

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Luz Villorroel
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L= Luz
M= Michael

M: This is Michael O'Rourke with the Washington County Historical Society beginning an interview today with Luz...uh, how do you pronounce your last name?

L: Luz **Marcell** Villorroel

M: Great, Luz I wanted to ask you a little about your background before we talk about what you've been doing here in Oregon and Washington County specifically. You were born in Mexico, is that right?

L: Yes

M: And when and where was that?

L: I was born in Guadalajara Mexico in July 1st 1951.

M: Okay, and what did your family do in Guadalajara at the time?

L: My family, my mother was a teacher, and, uhm, my mother divorced when I was about five. So basically she raised my twin sister and I by herself. She was a great inspiration to me because she value education, so basically she dedicated herself to working and making sure that we went to, you know, good schools.

M: Uh-huh. What are some of the first things you remember as a child growing up in Guadalajara?

L: Well the things that I remember the most is **Pietro d' Viado**. Which was a, is a beautiful theater where all kinds of arts are there for people to enjoy. So I remember that. I remember the beautiful city, the kindness of the people. I remember the churches; I remember my family, my mother, being very family-oriented. I mean every weekend she'd plan for us to spend time with a different relative. And later on she'd share with me, because when she found me being very naïve about a lot of, you know, a lot of things, she says, "there isn't a use for naivety because I always made sure that you, we visited the relatives that were going to share a positive impact in your lives." So I remember her, you know, very methodically planning our visits to different family members. And, usually I think her criteria was that they were kind. That they would be supportive of her because she was a single mom, you know, it wasn't very popular in her time; that they were not judgmental of her or us. So, I remember that, I remember the arts, I remember a small town called **Pornala** which was, like the mecca of pottery in Mexico. And then I remember some **Piedroclacapakay???** which is also pottery, glass blowing, a lot of art. I remember Zapopan because of its church, which, you know, it's incredible. I don't know if

you've ever been there, but its, they have a beautiful church, which is dedicated to the Virgin of Zapopan. So I remember basically Guadalajara is a multicultural, very diverse place. It's influenced by the Arabs, the French, by Asia. It is a very diverse city, very, very diverse, very multicultural.

M: So it's a stimulating place to live.

L: Very stimulating place...you know, Mariachi music. I remember the **Markado**. It's a city that, of course you know, I miss a lot...I miss a lot.

M: And you started school in Guadalajara then?

L: Yes, I started school in Guadalajara at age three. Actually my mom became the assistant director of that school, and it was called, "**Guadalia infantil**" which is uh children's... the literal translation is, "children's daycare", which was the first government daycare which was founded for children, for single moms. So most of the children that went there did not have a father, and were moms that worked very, very hard in very low wage jobs. So the wife of the governor at that time founded this, "**Guadalia**", and that was called, "**Guadalia Numero Uno**." So that's where I went to school and the school, what I remember the most is that they didn't teach us how to write. It was more like a Montessori; where we was a lot of activities, a lot of plays, a lot of interacting, a lot of poetry, dancing. So it was focused more in the child development, the physical, the motor skills, than the writing and the reading. So I liked that a lot.

M: And I assume, your first language was Spanish of course.

L: Yes, my first language was...

M: Did you, did you learn any English down there? Or were you just Spanish speaking then?

L: No we did learn some English, but, you know, basically it's like when you learn Spanish here. You just learn a few sentences but you never really master it or, you know, can communicate. You just learn a few sentences, you learn, maybe, to write a few words, but you know, I mean I did not know any English, I mean [Laughs] any literacy, or any type of grammar.

M: Did you enjoy school as a young girl?

L: I loved school; I have always loved school- that's my passion. I think that's why I became a teacher [Laughs].

M: What did you do in, just sort of in your spare time, when you're on your own in Guadalajara?

L: In Guadalajara? We spent a lot of time at the park. I don't know if you've been to Mexico, but in Guadalajara the parks are full of people. I mean here, when I go to the park I go, "God if this park was Mexico it'd be full, you know of children and old people, and people selling things whether its food or balloons or arts and crafts." I remember going to parks a lot. I remember spending time with my family. One of the things my mom loved to do was to take us to **Tonala**, so that we could learn about the native people, and the pottery, and the arts, the native arts. We went to **Teaitro do'voyado** on Sundays usually, and we listen to opera, we listen to **voaya, se coluiclo???**, so my family was very artistically oriented you know. What else did we do...I read, I play with dirt a lot because we would make our own dishes with mud, so you know, we did our own dishes, we entertained ourselves with uh...

M: Sort of like pottery?

L: Pottery, uh-huh. And then we also visited my relatives on my mother's side mother in a town called **San Miguel**, so we would go there at least twice a month, which is a village, which is a little town about an hour from Guadalajara at the time, because it was a very small, crooked road. So **San Miguel** lays close to Lake Chapala. And I remember spending there a lot of time and having a lot of fun because it was going from Guadalajara, a huge city to a small town, where you were free to just kind of do whatever you wanted and be very safe.

M: Uh-huh. And then at some point your mother met your step-father in Mexico, is that right?

L: Yes, uh-huh. My stepfather, his story goes that he was about to retire, so he would read a lot of magazines about Mexico, and Guatemala, and Central America. He was a gold-panner here in Oregon, besides being a plumber, so he would dream about going to Mexico and finding his gold nuts or gold coins. So he decided one winter to go down South, and as he walked into a market where my mother was doing some shopping he saw her, but then the following day, she was, she actually had three jobs: my mom was working at the market, besides being a teacher and being a Spanish teacher at an institute for American people, she was also working at the store. So he saw her and immediately he fell in love with her. So he went back to the trailer park where he was staying and then he asked the guy there to teach him how to say "Do you have a husband?" So he went back and asked my mom, "Do you have a husband?" And my mom thought he was crazy, because, you know, you don't ask that type of question to women in Mexico, you know, you ask other questions but you're not so direct. [Both Laugh]

M: And that was the first conversation she'd had with your step-father?

L: Right, right, that was the first conversation. So then she told him, "no..." and then she was very quiet, and kind of not very friendly because she thought, you know, "what type of a questions was that?" So then he didn't know what to say so went back and tried to learn a few more sentences and he would come back and ask her a sentence at a time. And then he realized that wasn't going to work so he brought in an interpreter, and then he asked my mom like probably the fourth time was, "she interested in going to Chapala?", which was very common in Guadalajara to go to Lake Chapala on the weekends, it's a huge.. it's the biggest lake in Mexico, and so people go there to eat fish or swim, or just enjoy the shade and the coolness of the lake. So my mother said, "Well...uhm... uh...usually the weekends are for my family." So he got kind of hurt, and he decided, "well I'm going back to the US." After he spent a few days, I guess he went back to the US and he asked my mom for her address. So what he did, he came back to the US and then wrote to her for about six months. But my mom really didn't want anything to do with him because she had made up her mind that she wasn't going to remarry until we were grown up. Because the expectation is you don't remarry in Mexico, the expectation is you stay single, you know, you should not remarry because step-fathers in our culture are not seen as something positive. Or step children are traditionally not treated positively by the step dad, so she was afraid that she would marry someone who would mistreat. So then she actually gave him my aunt's name and address, so my aunt couldn't figure out why she was getting these letters from this stranger, and she [my mom] goes, "well that's this man that I met." And my aunt, goes, "well why are you doing that to him? Just write, you don't lose anything from writing to him." And she [my mom] was a very strong woman so she said, "no". So he came back because they had sent the letter back. So he came back to Mexico and he looked her up again, found her, and then at that time my mother- oh no he would send us presents. He would send us boxes with like coal cream, and nuts, and you know things he didn't think we could get in Mexico, **sets?**, soap, things he thought in Mexico would be very

expensive. So then he went back, connected with her again, but now I think my mother decided it's okay for me to-oh no... Then I went through, around eleven years old, I went through this stage where I really wanted a father. So then I told her, "Why don't you remarry? You're a beautiful woman, you seem so alone, you work so hard." And she was, "Well let's pray." [Both start chuckling, Luz pauses a long time] Then we prayed about it, and I guess he arrived again. And she told me, "I have met a man, remember our prayer? I have met a man, you know, that's interested." And I go, "Really?" And she says, "Yeah. And he is coming today, is that okay with you?" And I go, "Of course!" And immediately when my three sisters and I met him... [Luz crying]...

M: That's okay.

L: [regaining composure]... Uh, we like him a lot, because he seemed really kind, like a really kind man, he was like twenty-some years older than my mom. He was very, very kind. He showed up with all these gifts from the US. I mean, he was wonderful. Well they, we dated, they dated [laughs] and it was so weird because my mom would always take us, we'd take her sister, we'd take several of the relatives wherever we went she would take a group of people, because we had a camper, and in Mexico you don't date by yourself. You date with a family, and everybody gets to know him, and then everybody approves of him and then you marry. So by now everybody's in love with him, because he's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful person. Only went to the third grade, but you know, he was just an outstanding man. By now he wanted my mom to go back with him, he wanted all of us to go back, and my mom said, "No, you know I need to get some things settled, and then maybe in the future I will go." So then he send us, because the girls are in the school right now so I can't get them up, so then he send us a ticket like in June to come to the US. So we met him in Laredo, because my mom had a sister that was a nun in Laredo, you see her plan was very family-oriented. So then we met him in Laredo, and then from there we traveled to Oregon. We traveled to Laredo in the train, we met him at my Aunt's convent, and then from there we stayed two or three weeks, and then we traveled. My aunt approved, my aunt totally approve of him, you know, she says, "Stanya? (moms name) you remarry, the girls need a father, its okay, he seems like a kind man." So my aunt approved. This is my mom's second sister, she had, there were three of them. So we traveled to the US, and then she meets his relatives: his son, and his daughters and their husbands and their wives, and then, of course they approve of her. So then we come back around December, and then they marry in Mexico.

M: Uh-huh. December of what year would this be?

L: December of probably...60... probably 61.

M: And then shortly after that you moved?

L: Then shortly after that then we come back to the US, and ever since then every six months we go back and forth.

M: Okay, so you made frequent trips back to Mexico then.

L: Frequent trips uh-huh. So we stay here from like March to Thanksgiving, and then for Thanksgiving when everybody, all the Walt family, his family, goes back to where they came from, we head back to Mexico every Thanksgiving. That was the ritual, you know? [Chuckles]

M: That's what you did then.

L: That is what we did.

M: And you were living in Grants Pass?

L: In Grants Pass uh-huh.

M: And what was that like for you, as what, a twelve year-old girl?

L: A twelve year-old

M: To come to Grants Pass, and be in this strange country?

L: Mm-hmm. It was exciting, but now when I look back, I thank God that I was so naive and innocent. Because now I look back on some of the things I went through, and it totally was ??, there was a lot of ignorance people there, there was a lot of racism. Later my father confessed that there was a strong KKK group there. And I remember him talking about the Sunset Rule, which meant that African American people had to get out of Grants Pass before Sunset otherwise they would be put in jail, probably hung too. It was okay, I think what made it tolerable is that we would stay there for six months and then we would go home for six months. Otherwise it would have been hard. And I loved school, and we were in a good school, so I think that's what helped things, you know that we were in a good school.

M: In Grants Pass?

L: In Grants Pass uh-huh.

M: But then you'd be out of school for long periods in the winter then?

L: No, because as soon as we got to Mexico my mom would put us in the private school.

M: Okay, so you'd school part of the year in Grants Pass and part of the year in Mexico?

L: In Mexico uh-huh. Except when I arrived in Grants Pass, they didn't know what to do with my twin sister and I. They did not know what to do with somebody that did not speak English. So what they did, they put us in special education. So we were in special ed for I don't know how long, I don't remember...I do not remember how long I was there. So we were in special ed for a while. And that was a shock to me, because I came from a school where I was like the top ten in my class. And here I am in special ed, and back then special ed was not what it is today, I mean children with very severe physical and mental disabilities were put in this room with one teacher, and so, I mean, I was like shocked that we were in this room. And what I do remember was is the one day I was crying, and I guess I refused to participate anymore. And they brought an interpreter, they brought the Spanish teacher from the high school to interpret for us and basically I told them I don't want to be here. I think that's when they realized, that they had not placed us in the right place. So that was traumatic I think.

M: And then did that change anything? Did they move you?

L: That did change. What I remember was then going into the third grade, instead of the special ed we were sent to the third grade to learn how to read. So instead of being with the sixth graders we were sent to the third grade.

M: So basically they just didn't know how to handle you.

L: They didn't know how to handle, you know, people who didn't speak English. They did not know.

M: And was there any kind of Hispanic presence at Grants Pass at that time?

L: No, we were probably the only family there. Later on I heard that there was a woman, and I don't know who she was married to, out in Junction City. So that's it. And then two Korean young ladies arrived when we were in junior high. I remember there were four of us. And I remember being harassed, but I was so naive, that I just, you know...

M: What kind of harassment?

L: Like we were called, "Niggers", and things like that. "Did you bring me some **Mardiguana** from Mexico?" "Is it true that in Mexico you eat with your hands?" Silly things like that, you know stereotypes. Something like, "When are you going back?" I remember certain children wanting to play with us, so what I would do is I would internalize it. I didn't think it was because of my race I thought it was because of me. So I would internalize a lot of that, a lot of what was happening.

M: Yeah, sure. Well you wouldn't understand at that age really.

L: Right.

M: And so you eventually learned English then?

L: We learned English. I remember a lot of my friends talking about college and going away, and I didn't know what that meant. So I was like, "what are they talking about?" So one day the Spanish teacher asked if somebody asked if I would volunteer to host a young lady that was coming from the University of Oregon to visit Grants Pass. Because I guess part of the deal for her scholarship was to come to Grants Pass and do presentations about her country, and I can't remember her country, I think it was Costa Rica. So I hosted her, and I remember we went to pick her up at the bus station, my mom and my dad, and I. And then she stay with me and then she went to school with me for two or three days, and then before she went back she invited me to visit her at the U of O. So, you know I didn't know what that meant, but I said, "Yeah! If my mom lets me go I will go." Then she told me how to get on the bus and how to get there and she would pick me up. So I did that, and shortly after that I went to the U of O, She picked me up, I spent the night a couple of days, she showed me the University of Oregon and I go, "well what does this mean?" And she explained to me the concept of university after high school. And I go, "Ohhh so this is where my friends are coming after high school." So no counselor, no teacher, nobody had ever talked to me about college. So when I went back on Monday, I remember I was really angry at my counselor. I was like, "How come you didn't tell me I could go to a university?" She was like, "I didn't think you would want to go. I thought you wanted to be a nurse's aide." Because I was a nurse's aide between the age of 16 and the time I went to college.

M: You worked a job as a nurse's aide?

L: Yes. As soon as I got out of school from 3-11 I was a nurse's aide.

M: Starting in high school then huh?

L: Uh-huh, when I was 16. Actually, first I became a kitchen aide, and then I volunteered at the hospital as a candy striper, and then in the summer I became a nurse's aide. S between 16 and 18, I was a nurse's aide, a candy striper, kitchen aide, and then one summer I was a maid for the rest home I worked at.

M: So what's a candy striper?

L: Candy striper means that you volunteer at a hospital, you go and take them water, you clean their little garbage bags, you talk to them.

M: Okay I see.

L: Anyways, so when the counselor realized I wanted to go to college, and when I told the mom of my best friend that, "I want to go to college. What do I need to do? How do I go about it?" I said, "I don't have any money." So she talked to her mom who was in charge of scholarships, and the mom quickly came up with this funding which was called the Robert F Kennedy Scholarship, because RFK was just shot a few months earlier I guess. It was in 69? When was he shot, do you remember? Was it 68?

M: Uhm...66 I think?

L: 66? Well they developed this Robert F Kennedy scholarship, and that was how I ended up going to college. But it was like last minute.

M: Actually I think it was 68.

L: 68? Okay. So that's how I ended up going to college, because my parents really didn't have money. The nice thing was since my dad was retired, social security would pay for me until I was 21. So those two- the scholarship and the social security- actually ended up putting me through college for my undergraduate.

M: And now you said when you arrived in Grants Pass at age 12, they took out of the special education class and put you in third grade reading, but were you still able then to graduate school at the normal age.

L: Yes. Well I actually graduated a year later. Instead of graduating at 17, we graduated at the end of 18 years old. Because what happened was, when we would go to Mexico our math skills would just rise, so when we came back here they would give us math tests and we would be like 9th grade instead of 7th grade level. So that's how they figured these girls are okay, you know?

M: Yeah I can see where that would help.

L: So it's the math that made a big difference.

M: Yeah, and going to Mexico during those 6 months in the winter probably really helped you catch up on subjects where you maybe weren't learning them as well because of the language problem.

L: Right. I remember taking the SAT and in the English SAT I placed in like the 10th percentile, which meant that I really couldn't make it in college. But then luckily, I don't know who thought of it, but they said take the Spanish version and I placed in the 98th percentile. So, you know, that kind of gave me the edge, and the score to get me to college.

M: And so how was college for you once you got in?

L: It was exciting. I liked it a lot. It was in 69, so that was about the time of the civil rights, the anti-Vietnam war, the women's movement, and the Chicano farm worker's movement came along. So it was exciting because it was a time when I opened up my eyes to a lot of things. Especially I remember one day when I was freshmen, I went to a meeting that was organized by the United Farm Workers because Independence was predominantly farm land, and a lot of farm workers there. So these men came from California to organize the college students, I don't know if you remember the Chicano movement during the 60's, late 60's?

M: Uh- huh.

L: So these guys came to organize the Latino community at the ??? College Chicano- so the Espanols. So I went to this meeting, and I remember him talking about the unfair practices for farm workers, the unfair wages, the unfair housing that they had, the unfair schooling that they got, and I remember getting up and say that he was wrong. God, I was so naive! Because they were talking about a system, the white system being racist, being classist, being unfair, and I go, "No but look how we're all here at college! How can you say this white system is bad, or is racist?" [Laughs] And two men, after that took me aside, they were Patrick- he's still in the area, he was like the head of the Indian Affairs, and then Jim Montoya, he was the head of Chicano Affairs, and they worked at the college. So then they took me aside and said, "We would like to take you to lunch one of these days." And I said, "Okay!" And I was really outspoken, because I would read a lot and, you know, coming from a private school in Mexico, all girls' school- where, I mean, it was good to talk, I wasn't supposed to keep quiet. So then they picked me up one day, and they said, "Before we take you to lunch we're going to give you a tour of a migrant camp." And I said, "Okay!" So they took me to the migrant camp in Jefferson. And at that time I went like, "Oh my God!" It became very clear what they were talking about, what that guy was talking about. I mean, I had not been a migrant worker, I had not ever picked anything, I came from Guadalajara where we lived very privileged. So I felt so bad that his was happening, and I got so angry, so I got really in the Chicano movement. I got really involved with a nun that organized the Right to Read program, which meant that college students, part of their college credit would be to teach farm workers or new immigrants how to read and write. So I got really involved in that, I got really involved in starting the first Cinco de Maya in Monmouth, in Corvallis, and I started the first vallay se coluiclo??? in Monmouth, in Corvallis, Independence area, and Salem. So I start like the first dance group for small children, ve clouric group.

M: And how did you do that?

L: How did I do that? What motivated me was this woman that, I remember, wanted us to do a fashion show. She wanted us to do a fashion show of Latino dresses, so happened to have some because my sister had given me a couple of them. So then we did that, and after that, I decided this would be a really good way to teach culture, because when I was teaching children how to write in the Right to Read program, what I noticed is that they didn't have self-esteem. They didn't know who they were, they didn't know where they had come from, and I noticed that was impacting their work in school, their attention in school. So I thought one way for me to be able to make a difference in their life and to improve their writing and reading skills, and their

self esteem is through dance, through their culture, because, I noticed that's what we had done in Mexico. So then that's how I started the dance groups. And there was a family there that was really supportive of what I was doing. And then I met this lady who helped me write a grant through the Arts... and Performance? It was an association in Oregon that gives money to people who want to start programs that have to do with the arts. So then she wrote a grant for me and got me money to buy dresses for the children, money to travel throughout the state, we were on TV, we went from school to school during Cinco de Mayo, from college to college performing. So that was highlight of my life, I really enjoyed that.

M: Sound like that would be quite rewarding.

L: It was very rewarding.

M: And how many people were in the dance group?

L: In the dance group anywhere from 12-30 students. And they were little like, junior high to high school. Some of those people are teachers now, they're teaching dancing, or their children are teaching dancing.

M: And so this is all during the time you were at Monmouth doing your undergraduate?

L: Uh-huh.

M: And then you went on after that to Oregon State for your Masters? Is that right?

L: Uh-huh. Let me tell you a little bit about Mom; let me go back just a few steps. When I was about to go to college, my mother had a hard time letting go, because in Mexico children don't go far away to college, they stay in the same city, or if they do leave they live with relatives. And so she wanted to move with me to Monmouth. In view of this she told my dad, "Well we need to sell this house, and we're going with her to Monmouth." And at that point I had become, like, Americanized and I said, "No you're not! [Laughs] My friend's parents aren't moving and they're not dropping everything for their kids, it will all be okay! You've given me a good example; you've taught me how to fly. I'm like a bird- I don't want you to put me in a cage now and don't let me fly." And she would kind of argue the whole summer, it was like, "We're going to move with you!" So that was a hard part for me because it was hard for me to go against her, and see her- she would get sad because she felt 200 miles was too far. But eventually she got over it.

M: And then you'd go back and visit I assume?

L: I did. The first trimester I went every week. She was expecting it every week. Luckily, there was a friend of mine from Grants Pass that went back and forth every week because she had a boyfriend there. So that's who I rode with every week. And then it got less and less, and then she would come down, they would come down.

M: And so you graduated in 73 from Monmouth?

L: Uh-huh, I graduated in 73.

M: And then you went on to Oregon State to do a Masters. Did you have any idea then of what you wanted to do with your education?

L: No, because I didn't even know there was a possibility of doing a Masters or a PHD. I was just so involved in becoming a teacher

Tape cuts off from 33:37 to 34:16

L:...out of the system [laughs]. So I got a phone call from a former classmate of mine who was much older and who had been really nice to me throughout my senior year. He was a police officer on the campus and he was from California, he was Latino, really, really nice and kind man. And we would have these intellectual conversations, and we would argue. So once that summer that I graduated he called me and he says, "You know Oregon State got his huge grant for students like yourself to get their masters. How would you like to apply for the program?" And I go "Masters? What is that?" I didn't know. So he said, "Well why don't I make an appointment and we'll get together and I'll tell you about it." So he did, he brought all the applications, he told me about, he didn't even give me a chance, he just said, "You fill in here, you sign here and you will hear from Oregon State pretty soon." So that's how I ended up doing my masters at Oregon State. So I went through the counseling program, but at that time they realized that the population of Latinos in certain states was growing and they didn't have the staff. So then they developed this program to grow or to graduate more minorities in the masters counseling program- Oregon State did that. So at that time there were about 10 minorities in the program. There was Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, I don't remember Asians, but those three groups were in that program, and most of us graduated and are doing fairly good in our careers.

M: Did you find any differences going to Oregon State compared to Monmouth? In terms of the community or your relationship with people at the school?

L: Actually my relationships in Monmouth were really good, with the Deans; because it was a small campus they were really nice. I mean, I remember people being super nice and really accommodating, especially they did not judge us- that's what I liked about Monmouth, it was small too. Oregon State I was very fortunate because I ended up with this cohort of people that basically were, what they call, economically disadvantaged, first generation in college. So we ended up with a lot of support. I ended up working, I would go to school full time, but then I would work half time at the EOP Program: The Education Opportunities Program, and they were very supportive, very, very supportive, and that's where I found my first mentor which was Dr Larry Griggs who is currently the director of the EOP special programs. So he was my mentor.

M: He was someone who really influenced you at that time then?

L: Yes, he's African American, he was a director- he's still a director, and what I liked about him was that he was very student-centered. The student always came first for him, and he instilled that in us. No matter what, the students come first, we take care of students, we are here to help students, we are here to educate students. So he trained me a lot on student development, student retention, on programs to develop to make sure that they stay in school, so as a result of what he has done, EOP has like an 80% graduation rate- which is a high percentage. So Oregon State was nice. Again I got very involved multiculturally, so I started the first dance group **vallay fo clorico???** for Mexican folk dancing. We started probably the first Cinco de Mayo celebration there.

M: In Corvallis?

L: In Corvallis uh-huh. And this is from what, 73 to 75?

M: There was then a fairly large Hispanic community at that time?

L: No, not really- maybe about 25 at least identifiably and visible.

M: So the Cinco de Mayo festival was attended by the greater community?

L: The greater community, it was attended by the parents and the families of the students there. Later on it grew into more than 400, to where we would have to stop selling tickets because the room would fill up.

M: And then after Oregon State, you went to work in migrant education programs? And this is in Salem/ Woodburn area?

L: Yes. Let me go back to Oregon State on more step because I forgot. During this time, the African American students had gotten a center called Black Cultural Center, so then my mentor said, "There's a small house that they're going to tear down. I would like for the Chicanos to have their own cultural center. How would you and two or three students like to go and advocate for this?" And I said, "Well what, how do we do that?" And he says, "What I want you to do is go and talk to Dr **Chick** and tell him that you would like for them not to tear the small house down and to make it a Chicano cultural center." And I thought it was going to be really hard going up there because this was still during the civil rights movement, during the Chicano movement, where you kind of went a demanded things. You didn't go and ask and wrote a proposal, you kind of said, "We're going to take over if you don't give it to us!" [both laugh] And when talked to Dr **Chick** actually he goes, "Sure! Why not? You can have it."

M: [Both laugh] This was too easy huh?

L: Then later on he told me, "Luz, I can never say no to you!" [still laughing] But he was so nice, he was wonderful. So then we got that center, and we started doing activities. Now if you go to Oregon State it's a much bigger center. The little house is still there, from what the students tell me they're still trying to tear it down, they're still trying to get rid of it because you got to see that there's the alumni center, Gil Coliseum, and then residence halls, so there's this little house in the middle of this huge new development. So it's kind of funny, I don't know if you've ever been there, but if you go there check it out- it's called Cesar Chavez now. And that center went through a lot of developmental stages, I mean first we call it the Center Chicano Cultural, and then I left and a group called the **Eye of the Chicanos** who were there at the time left, and then the group of Latinos came in so it went from that to the Latino Cultural Center and then it became the Hispanic Cultural Center. So the last time I was there in 1997, 1998...? Well the last time I was there anyways then we changed it to Cesar Chavez because Cesar Chavez passed away so we went through a proposal and a whole year of kind of changing the name. So now it's Cesar Chavez cultural center.

M: And then after Oregon State you did go into counseling for migrant education?

L: Yes

M: And so now you made your first visit to a migrant camp maybe four of five years earlier, something like that? And you worked in that for how many years?

L: I worked for migrant education in Woodburn School District for about a year, but then I continued with the HEP, which was also part of the migrant population program, high school equivalency program which served migrant and settled migrant students in Eugene.

M: Right and that was at the University of Oregon?

L: At the University of Oregon uh-huh.

M: So at that time what was the situation with respect to education in the migrant camps? What sort of help did they need?

L: Migrant education had been in other states but it was just kind of being implemented in Oregon. There was a lot of money at the time so they were developing a lot of materials, developing systems. Besides working all year long, we would also do an eight-week summer program. So that's how I got to work both for the Woodburn School District and the migrant program. At the time there was a lot being done for migrant students, a lot more than I think is done today, because right now they only do like a four week summer program. The climate I think was good just because the whole era, the states and the federal funding was much more...not as tight as it is today, not as conservative as it is today. So actually the programs were doing really well, we got a lot of training, that's how I got to do a lot of travels throughout the state and visit camps and develop parent programs, because part of the philosophy was you involve the parents in the education. At the time **Francisco Lauado** was the director, a very strong advocate, a former migrant himself, so he was a strong advocate for migrant programs.

M: Well one of things you worked with was the parents. Was that any sort of problem? I mean it sounds almost within most of the Mexican immigrants that I've talked to that the parents are actually fairly interested in education, and probably promote it, but maybe not all parents do that, and maybe they don't promote it equally for their sons and their daughters, I dunno, but was it easy to talk to parents about the value of education and get them involved?

L: Actually it was easy in the sense that the students were eager to learn, and most of the parents wanted us to do what we were doing, but once in a while there was a parent that thought because I was a female that I had no right in trying to influence their daughters to get an education. Especially because at the time I was already about 24, 25 and I was not married, so what kind of example was that going to set for their daughters? And what kind of example was I going to set if I was out all hours of the night transporting kids and teaching kids how to dance and involving them in different programs. To them, it was like, "That's not the job of a woman, of a good woman." So you write, your comment is well taken, because not all parents were supportive. But what I found is the parents that were not supportive, were like second and third generation here, who kind of got stuck with the rural mentality of Mexico maybe a hundred years ago. So they did not realize that in Mexico, education was valued and it was okay for woman to get an education.

M: That things had sort of changed huh?

L: Right. So they were kind of stuck, and we would go like, "Mexico is not like that anymore!" So that was the population that was hard to work with. All those people who came from Texas who had kind of had been used to being in their place, who didn't feel that education would serve a good purpose, but mainly it was a gender issue with the parents that I had difficulty with. And I could probably say one or two verbally said something to me. But for the most part they were

very supportive, very supportive. But there was definitely a gender issue there, and still there is, that hasn't changed a lot I don't think.

M: I imagine that's true.

L: Uh-huh. I mean some people won't admit it, but I know it hasn't changed much. The expectation of a woman is very different then the expectation of a man.

M: And that probably just comes, to some extent, out of the traditional culture?

L: I don't know if it's traditional culture, or if it's more economic. Because it is here, not in Mexico, because in Mexico if you go to a village education is valued- it's just not as accessible. But here I find that it is more of a lack of awareness, it is more tied to economics. I mean why should you go get an education when right now we need the money and you can get a job over there for five, six dollars an hour and you're going to be fine. So I see it more tied to economics here, I see it more that way I think. And the idea, the notion that a woman's going to get married anyways so her husband's going to take care of her so why should she? But I think that's changing, not because they want to, but it's a must. One person cannot minimum wage support a family. So they're changing just by the need to survive economically.

M: Uh-huh. Now you also worked, right after this period, for Oregon State for a while in their Education Opportunity program.

L: Yes. I went back to Oregon State, if you notice I keep going back to Oregon State [chuckles], I went back and worked there. Well when I was working for migrant education, I worked for McMinnville High School also. So I work like three years in three different places. And then I went back to Oregon State...oh I worked for the high school equivalency program in Woodburn School 74-75, 75-76 was University of Oregon HEP program, and from there I went to McMinnville for the migrant program, and then from there I went back to Oregon State for while-several years. And I was an advisor, a counselor, and a recruiter, and of course I organized and developed cultural opportunities for the students.

M: And during this period of your young adult life, out of school, you mentioned earlier that you would go to Mexico during the winter every year with your family. Were you still making trips to Mexico?

L: Yes! Every year I would go at Christmas time for two of three weeks. In fact, I would plan my finals so that I would be done and be able to spend at least three weeks in the winter, and then I would go back in the summer. And that's when I would go back and take dancing lessons, and would enjoy the company of my family, so I did throughout...actually I did that all the way until about 1980, 81. And then I didn't go until last year. So from 81 till last year I guess when I ended up going again.

M: Okay so there's a long stretch there where you didn't go to Mexico. Now but you also went to Venezuela. What was that all about?

L: Okay, I got my masters, had several jobs, and then in 1979 while I was working at Oregon State for several years, I met a guy from Venezuela who became my husband. We got married, went there, had my son in Venezuela, and had placenta previous so I had that life-after-death experience, which was a turning point for me spiritually, mentally, and in a lot of ways, I mean, it was a turning point for me.

M: So you almost died?

L: I almost died, yeah. It was hard, but in a way I'm glad I went through that, it changed my life completely- it totally changed my life. I became more focused in wanting to help people; I mean I was already doing that but I was also focusing on dancing and entertainment. But now I really want to focus on one goal and that is to help student succeed. That became my role, and, of course, to raise my son. So then I did not adjust well to Venezuela, it was too hot, too humid. The woman's place was really good as far as career, like women could do really well career-wise, they were respected, accepted, but I found that her personal life with her husband or her boyfriend was like a double standard. And I found that very hard, very, very hard, and you were supposed to accept it, you just take it and you succeed in your career but it was a double standard in your personal life. So I didn't like that, so I decided to come back. Then a couple of years later my husband and I divorced, because I didn't want to go there, he couldn't stay here because he had a commitment with his scholarship. He had come on a scholarship- remember when the petroleum in Venezuela, they were getting really rich, so he was one of those students that they sent on their scholarship. So then he had to go back, and I didn't want to leave, so we just kind of grew apart and divorced. Then, after I came back I decided, actually my mentor from Oregon State encouraged me to go for my doctorate. He said, "You know, if other people can do it, so can you!" And I still didn't feel confident; again I was like, "What's this doctorate all about?" And then I met a guy from the Dominican Republic and he was doing his doctorate in agriculture, and I respected him a lot, I thought, "Wow here's this guy from the Dominican Republic, really smart, obviously." And then I thought, "If he can do it, I can do it!" That's when I kind of connected it. I didn't connect it when my mentor was telling me because I had not seen a role model- now this is where I think role models are really important for Latinos. So that's when I connected it, and he also encouraged me. I was working for the financial aid office at Oregon State, and just about that time Nixon came into office. And you know, I don't know if you are a Republican, but I notice when the Republicans come into the picture education money gets so terrible [laughs] so all of a sudden I didn't have a job. But then later on I learned that the reason I didn't have a job is because I had been at a protest march in Corvallis against...who were they bombing at the time, Iran?

M: Cambodia maybe?

L: In 1979? 1981?

M: Oh okay no...

L: Well we were bombing someone, and I then went to the protest march, and the director of financial aid didn't like it and that's why he fired me. He just told me one day, "I don't want you back, I don't need you anymore." And I was like, "Why? What's going on?" And later on I learned that this is why, because I had participated in a march and here somebody had seen me at that march. And I was so hurt because I thought, "This is a free country, how can this be happening?" So then I went to my mentor and told him about it and he said, "Don't worry about it, we'll figure something out." So then he made an appointment for me to see the president of Oregon State, who at the time was Dr. McVicker., and my mentor told me what to say: that I had lost my job, and I wanted to do my PHD, and did he have any more funding, did he have any more Presidential Scholarships; and McVicker, I don't know if you've heard of McVicker, but he was a really nice guy. So then he said, "I do believe I have some funding left, I am going to have my secretary check into it and I will get back to you by the end of the week." So I think that was like a Monday, so by the following Monday or Friday, I had a letter from him where he

said he had awarded me some money to do my doctorate. So I went ahead and did my doctorate in four years, and at the same time that I was doing my doctorate, I was also serving on the board of directors for the health clinic for **Salu D'familia** in Woodburn. That was one of the things that I was really involved in, serving on that. I learned a lot about health issues and for people, and health issues of the migrant people. I was attending training conferences in San Antonio, in Washington DC. I learned a lot about how the people who were coming from Latin America were taking teas and herbs, and how that was affecting modern medicine, so I became an advocate of the community of teaching them not to mix the two. So I became like and education of that issue- not to mix...

M: Modern medicine and traditional medicine.

L: Exactly. So I became very active in that. I did my thesis on a comparison of self esteem of four year college students and two- year college students. And that was an interesting study because I hypothesized that four year college students would have a better self esteem than two year Latino students- I did just Latino/ Chicano students- and I found out that it wasn't true.

M: It wasn't true?

L: No. Two year college students have a higher self esteem than four year college students. Isn't that interesting? And one of the things I found was that they stay close to home, they stay in their communities, they don't have to go through this culture shock, through this internalized racism like you do when you transplant into another city, another state. So that was really interesting for me. Then I learned that self esteem is impacted by your reading scores. So I use a lot of that information in working with students now. And that was an interesting time, I learned a lot, during the PhD I got really involved with women's interests. I challenged my classmates and teachers a lot because I was learning about student development theories, and none of the developmental theories actually took into consideration culture or economics, they were kind of theorizing just one group of people. So it was interesting to challenge some of the theories. So I was the devil's advocate. [laughs]

M: So you notice, you felt this sort of unfairness of losing your job because you marched in that march. With your growing awareness and growing understanding of the issue of discrimination and political terms, did you have any personal encounters still yourself with discrimination during this period of time apart from the business of the march?

L: Let me go back to Monmouth, when I was in my undergraduate, because that was the critical point when it hit me that what I had been facing in Oregon wasn't me, it was a racist environment, or an ignorant environment. When I was in my freshman year of college, I became aware of African American people, so when I told my mom about it she didn't even challenge and said, "Get to know them. They're people with a rich history." And she told me a little bit about their history because she had been a teacher, and so I got to know them better, and this young African American woman, who became one of my best friends, came to visit me in the dorms, and after she leaves- she was really dark, really dark, chocolate face, really beautiful lady- I was in the residence hall, the woman across the hall opens her door, and I go, "Hi Susan!" and she goes, "You nigger-lover!" And I go, "What??" And she slams the door in my face. So then the next time I saw Gloria (who was my African American friend) I go, "What does nigger- lover mean?" Oh my gosh, she says, "Who said that to you? Where did you hear that?" Because she, by now, knew I was kind of naive about the language and the racist attitudes, and I was still very naive. And I said, "Well that girl." And she goes over there, and she just let her have it verbally, I didn't know what they said because still I didn't feel like I understood enough

English that I got so shocked that I didn't know what they say. But it was at that point that I realized, oh my God, there's a racist attitude. And she taught me a lot about the attitude, because she would share with me, and there are times that I honestly feel that I wish I had never opened up my eyes to that. There are times when I wish I had stayed innocent and naive. The other day one of the retention specialists from Beaverton School District wanted the gay and lesbian students to become more aware and I go, "You know what? Let them be innocent, because if I had known more at the time I would have been....." And she goes, "No, let them be angry." And I go, "No, just let them grow at their own pace." Because there are times when I'm glad that I was naive, because that's how I survived- being naïve. You know, people would say things like "?????" and I go, "Oh haha." Or they would call me "nigger" and because in Mexico, because I'm the darker skinned child of the family I was called "neggerita" so thought they were just calling me "niggerita", but if I had been really aware, maybe I would have gotten angry, and would have been self destroyed in High School.

M: It might have been too much to handle.

L: Yes, too much to handle. For in college instead of being self- destroyed I turned that anger in courage. And that's when I started doing all this activism of education, education, education. So that was a turning point for me. But going back to Oregon State, and the discrimination, and the unfairness... I shared this with my dad, my dad being Anglo, of course he would have perspective of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant, and he would share his point of view, but he was also very supportive of civil rights, he was a strong union man- so that gave me a sense of justice because he would talk about these things. So I became also very strongly a supporter of unions and pro-activism, and I think that's what gave me my sense of leadership, my sense of self-esteem by becoming proactive. And there were times when I reacted and there were times when I alienated people, and there are still times when I do that [laughs], because it is very enraging to see the injustice, but now I think I've learned to become more like turning my anger into more pro- activism and courage, and I'm at the point where I think I'm more mature. But I still get angry [laughs]. But that's when I say, "Well then we need to do this", and I identify the ways to solve the problem- that's how I move forward.

M: Okay and then after Oregon State you went to U of O briefly and worked there as a coordinator for special programs of minorities?

L: I actually applied for a job at Oregon State, and I can't remember what I applied for, but I remember I was told that I was never going to be hired because I had graduated from Oregon State, and that's the point that I felt so unfairly treated again. So I went ahead and applied for the job at U of O which was with the Council for Minorities Education. And I was working, that was a good point for me, that was another turning point for me, because I was working for a group...are you familiar with the University of Oregon?

M: Not too familiar

L: Well I worked for Oregon State, then I worked for the U of O, and I worked for Reed College, PSU, and U of O is kind of a unique place in that they think they're very liberal but when I worked there I learned that they're stuck in the 60's and they're really not that liberal. At least the people that I worked with okay, I'm generalizing- because the people that I worked with were not really reading so they were totally stuck in the 60's mentality, so at times I found their tactics almost offensive. For example, I was working with all students of color, and when the athletes would come in a lot of the women would be anti males, and I would be like, "Why are they treating African American males like that? They deserve the same respect." So I would

challenge those women, so here they were so liberal that they couldn't take my challenge. So that's when around seven months into my job that my director told me that she wasn't going to rehire me the following year because I didn't know how to be a team player.

M: Hold on for one second. [Switches tape- silence for about a minute] This is the second part of the interview with Luz Villorroel on April 17th 2001. So go ahead- you were saying?

L: So she told me she wasn't going to rehire me, but what I found interesting is she told me while I ended up in the hospital. I actually ended up feeling so depressed because of the way that they were treating students that I was like, "What is going here?" Here I had finished a PHD, I was supposedly an expert in student development and retention programs, and this group of women were not valuing and yet they had hired me for those same reasons. So I found their politics kind of dirty, real nasty and backward. So I got depressed, I ended up in the hospital, I actually ended up going back to work and fighting this case through the civil rights, did not win, but luckily I got another job in the meantime, so I ended up going to Bellingham and working there, getting a really good job and enjoy that a lot. I really enjoyed that a lot. So this was in 87.

M: So in Bellingham you were working also at the university there?

L: Western Washington University uh-huh.

M: And as coordinator of diversity programs and coordinator of diversity programs and minority achievements scholarships?

L: Uh-huh. I actually instituted that program, and they were diving like 25 \$5,000 scholarships to diversify the campus, to bring more minorities, and it was a good program. I worked under a guy by the name of Ron Martinez who had a vision, really really nice man; he was the director of financial aid. He's now in California actually, with the financial aid center, huge financial aid administration. There was a wonderful experiment because at the time they brought 25 students for the purpose of diversifying, but when I started to organize retention programs and events I noted that the students were not showing up to the events and I wondered. So what I did, at the end of winter quarter, I put a stop to their scholarship, that they had to come and meet with me, because they weren't coming. So then I learned that all these students were very, yes they had a minority name, or they had claimed they were a minority, but most of them were not a visible minority. If they were African American they were mixed with white, if they were Latino they were mixed with either white or another race, so they were very mixed, very upper-class. They weren't the traditional minority students that I was working with, which were migrant, low income, very visible minorities. So I thought, "Okay, that's why they're not coming to these retention programs because I was planning programs like I had at Oregon State, thinking that the population was the same. So then I got in trouble there too because I noticed that they didn't have any Native Americans and we were surrounded by like five Indian nations. And I go, "What is this?" I told Ron Martinez, "What is this? This is not fair! We should at least have five Native Americans in this program." And he goes, "Well none of them applied." And I go, "Well what was the effort? How did you go about it?" And he says, "Well this is what we did." And I go, "That doesn't work." So I started mingling or doing a lot of interaction and networking with the Native American tribes.

M: That must have been interesting.

L: Oh, it was very interesting! And, of course, the college personnel had the idea that Indians would never make it here because every time one of theirs dies, they take four or five days to attend the funeral or their ritual, so they will never make it here. And I was like, "Well if you make the rules very clear and if you allow for that, I mean I'm sure no more than one relative will die a year. [Chuckles] So you can give them five days- so what?" So they would make excuses, and I got in trouble because I advocated for, "if you're going to have the scholarship and if you really want diversity you cannot just bring in different colors of the same economic". I said, "If you want diversity, you also need to put scholarships for low economic whites, first generation whites, poor Native Americans, and first generation Native Americans. I mean if you really want diversity we need to do it that way, because this way you're just making yourself look good without really making much effort. So the following year we did improve that actually, we had about 15 first generations, 7 Native Americans, and the financial aid effort office made a bigger effort to give more scholarships first generation whites and low income whites- and these are all scholarships, not financial aid, because financial aid will go to anybody who needs it. It was interesting because I learned a lot about the Indian tribes, I learned about the treaties, I learned about their spiritual life, so for me it was a wonderful experience, wonderful experience and Bellingham is just beautiful, and being so close to Canada, being so close to Victoria- I was just in love, just enchanted!

M: I was just in Victoria last weekend!

L: Were you? Oh I love Victoria! [both laugh] It was beautiful, just beautiful, but, you know, I learned that Washington is more politically aware than we are, I think. They're very active, and more pro-active as a state. I worked for Oregon Department of Social and Health Services, I forgot to tell you that, right after I left that job then I worked for, not Oregon... it was Department of Health Services for the state of Washington and I also served on the Commission of Hispanic Affairs. That was interesting, because at the time they were trying to pass the English-Only Bill, so I worked very hard on that- not to have that. But still we passed the English Class Bill, which meant English is the official language, but we also acknowledged that there are other languages. So that was a neat period. I also traveled a lot throughout the state, because the commission actually had monthly meeting at different parts of the state, so it was neat- I learned a lot about government and the deals.

M: And this was in Oregon?

L: No, in Bellingham. It was a wonderful time.

M: And what brought you back to Oregon then?

L: My son really missed my family. My son really wanted to be with his cousins, he had cousins who lived in Corvallis. So I called my mentor again and said, "I really want to go back to Corvallis, is there any you can help me to get a job?" And he said, "Well, let me look and see." Then at the time he got a grant that was called a College Assistant Migrant Program grant, which was specifically to work with the college-age students who had been migrant workers. So then he hired me. I'd do advising, counseling, and then I got a teaching position in the college too. And that's when I started working for the women's studies department, and I taught the first time the Chicana Feminism class was taught at Oregon State.

M: And did you have to develop the curriculum for that class then?

L: I had to develop the syllabus and the curriculum, and at the time there were already a lot of materials coming out so it wasn't hard.

M: What was your objective for your students in this women's studies class?

L: My objective was to teach about the contributions of the Mexican- American women from before the Europeans came to the present. I did that, my objective was, of course, to teach about the country- which was the Mexican- American Chicana women in the history of the US, the contributions we have made from prior to the Europeans to the present. And to raise also the self-esteem of Chicana women that were taking my class. At the time the Latino population was about 400 at Oregon State so I actually had a class of about 50 students, and I taught it for about 4 years.

M: And were your student's pretty open to these ideas?

L: The women were, the men were very hard to teach. [laughs] The Chicano men, the Latino men, were very hard to teach.

M: And so you had some men students then in this class as well.

L: Oh yes, and they challenged me. I remember we started a women's support group because we found the women had a high rate of pregnancy by the middle of the freshmen year, so we started support groups, we started pregnancy prevention groups, and we started support groups for sexual harassment because the men were harassing the young ladies a lot. Because, imagine we have 400 Latinos at Oregon State, and they come from different backgrounds, most of them first generation in college, a lot of them come from fathers who were very chauvinistic. So it was interesting, we developed these programs to make sure that they felt supported. The men took an offence to it, because we were focusing a lot on the female issues, so we decided we need to do something for the men. But the men, unfortunately, were in denial so it didn't go, it didn't fly unfortunately, it just kind of died down, and the guy who was supposed to facilitate it was also in that mode of thought, so he didn't make it happen.

M: And then you came up to Portland to Reed College for a couple of years?

L: Yes. We lost the grant, so my immediate supervisor said, "You know, we lost the grant, I'm going to rewrite the grant, I doubt we will get it." I worked for him for like four years, another colleague and I worked really hard, I mean we worked really really hard, because here, all of a sudden, we had all these Latinos, we had to do retention, we were also doing recruitment, so he said, "You know, I checked your unemployment, I would like you to go sign up, because if you sign up right now, by the time the grant runs out you will get the maximum- and I want you to think about taking a year off. He was a wonderful man, Milton West? out of Salem, he goes, " I want you to take some time off- you deserve it Luz." And I kind of took it, like almost as offence, but then I told my mother, because my mom and I were very close, and she goes, "You know, he's right. You deserve it. If he's telling you that, you need to listen to him, don't take an offence- listen to him; because you told me he has always looked out for you, so just go ahead and go for it." So I did, I took a year off, not a year, but about six of seven months. It was a wonderful time for me, it was just great, because that time I was very selfish; I basically spent a lot of time with my son, exercised, did a lot of spiritual reading, so I grew spiritually and my strength became spiritually better than ever. So just about two months before my unemployment ran out, I got the job offer from Reed College. For about a month I was like, "One month left of unemployment..." and then I got the offer from Reed College.

M: And you were the assistant dean of admissions?

L: Yes.

M: And did your work continue to be focused on minority communities at that time?

L: Yes, that was why I was hired. I was hired to do minority student recruitment. It wasn't my primary responsibility, but it was one of a list of four other responsibilities. So I worked there for two or three years. I felt very privileged; I traveled a lot throughout the state, like in the most expensive hotel in whatever city they sent me, because I had to interview students, and in order for me to interview students they had to come of this plush, luxurious hotel. But I felt very disconnected with my community, and I felt like this was, I almost felt like this was a gift for me to have worked there because I learned a lot, I wrote a children's book which I hope to publish soon, I saw a different environment, I saw students with different attitudes, it was very easy. I also saw that money doesn't necessarily buy happiness, because a lot of the students, they were from very rich homes **actually**, but were not very happy or did not even know how to enjoy life, from my perspective. So I spent a lot of time with students sharing with them that you can be studious, you can be an intellectual, but you don't have to totally submerge yourself in that, you can have a balance. I think that's why the president hired me, because he felt like I had that attitude, and a lot of the students there, feel really just committed to studying, and it's really self-destructive. So I worked a lot with all students, I worked in a multicultural center with their retention programs. I was able to implement a program where we actually flew in students from different parts of the states. Unfortunately, many of them did not choose Reed because they had offers from Harvard, Stanford, from UCLA, so it really was maybe the lesser choice. And we were not successful, except we were successful with first generation, because again I asked the president, "You need to also look at including first generation whites, because I think they are a group that, by themselves, are never going to be coming here." So we did, and that's where my numbers went up. So that was a success in that area.

M: So you left the job at Reed because of this feeling of isolation?

L: I left Reed because I think it was time to leave. I did feel isolated, I did feel very privileged. My mother got very sick, so it was time for me to take care of her, so I took care of her for about six months. And it was safe for me to go back to Corvallis, and just kind of retreat again. I had already had a taste of being unemployed once, so this time that kind of gave me the feeling it was okay to be unemployed again. So I did qualify for unemployment, and so I was able to spend more time with my mom, take care of my son, and kind of reflect. And then about six months later, I got a job with the YWCA in Salem, and I was a director of diversity. Wonderful organization, I don't know if you're familiar with the YWCA? They have a very long history of liberal thinking, so I liked it a lot, I learned a lot. I organized a conference for diversity training in Salem for government employees, along with other people, at Willamette University, and it was very successful. Then when I was working for the Y, I got a phone call from PCC that they were looking for a counselor, and I don't know if you know, but there are very few bilingual counselors. So when they called me and I learned that...well working for the Y again was another privileged job, so I felt that PCC would be going back to higher education, which is why I went and got my credentials so I felt almost guilty that I wasn't in higher ed, and then when I heard that the pay was much better than what I was making- I mean it was almost twice as much- that also was a big motivator to come back to PCC.

M: And this is PCC here?

L: Here in Rock Creek uh-huh. And I worked for them for a year.

M: And then you went to Beaverton School District?

L: Uh-huh. I worked for PCC for a year where I was the bilingual counselor, I also was the mentorship program instructor, and co-coordinator of activities for the Oregon Leadership Institute. Then one of the mentors that was part of the Beaverton School District went and told her boss about my kind of work, and my kind of retention history, and program development, and then they came in and looked for me. They asked me if I could meet with them, that they had a position open and that they wanted to meet with me. So they took me out to dinner, asked me a few questions, and they basically asked me if I was interested in a job. I told them I would apply and would like to know more about it, I did, and then I got the job offer.

M: Okay well, I want to ask you two more questions; I hope we can do it in five minutes.

L: I hope so, too. [both laugh] I'll try to be brief.

M: That's okay. Well first of all, so I take it when you started working up here, that you started developing some awareness of the Hispanic community here in Washington County. I wonder, what you'd say about the community here in terms of comparing it to other places you've been?

L: Well the community here is very new, it's mostly new immigrants. Economically, they're not doing too good, they're working very hard, a lot of them are undocumented, unfortunately. I hate that term, and I hate even that concept, because I don't think anyone should be undocumented in a continent like America, especially when these people work very, very hard. Most of the Latinos or Hispanos that I know around here have two or three jobs, most of them are restaurant workers, cleaning crew, hardworking people, a lot of them have their own business. They're very eager to learn, every ESL class, every language survival class is full; I'm familiar because I still continue to promote those classes with PCC and through Beaverton School District. So I think that, as an educator, I need to promote that we continue to educate that group of people, because they are the people that are the future leaders of our country, and if we don't give them the right education in our economic system, I think then it's a risk, I really feel that. If most of them are just trained to be restaurant workers, and cleanup crews, then in 20-30 years we're going to be short. I mean we could import people from other countries, but why not grow our own here, why not be supportive of our own. I hope I answered your question?

M: Yeah that's good. And I wonder to what extent you're aware of some of the organizations that are here in the Washington County Hispanic Community such as Center Cultural for instance, and I guess the Catholic church here in Cornelius and other places has been a focal point for the community as well, and of course there's the Virginia Garcia Clinic- you must know a little about what they're up to because you worked earlier in the clinic in Woodburn. How can you comment on these various organizations in the community, what would you say about their role and how they've helped people?

L: I think their role, hopefully, is to keep up with the growth, to realistically plan their goals and objectives around what's the need of the community, and hopefully not stuck in what was appropriate in the 60's, 70's or even 80's. I think their role is to educate, but also to hold the members accountable. There's a lot of problems with drinking, drugs, and illegal activities- I think that we need to provide a center for new immigrants, where they can go learn that it is illegal to drive without insurance, that it is illegal to drive without a license, have some kind of

center where new immigrants can just walk in, and they can be educated about all kinds of situations. And I don't see that happening, I mean it happens here and there, but I don't see a center where we can actually just say, "Okay I'm a new immigrant, I'm going to go there, whether I'm documented or not, I can get some training, some education about the society and what is expected of me." We have a lot of young men ending up in jail, because they don't know they're not supposed to drive without a license, and if they do they take it for granted. Right now I have a father in jail, because he thought that if he just went back to Mexico when he broke the law in California in regards to his license, that if he just went away and came back that it would be okay, and it wasn't okay- he got caught, he's in jail. Just because he didn't think that not paying a ticket would haunt him the rest of his life, because there was a warrant for his arrest. So when they stopped him and they check, they go, "in California you're wanted" so they sent him back there. So little things like that, so I think the role of these organizations is to keep up with the need of the community, and I think that we have a long history of providing services as a community and taking care of our own, but I think we really need to keep up with what's needed today, maybe even what's going to be needed tomorrow. Like learning centers, I would like to see more learning centers for Latinos, where they can go and students can have access to computers, they can have access to someone helping them with homework, a lot of the parents don't have the knowhow to help their children with their homework, how to learn, how to read.

M: What about the Beaverton School District now, is there a fair Hispanic student body there?

L: Yes, we have at least 25% minority and ESL students. I love working for Beaverton School District, we have a superintendent who is amazing. She came from Texas, and so she also hired a woman from Texas who is the director of special programs including ESL and special ed, and both of them have a vision, and they've been in San Antonio where things have improved, so they are bringing their vision from there to here. But the difference is that the population here is different than San Antonio and I've just come back from a conference so I'm seeing a big difference, so it's going to be a challenge. But I love working for Beaverton School District because they have a lot of committed people, they have a lot of commitment to the students, I noticed that.

M: And of course, I guess there's yourself, there's a lot of other Hispanics now involved in the school systems out here. There's Enedelia Hernandez out in Cornelius as principal, so I guess the Latino presence in the school system in Washington County has grown quite a bit in the last thirty years or so.

L: It has.

M: Well, they've just about kicked us out here. [both laugh]

L: I didn't realize it was this late! I talked a lot, I'm sorry!

M: Oh no, that's quite alright. I wanted to thank you very much for doing the interview, and I wondered if there's any other final thought that we haven't talked about that you'd like to say anything about, in another minute or two?

L: Well I have a son whose name is Carlos Antonio Javier Marcell Villorroel, he's going to PCC and I hope that he gets an education like I did. And I hope that these historical- oral historical tapes serve a purpose, and I really believe in oral history, and I'm really glad that you're doing

this, and I'm really grateful that you asked me to do this interview, and I apologize for putting it off for so long [laughs].

M: That's okay, it sounds like you're a very busy person, and I'm glad we got it done at least.

L: Yes I am! Well thank you! Thank you so much!

M: Okay well thank you Luz, it was a pleasure meeting you.

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