

Oral History Interview

November 3, 1998

Interviewer: Elizabeth R. Carter

Interviewee: Maria Huerta

ERC: What is your name?

MH: My name is Maria Huerta

ERC: Where were you born?

MH: I was born in Mexico

ERC: And how long did you live there?

MH: Oh, I was there until my twentieth birthday, so twenty years

ERC: Tell me a little bit about your family

MH: Okay, my family is consisting of two parents, eight sisters and two brothers. Both of my parents were born and raised in the country where they met each other and got married. Life out in the country is different from life in the city, to live out in the country get a little tough at times. In some areas there is no roads, running water or electricity and things get tough when there is an emergency of any kind.

ERC: What was life like in your hometown?

MH: It was a very warm, loving environment. There's not too much pressure and people learn how to cope with whatever life brings along. Everyone will help each other-kind of take care of each other in every way they can- but the opportunities are limited compared to those in a bigger city.

ERC: Where did you go to school and what was that like?

MH: Since my parents lived on a remote area where schools were near impossible, many children did not get the opportunity to go to school at their appropriate ages. For myself, by the time school was available in the area where I lived, I was already in my early teens, and I was only able to get through elementary education. It was a different type of schooling compared with what is available now, but because the learning opportunity was available later in my life, I enjoyed it at its maximum when it came.

ERC: What did you do for your job before you came to the United States? Did you have any kind of employment?

MH: I left my home at a very young age and went in search for better opportunities in life. By the time I was 20 years old, I had gone through many jobs, which at my early searches many of them became inhuman, especially if you are young and do not have experience dealing with people who just take advantage of the situation.

ERC: And did you enjoy working in the city?

MH: After I learn how to deal with people, yes I did enjoy the city life.

ERC: Once you got older, how did you usually spend you free time?

MH: As I got older and became more confident of myself and was able to manage to get around easily. Since I work 12 to 13 hours daily Monday to Saturday my free time was very limited. It was only 1/2 days on Sundays and I used those hours to go to church and do my laundry and personal chores.

ERC: Was your family active in church in Mexico?

don't have the right to take that away from them now. Sometime I think I should go back, but it's not fair to my kids. They deserve more.

ERC: In what ways has your life been changed the most by your decision to come to America?

MH: I think it's all the people you knew when you were growing up, all the friends you have, all the important, because even if you're a little poor, you invite all these people. Everybody is so important to you. Now you go back, and you hardly recognize those people, even your family you kind of pull apart from them because you have been apart so long, that you kind of just grow apart, it's not the same closeness that we used to have.

ERC: Have you been happy here and would you make the same decision again do you think?

MH: If I was single, and didn't have any kids, I would. But now I have my kids, and to me my kids are the first thing and I would do whatever it takes to do the best for them. So I don't think that I'd like to be moving around or going to different places.

ERC: What is it that you do now with your job with the CASA program? And how did you come to get that job?

MH: Ok, well, it's a long story. With the CASA program I serve as a secretary. I think the main purpose is kinda keep in contact with the parents that do not speak English. I call them up and share whatever information they need to know. And how I came across, like I said before, my kids are very important to me. My youngest one was six years old, he was going to start first grade in the fall, in September. In August, in eighty five, we were in a car accident pretty bad, and so I was waiting for my youngest one to go full time at school so I can start, you know, saying "now it's my turn to go and get a full time job", and you know, maybe trying to get whatever I always wanted, or whatever everybody wants: beautiful car, nice home, everything. So, knowing that the kids were going to be most of the day in school, so I was able to do that. But, because of that, I wasn't able to get a full time job because we were injured pretty bad and the injuries lasted for a long time. So, while I was recuperating, this job came open, and Debbie, the girl that works in Upward Bound, the secretary, is my sister-in-law, so she's the one that got me the job.

ERC: Is there anything else that you wanted to add to the interview-that you think we should know?

MH: Well, I've really enjoyed living over here and I'm glad I made the decision to come to the states. And now, I know my language is not perfect, but I always try to improve it. Now I have become a U.S. citizen, so that means I will stay here for good. But I also like to go back and visit, and I'm able to be a U.S.A. citizen and a Mexican citizen, so I have both.

ERC: Well, I think that's about it.