think change is occurring, or do you think it is as conservative as it used to be?

P: We are at the point I believe instead of going forward either we are standing still or going back. Considering when I came back, when I came here. When I came here I could—nowadays it is hard. Just last night, I went to south Fargo to a home, because I was gonna pickup a schoolbook. I just went in and out. Just, it didn't take me 3-4 minutes to get into the house, and pick up the book and come out. Did what I had to with that book in the area and came right back, and dropped it off again. Because, when I got done with it, they didn't see a white individual with blonde hair either, white but not blonde. And the neighbor, where I went, went behind the door, you could see that she was doing some observation—to see what I was doing because I don't belong in that neighborhood. Therefore, she wanted to keep an eye and see—oh, every time she sees this car coming, they leave, come back again, and now they are going to leave again. Something is going on there. Uh, especially I get down there, and so you still see that.

And as before I think I lived in a different part of town and therefore I knew all my neighbors. As a matter of fact, a lady that worked at one of the hospitals one day asked me, "How many children do you have?" I said one. "Oh," she said, "because every time I go by your house you got about six seven kids there." I said, "Yes, my dad had twelve but I only got one. But they come to play there," I said, "because a child is gonna be a child and I want to make sure that they play. And they have a good time, they have good memories. And that is why the neighbors come to my yard because I don't mind if they tear up the grass.

V: That's nice of you.

P: They want to—I had an area where you could put water and make mud. If you want to do it, do it. It doesn't bother me. There is always soap and water that can rinse and you look just a good as before.

V: You might as well open a kindergarten!

P: So the kids would come in and they dug a hole, and my wife says, "Oh boy." I said "Don't worry about it, we will put more dirt in there." And sure enough, they played there." And anything they wanted to do as long as it wasn't where they're gonna get hurt, I didn't mind. Till this day, I still don't, they can come and do anything they want to. "If you break something," I said, "don't worry about it, it can be replaced as long as you don't get hurt." That is my philosophy.

V: That is a very good philosophy.

P: Money can, you know, you can always buy another one and if you can't well, we'll do without it. I did without a lot of things

V: That is true. Sir, what would be the most vital piece of information you would tell to someone who is new to the Fargo Moorhead? If they came to you?

P: If they came to me and asked me, “I intend to stay here for ten years, fifteen, thirty years, or make it my home.” I would tell them, “Think about it. Really examine yourself and think about it. Why do you want to come here? Because once you have a family, you are not going to leave.” And if you have a family up here, considering that we are Chicanos you are not going to have—your children will not have the awareness of the culture that you come from. And that is very important because my son and daughter do not have that. They were robbed of that, because I decided to stay here. Even though, I have tried to teach them as much as I can. But they can’t see the rest of the people that look like them.

We had a wonderful experience many years ago. My son, he was a good traveler when he was young. So, we did a lot of riding back and forth between here and Texas. And he says, “You know what? We are getting close to Texas and we are getting close to your hometown, Dad.” And I ask him, “Why, why do you say that?” And he says, “Because now the scenery and the houses are changing.” You come from an area where you can’t have a window that is broken you can’t have one, a window that is broken here, or else you are gonna freeze, or that the house is not prepared for winter. I grew up in a three-bedroom house. And that three bedroom was kitchen, living room and dining room all three in one. So actually we only had three rooms the kitchen was the main room of our house where we all got together. And, like I said, 35 pounds of flour per week and 25 pounds of potatoes easy; I can peel potatoes in my sleep. I love fried potatoes versus a steak any day and with mustard not ketchup (ooh), but mustard. Every morning, as far as I can remember that is what I had for breakfast.

And so, when we were going back my son says, “The houses are not as well kept up as where we come from.” I said, “You have to look at the resources that are available for those people. You’ve never had to suffer like some other kids had to suffer here.” So, I tried to educate him that way. And that’s why now he says he’d rather fight for the person that has nobody to fight for. I hope that is the reason why. But it was because of education. And he right now, he gets along with anyone under the sun. I got no problems...and my daughter does the same thing. A lot of times he is not accepted because of the color of his skin. My daughter, the same way, but if you get to sit down and talk to the individual on a one-to-one basis, wait a minute, this guys not that bad after all. And that’s how before it would be—it was more economical to speak to a group and you give a presentation and try to help that group learn. Now, I see this as on a one-to-one. It’s going to take longer. But on a one-to-one, I believe that you can get farther than in a whole group. We were in a meeting in Crookston, Minnesota. A lady stood up in the meeting and said, “I am afraid of a person that’s brown,” she said.

V: Oh, god!

P: And the question was, “Why?” And the lady says, “Because they all carry knives.” I don’t even have a knife to clean my nails with but that is what was in her mind. And she stood up in the middle of—these were teachers. Teachers that were teaching kids. That stood up and made that statement. And no matter how hard you try to talk to

the individual it wouldn't go through. It would have to be on a one-to-one and that is how I decided that I am going to do it, a one-to-one basis from now on. And I have had, I have had people say, "You know what, I don't want to hear anything of what you have to say." That's fine, you are the one that's losing out, not me. If you ask me, I would be more than glad to share with you. If you tell me to go back to where I came from, I am sorry. In this country, as long as I am not violating any regulations, I am doing all right, I think. I said I am going to do whatever I want.

V: Plus, you do belong to this country

P: I hear it in my work.

V: And I have two more questions then.

P: Sure

V: Okay, what was the best part of living in the Midwest. You know I sometimes—as a foreigner myself—I do complain a lot about Midwest. My classmates already know that, but sometimes my mouth close. So what is good about living here. Come on it can't be that bad.

P: I am a product of public school so there is nothing wrong with public school. Public school is public school. But I believe the more taxes you pay, hopefully the better educational system you're going to have. You're going to hire the best, and therefore those kids are going to benefit. And I come from an area that is economically—I don't know where... what area you come from?

Raul: San Antonio

P: San Antonio, San Antone. But therefore I come from 240 miles farther south than he is. I can't get any farther, then you are out of the United States. But that area economically they do not have the dollars. The state of Texas—they are not paying state taxes, only federal taxes, so therefore you have a huge number. Here you got schools that are closing. There you have schools that are popping every single year. Because you have a tremendous amount of kids and therefore if you don't have the resources, you gonna have to stretch that dollar, so in order to have twenty kids you might wind up having 35. And you cannot serve justice to 35 kids per one teacher. That's too many kids. Not even if you give them one minute—just for one minute per child you wouldn't have enough time.

But here, schools, not only are they larger, but you still have within a reasonable amount of kids per teacher. So, therefore the system—the educational system here—someone that was educated here, let's say through the ninth grade and then decided to move down to where I came from. They could coast the rest of the three years. But that only puts your brain to sleep because he says, "I don't have to study, I don't have to learn." It comes automatic because I am that far ahead, and then you are gonna have trouble when you come to college.

But here, I love living here because you get to see the four seasons. Yes, it's cold, but you know it's cold and you're going to have to dress for the weather, you get you take it off, you are all right. You know that the weather in here is going to be perfect, maybe a little hot because to the heater is going too much. But I love living in this area because also there is different activities that you wouldn't have back where I come from—there is no snow. I had never seen snow to beginning with until I came up here. So, my first impression was I will use a windbreaker. I will make it through the winter with a windbreaker. Well late September, I was wrong. So I went to a heavier jacket. I said I will make it work. Forget it, come up 15-20 of October, forget this, I bought a Parka—that took care of my winter. But I had to learn. Coming from... where I came from, I didn't need- you put a sweater in the morning; you take it off in the afternoon, because it is nice and warm. And, so therefore, I believe that you are a little healthier here. Maybe it is so cold that it kills the germs for a while. And your body is able to function a little bit better. Also the standards of living in this community. You, in order to survive, you're going to have to work, and when you work, you gonna put the best you can in your house. So you're going to be exposing your children a better quality of life.

V: So you wouldn't move out of here?

P: I wouldn't move out of here. Not...I've thought about it. Don't get me wrong. But I have noticed that when I have been home for three days, I am ready to get out of there and come back here. And you can say, "Why in the world do you want to move to no man's land?" You live wherever you feel comfortable.

V: Your family is here already.

P: My son wouldn't leave. My daughter she is a fourth grader, she doesn't want to move. I am too old to get a job, no one wants to hire me—hey figure in ten years I will die. If you look at statistic, how long do Hispanics live? Not too long—look them up. But then I went to see the doctor, that's a few years back cause I got high blood pressure and cholesterol and all that good stuff that comes with the good eating. But, I went to the doctor and he said—and they always ask you—"What of your father?" "No, he died." "Of what?" "A heart attack." "Mother?" "Died, heart attack." "Grandparents?" "Died, heart attack." I said, "Doctor, I only have twenty-five percent of life left. The other seventy-five percent, you killed me already. He said, "No, no, no, we are trying to prevent any..." I said, "Well, survey says that if your mother, father died... dah, dah, dah, ...died there's certain percent left only. I got only twenty-five percent. He said, "No we are gonna try to give you better life."

I believe that is—before I did not have insurance, so I never went to see a dentist, a dentist. I was twenty-one years old before I saw my first dentist, and, uh I had a root canal done automatic because I fell down and hit my tooth when I was in second grade and it died and it turn brown and yellowish. And therefore the dentist says, "Who gave you the root canal?" I said, "No one. I fell down I hit my desk." "No one ever doctored it? Because you have a root canal, it is dead." I said, "It was done naturally." But uh, I didn't have any body look. I have had relatives live there where I grew up and they don't have any insurance that I have with the employer that I work with so I have to weigh both

ends of the scale. Do I want to give up, and I am 51 years old, to tell you the truth, I am getting to the point where sooner or later my body is going to start breaking down. But and I am gonna need the insurances so do I wanna give up my insurances and go back and look at the economics and the economy and the way the prevailing ways for what I am doing? No, I don't want to move. So, I have to weigh the scale to decide if I want to stay here and have the Midwest, or have this are my home, yes.

V: As long as you feel good, and your family feels good, that is the most important thing.

P: That's basically the bottom line. The only thing is that you rob your children of culture. This area will not have too many Hispanics. But if you go to Minneapolis and southern Minnesota and down to Nebraska, South Dakota, and down you have a huge number of people of Hispanic descent and the reason that this area does not receive that group of people is because Moorhead does not, or Fargo does not provide or have manufacturing jobs. There is nothing. You look out, there is no factories.

V: That is true

P: That is what I used tell the people. When I was doing that, they say, "I wanna work in a factory." I said, "All you have to do is go outside, look at the sky and if you see black smoke coming out then there is a factory. Go count them and see how many there is." Couldn't. So this community is composed of students and farmers and farming is gonna be here for a long time. And students are gonna be here for a long time. So, this area does not allow people to come up here, especially to these parts 'cause there is nothing for them to do.

[Tape flips over]

P: (Starts again mid sentence) There is no money for factory jobs so people will not come. Now you have heard many times in your studies that we had migrant farm workers come in here and they will come in and apply for what they call assistance, food stamps, money from the economy. Well, food stamps are federal program no matter where you go

V: Your gonna get stamps.

P: Your gonna get—receive them, same thing with other assistance. If you look at the budgets of the county and you have pie shape and you cut them in slices there will be less than one and a half percent of that money from the whole budget going to migrant farm workers. Less than that and now it is even less than *that*. So if you knew that there was an article in the paper, last week's paper I believe it was, that said that out of all the Hispanics coming to Minnesota, I think it was one out of seven was the one that was receiving assistance. It wasn't the Hispanics coming in that said, that the community says, "They are taking all our benefits." Benefits are there, if you qualify, no matter where you come from, who you are, you are going to receive them, but the Hispanics aren't taking. They are putting umpteen number of dollars into the system.

If you, people uh—you go to the cities and every time I go to the cities I when I stay at the Holiday Inn or where ever it is that I stay. You always have people of Hispanic descent working there, and I make it a point to ask, “Where you coming from?” And some say, “I am coming from Mexico, a certain part of Mexico.” “Why did you come here?” “My husband came here 20 years ago, he stayed and I came and I followed him later on.” And I said, “But you are not working full time.” Said, “I have two jobs, I get out of here, go to another one” I said, “How long are you planning on staying?” and the question is, “As soon as I finish paying for my house and everything is clear I am getting out of here.” The lady was telling me, “I have two jobs. One of my paychecks goes directly to the bank in Mexico or wherever I come from and I only survive with one half of paycheck and the same thing with my husband. Because this not my area. I am not going to be here.”

V: She doesn't feel she belongs there.

P: No, she says, “No, I only came here to work I am going back hopefully in about 3 or 4 years. When everything that I want is paid for, I am out of here. I will have enough money saved, then I can go back.” But all those people that are working here in the United States with their social security, or they're paying taxes. They will never see that. They are never going to collect it. And that's why the system. I don't know if you have heard this. They say that there is a lot of illegal people working in different establishments. If you were to take every illegal individual out of here, people that don't have the proper documentations, the system would collapse. Because they are paying to a social security whereas my social security and your social security that they are using those are the individuals that are going to benefit out of it. Not them because once they're done they can't work any longer, get out of here, I need somebody else that can do the job. So all that money is going to a system that they will never touch.

V: Well it was great to learn. If you guys have any questions...

Jindalay: Um... I just wanted to know what number child were from 12. (Pablo holds four fingers up) Number four?

P: Number four.

J: And did your brothers and sister did they all leave Texas?

(Pablo's Cellular phone rings)

P: Please hold. Sorry about that. Hello, Si...

[After conversation on phone, recording continues]

J: Now did your brothers and sisters, they left Texas?

P: Oh, Some of them did. I got one in—I got two in the Twin Cities. I was the first one to leave. To be leaving there. Then I have two of them live in the Twin Cities, one that lives in Colorado, and one in San Antonio, and the other ones are back in my territory where I grew up. But they have been all over the place that has been in Hawaii twice she lived in Hawaii twice, New York, West Point, she is in the military. And I had a brother that was living in Fargo but he moved down to the cities. I have a sister that lives in around the cities area, one of the suburbs and she also works for the state. She has always worked for the state. Once she got out of school. We are, as far as education-wise... Yes, I attended school here, and then I went to a trade school and from the trade school they pulled me out to see if I wanted to work for the state. I said sure, and I worked for twenty-two years for the state and then they, the state decided that they no longer were going to use my services and I would—I did not just work with Hispanics, I worked with everybody in the community. And on unemployment, ‘til this day I have quite a few people from the community that—that is how I was able to break a lot of the barriers because I would sit down I would talk to them, I would ask them, you know, “How did it go?” Cause there are a lot of jobs that are very seasonal and I would be able to help them with unemployment. Basically take hold of their hand and going through the motions and doing everything. And I did for twenty-two years you know I did all that, so I still have good rapport with some of the people that used to come and collect unemployment.

Or people that, I... throughout the year... I get people that says, “Well, do you remember me.” Very frankly, I say, “No I don’t remember who you are.” Said, “Well you sent me on a job umpteen number of years and I am still there.” Well that’s good, you know, At least I know I did something right. But I get those comments from people in the community. And so I – when they see me they talk to me and sometimes I have no idea who I am speaking with but I still listen to them. I was number four and I guess I – out of the twelve we were all alike and I think our parents would be very happy that all of us are productive. We don’t—none of us depend on a system or... but we always work.

J: What’s the age of the oldest and the youngest?

P: The oldest one just had a birthday and he is 56, and the youngest one is gonna have birthday on May 3 and she should be 36. Yeah she’ll be 36 years old.

J: Wow.

R: You had talked about how sometimes your kids aren’t accepted in certain situations. How do you feel, or how does that affect you when you see your kids not being accepted?

P: It hurts. It hurts because you know it’s not supposed to be that way. Supposedly it’s not supposed to happen, but it does happen, and either they have real tough skin or they can hide it very good, one of the two. But our son when he was growing up, he has a friend of his that has been his best friend since he was in the fifth grade, one goes to NDSU the other one goes here [MSUM]. And they see each other, and throughout their growing up ages when they, cause he went to a private school and

then from there he went to Oak Grove. Graduated from Oak Grove. His friend—his parents did not want him to mingle. You could see it but he stuck with it. His friend stuck with him and till this day I guess the parents gave up or what, but, uh, he goes to their house and they, now I guess they got used to him. But his friend, I have to give him a lot credit. He put up with I don't know what. But, to stick by my son's side to this day. And our daughter you know she's a very go-lucky individual; kinda goes along and, but she's also starting to notice that some of the people and some of the kids don't want to talk to her. I said, "Sweetie-pie that's life in this area." And we'll deal with it but, it is gonna be hard. She is getting older you could see that its starting to, its going to affect her but she doesn't want to move.

V: Basically why one of the main hard parts I perceive in living in Midwest is that yes, you are gonna find a better life, healthy life, healthy education, but culturally you have—you feel like you have a lack of something, you know. I mean not within your family. Sometimes you just want your kids to get out and see another Chicano, another, as I do, Turkish speaking your language, but, when you go feel that your daughter or your son is kind of being looked upon differently, it's like...I wish it didn't happen.

P: That's true. I wish it wouldn't happen but it does happen in this area. And I don't know I have never lived any other place except here and in Texas. And I grew up with two different groups of people. My group and another group from this community now and I don't have any. People don't want to talk to me, that's fine. I see it at work. I work for this university and I see it here. There are people that don't want to talk to me and I am pretty sure it's because of the color of my skin. But that's their problem. And if they want to talk to me, I got no problem; I can talk to them, I...all the way from A to Z, you know. I got no problem. It works to the point where sometimes you just wanna...if they give themselves a chance, and open up, they might change. They might change. There's still hope.

V: There's still hope.

P: And, but, you see it every day. I have to prove myself every single day of my life. Because when, whether it is at work, whether it is in the community I am measured with a different yardstick. Because of the color of my skin. When I live, when I am leaving my job site. And I work at night, and I work as a janitor here. I chose to do that work versus moving from this area. When I leave my station I have shaved, I have changed shirts, and I have combed my hair, 'cause when I walk out of that building I have to put a different picture. So those individuals that are working with me, or if I run—I am an ambassador.

V: That's true.

P: I am an ambassador for the University, whether I am working, or not. And if I am not shaved, and If I am not clean, and if I smell, I have a bar of soap, I have shaving kit and I have everything that I need to take a bath in my janitors cart. And some of my co-workers have asked me, "Why do you want to do this?" I say, "Because I am

measured by a different yardstick than you. When I walk out of there I have to present a different picture.”

V: You—It is really remind of one movie I just recently saw, I mean, I am sorry if it bad analogy, but just how your trying to...even I am trying to get out of the premises that I don't belong to and then become who I am outside. You know the movie is called *The Sand of a Sand*. [*The House of Sand and Fog*] Something like—something having to do with sand—it is a new release. But it is a beautiful movie. It's about an immigrant family from Iran. The husband works real hard to support family but after he gets out he has all these very fancy suits...he looks almost, I don't know, president, and everyone is amazed...what is going with you. So I mean it is good to be like that, you know, it is partially our culture, too. I don't know, I think sometimes when I used to work in Café Connection or Kise [Dining Hall] it is hard work lift up and clean, and at the end of work, I just wanted dressed up, you know, to preserve my culture. So, I know what you are saying exactly.

P: And many years ago, I have lived here for thirty years...thirty some odd years, but it is hard because every day you have to prove yourself, everyday you walk out there and it is a new day and I deal with it. I belong to quite a few committees at this University; I am laid back because I don't want to do much any more. I am too old to be a rebel.

V: No you are not (jokingly).

P: And so therefore...but I come across sometimes and I have had to fight for just about everything. A lot of people think I am very laid back, which I am. I never get upset, I never use foul language. I never lower myself to somebody else's standards. I am going to present myself one way and I am going to do it to the best, because I don't want to give no one an opportunity to find someplace to criticize me. You know well, he never combs his hair. Today, I walked all way from Fargo over here. So I came through Hornbacher's and got cooled off there -but what I am saying is that I have to present myself in the best light I can. This way you don't give them a window of opportunity for nothing, no criticisms. When I have to, when I believe in something that I know I am right I will push the envelope.

V: Well that's a good attitude!

P: And I hope you can make you know—put together whatever you are going to put together.

V: Oh we have learned a lot from you. And I think, not only learned a lot, I think by telling us it opens up our eyes as American Studies Major student what really the culture or the community is facing. What really...deeper in inside just the buildings and you know the offices...

P: One of the questions you had there was, “Where did your parents come from?” My parents were always here. If you look into the history of the United States, from the area where I come from and just straight south of San Antonio, is a little town called Roma, I don’t know if you ever heard of it. But that area was settled that way before Plymouth Rock.

V: Wow.

P: So my daughter had the same situation. “Where did your parents come from?” My parents were born here in the United States, Well how about their parents? They were born in the United States. My Dad served in the Service and he had no knowledge of the English language. He was in the Army so he had no schooling to begin with. So he didn’t know how to read, he didn’t know how to write, he didn’t know his mathematics. He learned it on his own. I won’t tell you how he learned it. But he learned it and he was able to function among whoever the service people were. And they were from all kinds of life and, but he was able to do it. A judge once asked him, “Why didn’t you, why don’t you speak English?” He was going for jury duty, and he told the judge, “If you ask me why my kids didn’t go to school, I will tell you why, but don’t ask me why I didn’t go to school because I have no idea.” Judges said, “Out.” They didn’t put him on the jury. But in the sense the United States, at one time, part of it was Mexico. Therefore when the United States took over people were here, they came from no place. They were here already. So therefore where did our, my grandparents and their parents come from? They were here. They have always been here. Some of them have been here longer than Plymouth Rock, you know, if we were to trace it back. We never came from any place. That’s when they say go back where you came from. I came from here. I was always here and, of course, when the United States took that particular land that was something else. But yet we still have the privileges of speaking our language, and my language is Spanish. My number one language.

V: I am learning Spanish

P: You are learning Español? Oh my goodness.

V: Hablo español un poquito

P: Un poquito. But a it’s a wonderful area to live here. You have different seasons you have different activities sporting events, I don’t know, sports in Texas is the thing. If you’re, on a Friday night I mean, wow woodee wee, you got all kinds of football teams going on and people flock to the stadiums to watch their kids play ball. Maybe I would do the same thing here if my son or my daughter were playing one of the sports, I don’t know. I never have had to go that route.

V: Do they play soccer?

P: No, it hurts too much

V: Oh, that is the best game!

P: Soccer has, of course, been the number one sport in the North and South of the United States. It's out there, but soccer hurts too much, especially around here. You guys have any more questions?

V: No thank you very much

P: Thank you.

V: It was delightful to learn all this information about you.