

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Eduardo Corona
Date: September 11, 2013

Informants: Eduardo Corona (EC)

Interviewer: Luke Sprunger (LS)

Transcriber: Pat Yama

LS: It is September 11th, 2013. We're at the Washington County Museum in Hillsboro. I am Luke Sprunger for the Washington County Museum. I'm also a graduate student at Portland State University.

Today I'm interviewing Eduardo Corona. Mr. Corona lives in Hillsboro and is the Director of the Small Business program for Mujeres Adelante [Adelante Mujeres]. So Mr. Corona for the record could you just state where you were born and where you grew up?

EC: Yeah, I was born pretty close to Mexico City. I was in the metropolitan area in Mexico City belonging to the *Estado de México*. That is the next federal entity, next to Mexico City. And I grew up there. I went to the school all the time until I graduated in Mexico City.

LS: Okay. And what was the school that you graduated from?

EC: Business Administration in Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (in Atzacapotalco).

LS: And then, before you came to Oregon you said you were working back and forth between California and Mexico?

EC: Yeah, I came to California in 1999 maybe and stay there a couple of years working in the recycling industry—helping out a recycler who was getting plastic and selling this plastic to Taiwan. And after that I came here to work in a telecommunications company here in Beaverton. I worked there for a year here and then they sent me back to Mexico to open a branch in Guadalajara. And I stayed there for a couple of years, also three years and after that I quit this company and I got my own job in another imports-exports company. But my wife keep working in this telecommunications company located in Beaverton and they transferred her back here to Oregon. That's why we came here in October 2010.

LS: Okay. So to go back to California when was that that you first started working there?

EC: Nineteen ninety-nine I think.

LS: And what part of the state was it?

EC: Los Angeles, pretty close. I was living in Riverside, California, the southwest part of Los Angeles but working in Compton, pretty close to Los Angeles and South Gate also.

LS: And this was a U.S.-based company that you worked for?

EC: Yeah.

LS: So how was life different in California from Mexico when you first came to California?

EC: It was a difficult transition, just very different living than just visiting. And at that time I felt a little segregation to the Latino community, especially myself I feel a couple of times being mistreated in some stores, some restaurants in Los Angeles. And the transition—just learning the language because it's very different speaking the language than the language you learn in school.

LS: Right. Okay, so you'd taken English classes then in school but hadn't spoken it as much?

EC: Yes.

LS: Okay. It is quite different. So had you been to the United States maybe to visit before you started working in California?

EC: Yeah. I was working for Hacienda Secretaría de Hacienda y Credito Público back in Mexico, which is the Mexican IRS. And I worked on the borders from 1991 to 1995. So it was very easy, just come and go for shopping or just vacations.

LS: So did you have maybe family members or friends that were living in California or the U.S. when you first started coming up for work?

EC: Not really. I have cousins, but I think there's no Mexican without cousins. I just find that there...but it wasn't a pretty close relationship. I didn't see them for years and it wasn't a determinant or important thing to go there.

LS: So were your children born in Mexico or California?

EC: Yeah, in California.

LS: Okay. I was going to ask if that was difficult for them to make the transition but obviously they were already there so...

EC: Yeah, 2007 when we took the opportunity to come back to—2008, we took the opportunity to go back to Mexico. I was thinking specifically of the kids because they don't want to speak much Spanish and I was just interested for them to come and see their roots and speak Spanish and learn Spanish. They were at that time English native speakers but I want them to learn Spanish from the beginning and also know the culture and be exposed to it. It was very difficult. They suffered a lot but now they are stronger and they know that they can live there or live here and they know that they have adaptation skills, which is my intention for taking them back.

LS: So when you raised them from the beginning were you speaking Spanish with them or—?

EC: Yeah. Even in the states we were trying to speak only in Spanish at home but when they were kids, when they were toddlers, my wife didn't work so she was all the time with them and they used to watch TV only in English. But all the time we were speaking Spanish. And when we were living in Mexico we watched TV only in English and we tried to speak English at home trying they not forget what they learn. Yeah, it's interesting.

LS: Is your wife from California or is she from Mexico?

EC: From Mexico City.

LS: Was that difficult for her making the transition?

EC: Yeah I think it was a little difficult for her. She didn't work so the church helped her a lot and I think even it was difficult for her. She wasn't exposed to this mistreatment from some mainstream people, some white people in California. And I think California there is more segregation-mind than here. I love here because here [it] is more open-minded to all cultures, more cosmopolitan and it's a fun experience. But in California yeah, it's more difficult. She took her own time to adapt to a new environment.

LS: So you already mentioned coming back to Oregon because of your wife's job. So can you talk about starting to work for Mujeres Adelante [Adelante Mujeres]?

EC: I didn't have much to do; when we came back I quit my job. I was doing imports exports in Mexico for a medical company. And when she was transferred we decided I could quit and come with her to support the family with the kids and the adaptation. It's not easy just giving up all your things, all your stuff, your car, your stuff and start all over again.

LS: Right.

EC: So she needed support at that time on that side so we decided I could quit and came here with her.

LS: Okay. So compared to living in California what adjustments did you have to make living here, how did that—I mean you've already talked some about how you feel that it's different socially but were there some other changes that you made or you noticed here?

EC: Yeah, the weather [*chuckles*]. And it's important because my daughter, now 14 years old—at that time she was five, maybe when we came here the first time and she just likes a lot of sports and swimming because California's summer all the time. And coming here was difficult for her and my son also because they have to stay at home most of the time because of the weather, because of the rain. And even my son has to take some K vitamin because he was a little depressed and doctor says it's because of the weather. That's very, very important for us. When we were living in Guadalajara it was very similar to California, not so hot so it's more friendly weather. And coming here in October was a total difference in the weather and it impacted on my kids' behavior and feelings also.

LS: So you have one son and one daughter?

EC: Yeah.

LS: And your son is how old?

EC: He is 12 years old and she's 14 years old.

LS: And then did you say you have other kids also or just those two?

EC: Yeah. I have another daughter. She's going to be 22 in November and she's studying Sociology in Mexico City in the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana also.

LS: Okay. So for your two children that are here, how do you feel about the opportunities for them to get an education or work towards their careers?

EC: It's very good, very good opportunities. We are happy having all this support. As I said my son was a little depressed when we came here in 2010 and we have a lot of support in the elementary school. And he is TAG (Talented and Gifted) student. I cannot remember what exactly what's TAG (Talented and Gifted) but I supposed he's advanced student.

LS: Okay. I'm sure it's just that school program.

EC: This is a program. He's a TAG student so he's now taking advanced classes in math and sciences. He's succeeding in almost everything in the school, but his feelings were hurt so we were working on that. We have a counselor in the school. I feel that it was very good compared to Guadalajara, Mexico.

And for him and also my daughter was so afraid the first time she came to the school that she was crying. She didn't want to go to the junior high. But we have again counselor in the junior high. We talked to the counselor and we have a tutor in the school and now she adapted very, very well. She's 14 years old. She's going to be 15 in November and she's a sophomore now. She's advanced also.

LS: So what schools are those that they both attend?

EC: She's now in Liberty High School. When we came here she was in Poynter Middle School. And my kid was in junior—West Union Elementary School and now in Poynter Middle School.

LS: Do you know much about their friends? Do they have a lot of friends that speak Spanish that are from Mexico or more English-speaking?

EC: Yeah my daughter is more to have Latina girl friends and she's got one, maybe two white girl friends. And she used to be friends with an Iranian girl but she left and she's missing her a lot. But mostly she's hanging out with Latina girl friends. And my boy, he is on a soccer team, and so there's all kinds of kids there but I think he's mostly having white and African friends, more broader ethnicities.

LS: Right, through his activities.

EC: Yeah because of the activities. He is more exposed to having more friends in different ethnicities, which is [something] I love.

LS: So to go back to your work experience right, now I think you said before that this is the first non-profit that you worked for. How is that different from your previous work experiences?

EC: I'm starting again in my career. It was a change of career. I was working my whole life. Even I was working in Mexican government agency. It was for—on the side of exports, customs and the rest of the time for 15 years or more maybe working in the private sector. And especially working in Mexico, working in California, especially you have to be proactive. You have to make money to your boss. And even here with this company, telecommunications company, you have to make money for your boss, so there's a lot of stress. You have to work on results. Sometimes it's a little tough on people, co-workers or subordinates. And you have to do results. You have to show outcomes to your boss, to your employer.

Then I didn't have much to do and I saw this opportunity. I was doing a little volunteering in KBOO, the community radio station. I was coming there a couple times for doing something positive, more than just washing the dishes and taking care of the kids and my wife. And I heard about this opportunity to become a business coach with the micro-development business Adelante Mujeres. And I decided I have the skills and I decided to come by and apply for it. And I started there and it was a total switch. I saw that there were more focus on people, not only the outcomes, and I had to learn how to do things differently from the private sector.

And then I took this fellowship program with NALCAB, National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders. It was a great opportunity. I was just entering the world of non-profits and taking this fellowship on leadership and asset-building was very, very great opportunity to know about it, the non-profits. And I learned that we have to balance the outcomes and the people in the non-profit. It's not only the people. Sometimes we are really focused on how the people do and [that they are] feeling well, and generally we want to have a friendly working environment and teaching environment that sometimes we tend to forget the outcomes. So we need to balance these things.

And I am starting a new career. I just have the opportunity because of NALCAB they decided to nominate me to Julio César Chávez award [César Chávez Champions of Change award] in the White House. I didn't want [it], but I was invited to be there at the White House in March 2012. And I had the opportunity to see all these leaders, nation-wide, learn a lot from them and met President Obama there and hearing what he was saying about our community. It's really empowering.

And after that I went on one of these training trips I went to Minneapolis and I met Cylvia Hayes, the First Lady of Oregon, and we talked a little. I was a talking about the contributions, the economic contributions our Latino community is doing to the state. And she invited me to participate in the Oregon Prosperity Initiative, which we are still working on that initiative to write the guidelines to include in the ten year budget, the governor's ten-year budget. And it's a total different experience than working in front of my computer and my assistant than just doing imports, exports or bookkeeping or financing. So it's very, very different working with people. It's a great opportunity. I'm so happy.

LS: Excellent. So can you describe more specifically what your program does and what skills it teaches participants?

EC: Yeah. Well our program provides for services to our work constituents. The first service is business education. We have a ten-week seminar where we teach Latino people how to write a business plan and how to implement it in real life. But the first thing is how to write the business plan. We are very, very business

plan-oriented because this is one of the weaknesses of our culture. We don't plan too much. The Latino people don't plan too much, so we are teaching the people the business that it is necessary to have a plan, to have goals, set some short-term goals and long-term goals and trying to work through these goals.

And the skills that we teach people is basically to be strategic and develop a marketing strategy and a financial strategy and operations strategy where we're going to include our core values, our organization that is the triple bottom line—that is economy, ecology and equality. So these three values have to be balanced. We want to make money and that's why we open a business, but also we are making money but being friendly with the environment. And also we respect people. So it's people, profit, planet. All these three things have the same value and the same weight in the plan. And that's what we're teaching in the ten-week seminar.

And the second service—once you graduate from the seminar you can become a part of our business network. There is an Adelante Empresas business network. And once you are a member of this network you have access to monthly meeting business coaching. So every month—it used to be me, but now we hired another business coach. So once you graduate from the class you have access to a monthly business coach where the coach is going to work with you on your specific business plan and implementing the business plan into reality. That's the second service—the business culture.

The third service is very important for our community because we don't have very much access to capital. And we have access to capital through IDA (Individual Development Accounts) program that is a matching savings program, three by one. For each dollar people save for their business, to invest in their business, the CASA (Community And Shelter Assistance Corporation) of Oregon through our organization provides them three dollars, and it's a very good opportunity to invest with. We have five or six cars all ready to give to the people because of this program and they can be more consistently traveling to visit their clients, providing services and so on.

LS: Okay so that's sort of like you're loaning them or letting them borrow the cars for business purposes?

EC: No, they purchase the cars through IDA, with the IDA money.

LS: Okay.

EC: And we help them out. This is a whole process but it still it is very valuable. And Adelante Mujeres was and thanks to the support of Cylvia Hayes, the First Lady of Oregon, we were the first organization in Oregon bringing the Kiva [microlending website] a loan—Kiva zero percent interest loan. Kiva has been working for ten years in Africa and other countries to provide these loans to

micro-entrepreneurs, zero percent interest and is crowdfunding based on the social media, loans. So it is interesting that here in Oregon we were the first organization that provided these loans. We have already three loans running for our participants.

So summarizing is education for business, is business coaching, and access to capital, the three services that we provide to our people.

LS: When was that that you first started working with Kiva?

EC: It was in April we funded the first—April 2013.

LS: So you mentioned the importance of business planning and access to capital. What are some other issues that some of the people have faced that are—for them, trying to start a business, what do you think are some of the obstacles that you try and help out with?

EC: I think the internalization of the stereotype is something we have to fight against. We need to break down this stereotype in our people. Sometimes we think that we are speaking with accent, we are a little stupid. We are not stupid, we just have an accent. And I tell people, “Albert Einstein never lost his accent.” So it’s important to break down this stereotype and tell people, “You are good people. You have the entrepreneurial spirit because you ask me.” I know because I did it for myself. We left home. We left our friends, our family, our stuff there and we came just looking for a better place and trying to empower people.

And that’s the mission of our organization—empowering the Latina women it started but now it’s everybody in other Latin places. The micro business development program is trying to empower everybody—men, women, boys, girls to open their own business because I think the Latino people as immigrants have the entrepreneurial spirit. So they just have to channelize this energy into a positive thing.

LS: So you just mentioned that your program is open to men and women. Can you talk maybe a little bit about maybe the majority of the people enrolled in your program—maybe they are of a certain age or from a certain location—maybe something about the demographics?

EC: I think 80% of the people in our program are Mexicans.

LS: Born in Mexico.

EC: Yeah, but also their rights and immigration. And we have Argentinean people. We have Peruvians, a lot of Peruvians, some Salvadorians and Guatemalan people also. And I think women and men is 50-50. It’s 50-50 people. And the age I think on average is between 30 to 35 years old. Most of our people

are just elementary school educated, but we have also masters in our classes and some [with] other economical opportunities, but mostly is people [that] don't have a big economic opportunity. But still they have the spirit and they have the intelligence to open their business. We have seen a lot of micro business having success through this program.

LS: I was about about to ask if you could talk about some of the successes either in terms of individuals or just the numbers of people that have started businesses since completing the program.

EC: We have an amazing answer from the community. In two years we've graduated about 100 people, about 100 people in four classes. Now we are starting a new class and the numbers are sometimes a little tricky. We have 75 people in our business network, and from them are 35 people with their own business already running with all their license, registration, and everything done, everything set up to run their business in that perfect way, competitive with the system.

And we have a couple of stories. The first Kiva loan was for La Popular [Catering Service]. She's Araceli. She's under—younger than thirty years old but she was in our program. She graduated from the program in 2012, I think, and she was working on her business plan. And we enrolled her in the IDA for having enough money to open her food business. And for working on that we have to wait up to three years until she finished the IDA program and get enough money to open her business. But now with Kiva we have this loan. It was the first loan and the First Lady of Oregon was involved so we funded this loan in four days because it was the first loan in the states, so everybody was aware and willing to participate in this first effort. And for this we funded a \$1,000 loan to her. With this \$1,000 she paid for her license and insurance and started to cook tamales and delicious birria [stew] and is starting to sell in the Forest Grove Farmers Market, which is run by Adelante Mujeres also.

And she started to sell her food there in May. So we had the loan in April and in May she started the business making some money. And in June she was at another location to sell in another farmers' market—Cedar Hills and Forest Grove and one more. I can't remember which one was the other one but she's selling in three different locations. In just one location she's selling every week 250 tamales, so she cut her job to half. She now is part-timer in her job and part-time in her business and we hope she's going to become full-time in her business sooner. Now we are working with her to develop a sauce to marinate meat and we will try to package the sauce and sell it through the supermarkets.

So these kinds of stories. We have another man, he started his business in 2011 even before ending the first class. He asked me for help because he lost his job. And he started to work in his business and he started the business with \$3,500. It was the only money he'd got in the pocket. We leased most of the equipment

and he started his business. He was cleaning carpets for ten years. So he knows equipment, he knows some people and we try to lease most of the equipment and lease van because you need a van with all the gears to do the job. And now, it was in March 2011, now he's owner of two vans. He is full-timer in his job, in his business. His wife is full-time and they have an employee there. So that kind of thing is...

LS: So it sounds like you're not just giving them the tools to start a business but also the tools to continue to grow that business as well.

EC: Yeah, exactly, through the business coaching we help the people to implement the business plan in reality and keep working with them until they graduate. I think we're going to start to talk about graduation with this guy and some of the guys that are ready to have services from other organizations that we are not able to provide because the level of the services that we do is start-ups but they're growing to this level they can't change.

And also we are teaching people how important is the marketing and networking. And we have a monthly networking event where we have all the people together. We bring a speaker and we talk at these networking events. We have a topic on business and help the people out to learn more about taxes, about insurance, about marketing, about networking, about social media and to keep growing in their business. It's very interesting all the energy that we have found in the community to work in their own business.

LS: It sounds like some excellent resources for people trying to get started and to keep going from there. It sounds like a lot, yeah.

EC: We try.

LS: I know you talked about people and the importance of overcoming some of the stereotypes against them when they're looking to start a business, or demonstrate how intelligent they really are. You also talked about segregation in California and discrimination there. I'm wondering if you could talk about some of the discrimination that you personally felt here in Oregon?

EC: I feel much more comfortable than in California, really, I love Portland and I love Hillsboro. My neighbors I think 80% are Indian from India, neighbors. And our friend of Japanese—my next door neighbor is Japanese guy. And we have also white people and a lot of Latino people hanging around.

And sometimes I feel, just a couple of time all these three years I feel discriminated especially in the service area, in the restaurants. I went to a restaurant here in Hillsboro and it was a horrible experience. The waitress yell at me. The manager came with his attitude and because they were taking too long to bring me a drink and I was upset because I was waiting too long for just drink.

And I complained and the manager came with his attitude that you have to wait, we know our job and we're going to do as good as we can but you have to wait. And the waitress came to me yelling at me so it was very disgusting, was a very disgusting thing. And I think it was because of my accent and my Latino face [laughs]. Otherwise I think I've been very comfortable here and I didn't have any other episode like that.

LS: Okay. So how do you feel that racism or prejudice operates here compared to California? I know you were saying that in California there was more segregation and things were more—is that essentially how you feel about it—the difference?

EC: Here is much better for all kind of people than in California.

LS: Okay. So you feel like when you were discriminated against here it was more of just that individual having a personal prejudice?

EC: Can you explain your last word?

LS: Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm not stating it the best—that when you felt discrimination here in Oregon that it was just some individual that they were racist, they had that, but it was sort of an isolated incidence?

EC: Isolated incidence, yes. Yes, I think so. I just canvassed with Best Project. They asked me to help them out. If we find Latino or Spanish-speaking people, I have to translate to the students so they asked me to help them out with this. And it was very interesting because we found this lady, 60 something, mainstream white lady. She was tough. She said that she was Republican and the first thing she said—well the survey was—do you agree to have the immigrants, undocumented, having their drivers license and rights for health insurance and things like that.

The first answer of this lady—she was a real tough lady—is that the undocumented people shouldn't be here and they were breaking the law and they have to leave the state. But I was talking to her and I asked her, “Do you know that your retirement check is made because of the cash flow that is produced by the work of everybody and even the immigrants, documented or undocumented, they're contributing to the social security, to all these taxes for making your check for your retirement? And don't you think it's better having immigrant labor than not having labor at all or just closing down some factories and sending them out of the country because of the lack of employees? Do you think that's better or could it be better to have immigrants working here? On the other hand, don't you think that denying the rights to drive to the people that are contributing with their taxes to the State is a racist measure from the government?”

When we were talking because I was asking, I wasn't looking for a confrontation but I want to know why she was thinking that way. And when we were talking she was changing and changing. And the last thing she said is that, "I'm Republican. I'm registered Republican for 30 years or something," I don't remember exactly what time she said, "But I don't support racist laws so I have to think myself about it."

So I think sometimes the internal decision of this stereotypes is a process in your mind, unconscious process in your mind and is lack of communication and education. It's what I think and that's what I feel, probably, here. That's why I feel very comfortable. People are open to hear, to speak up.

I've been in hearings for the driver's license in Salem and I hear all these guys telling things, but personally I didn't face a bad situation beyond that one that I told you.

LS: So to change topics a little bit, do you know many people who either they or their families are from Texas or the southwest rather than from Mexico directly?

EC: Texas? Living here? No. because the fellowship program was from NALCAB is based in San Antonio (Texas) and so I meet people from San Antonio, El Paso, McAllen.

LS: Okay, so you know people in Texas, but not here from Texas.

EC: But here I don't meet too much people [from Texas].

LS: Are you at all familiar with the history of the Mexican ancestry community here in this area?

EC: No, not really. I just know that there were this Bracero program, that everybody knows in Mexico that this Bracero program existed. And we know that people used to come here but personally in my family we weren't too close to these programs because we were in Mexico City. I think these programs were running in the rural area in Mexico especially in the north area. But we know that that exists, but not very familiar with that with the Bracero program or any other programs.

LS: So here do you feel like there's a general community of Spanish speaking people or people of Mexican, Latin American ancestry? In your work experiences or with people that you know on a friend level or a personal level do you feel like there's that sense of community? Do you feel like there's an overall sense of community among Spanish-speaking people or Latino people here?

EC: Yeah. I used to say that there's no Mexican without cousins, so people tend to develop strong family ties. And this is a little different than in other

communities. We as Latinos we develop very strong family ties but not strong community ties. So we are in a nucleus family and communicating with other Latino families. And we play together, we party together and we do a lot of things together but not as a sense of community organization for doing things in an organized way. This we have to work [on].

Sometimes we are isolated as a community from other communities. We are afraid. We are just afraid or maybe we don't understand another community and because of the number of Latino people here we tend to stay in the group. It's like we brought Mexico from the State of Mexico even here. We purchase our groceries in Mexican stores and we go to the parties with other Mexicans and we tend to organize with other Latinos but not open to multicultural. And that's a movement starting now to blend with other communities and other diversity. But at this moment I think we need to work a lot on this side to blend our Latino community with broader diversity and trying to break down this isolated sense of just Latinos that are here as a group.

LS: Do you know if the people enrolled in your program from Argentina or Guatemala, do you think they associate more with their friends or family or people from their own country?

EC: Yeah.

LS: So to go back to your personal history, how often do you go back to Mexico or how often have you been back?

EC: In 2011 I went there three times. In 2012 I was there one time and this year I didn't go back because of job and expenses to come back and especially because expenses. My wife's parents have gone and my parents have gone so our main family is here, that is us. And there's a lot of insecurity in Mexico, so we're trying to keep safe

LS: So it sounds like at this point you don't have so many personal or family ties in Mexico. Can you talk about maybe some of the cultural ties you feel?

EC: Yeah. Cultural ties, I love to be Mexican. I love Guadalajara. I am paying for a house in Guadalajara and I rent this house. And I have my daughter in Mexico and she's refusing to come here to visit us because she belongs in our family. And we are very close. But still, even in my trips to Mexico I didn't see her because she was in the university. But still we have very good communication through the social media. And I think this is a very good opportunity to communicate with people in Mexico through the social media—Facebook and Twitter.

And I don't need to travel to Mexico to participate in the social justice movement. It's experimental country. I have my Twitter account, 2,000 people on the Twitter

account and yesterday I have 1600 tweets about my opinion on the movement against the constitutional reforms that they're trying to do in Mexico. So I feel I don't need to travel, to be there, and I don't want to expense much money now. I'm saving money for a trip for my daughter. She's going to be 15 so we're going to do a trip with her, so we're saving money. And also, unfortunately, sadly we feel not very secure in Mexico because of all the things happening there.

LS: My next question is, how do you self identify? If someone asks you to identify or describe yourself, how would you do so?

EC: I'm a human being.

LS: Obviously being from Mexico—Mexican culture, both are very important to you but maybe you said for your children it's a little bit different because they were born in California. Could you talk about how they see themselves in relationship to Mexico?

EC: They call themselves Mexican American. I don't like very much that because there're no German Americans or Swedish Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Mexican Americans and on that side I don't like that too much because they're labeling, we're a minority. We are labeling ourselves or maybe somebody else is labeling us as a special kind of American. On the other side I love that they are mixing two cultures, Mexican or Latino friendship or closeness to friends and their family.

But on the other hand being Americans, working for the community having all these values about the community, the country, the things you have to do because it's their right, and feeling yourself that you have to speak up about yourself and your community. That's the other thing that I love. I love this combination in them.

And also I know myself I came here very late and I speak with a big accent but I identify with American values of community and speaking up and rights and citizenship. So in that sense I feel American, also, as them. And they love to be Mexicans also because when they were in Mexico we were trying to travel as much as we can to see the country. And they were in the schools. They have friends and now they're communicating with their friends through Facebook also.

I didn't take them to my trips to Mexico because I don't feel very secure. It's expensive. We don't have really something to do [there], so just living here. But still they're communicating with their friends through the social media and still have some kind of presence in Mexico also. And they have a lot of friends here. I think they're well adjusted to the school and to the society here and I love this combination.

LS: So do you feel that Oregon is your home?

EC: Yeah. I've travelled for such a long time that I think everywhere is my home. I try to be comfortable wherever I go. Find the good things and enjoy them.

LS: And obviously she's not here to say so but do you think your wife feels the same way or do you think she feels differently?

EC: No, I think she feels Oregonian. She loves Oregon because in 2010 we were talking about coming or not and she was very insistent to come not only because of the money. We are making much more money than we were making in similar positions in Mexico, than here. It wasn't that only but the way of life, the security for the kids, the opportunities for the kids and the security for the family especially. We had a couple of experiences in Mexico.

LS: So let me know if I'm not hearing you right but it sounds like even though there are some differences from elsewhere and you've had a few challenges or bad experiences but for the most part you feel, would you say comfortable here in this area?

EC: Yeah, I didn't have very bad experience here. I'm really happy and it's exciting for me. I'm starting a new career. In February I was the Latino person, *El Personaje Latino*, of the month with the newspaper, the Latino newspaper. They are recognizing the job we're doing that's very cool for us. In the private sector nobody recognizes your job and all this experience made me feel—identify with my community but also going to Salem working with this advisory committee with Oregon Prosperity Initiative I feel that I can bring my current views to this group. So I feel very happy here and I don't have really a bad experience. Sometimes a bad day but—*[laughs]*.

LS: Right. Well that's excellent, the impact that you and the organization are making in the community.

EC: Oh, thank you. We are trying to work as much as we can, trying to flourish our community, to help them out to contribute as much as we can to the community in the economic arena but also social and political impact that we can generate in a positive way. Trying to blend and trying to integrate the diversity into the broader community.

LS: I think that takes care of all my questions. Did you have anything else that you wanted to talk about that I didn't cover or to say for the record?

EC: I think that's it. Yeah.

LS: Okay. I'll go ahead and conclude the interview now. Thank you very much for your participation.

EC: Thank you for your time and thank you for the invitation.

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