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Elise Kelly

Victor Garcia

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Profile

Narrator Name: Victor Garcia

Interviewer: Elise Kelly

Author: Elise Kelly

Date of Interview: 04/28/11

Subject: Oral History Interview with the President of Del Pueblo Inc, a non-profit organization dedicated to community building and advocacy for the empowerment of Spanish-speaking persons. He discusses his life and his service in community involvement.

Key Words:

Mexico City, Mexico

Immigration

Macalester College

St. Benedict's College

University of Missouri - Kansas City

University of Missouri – Columbia

Antioch College

Latino Community Issues

Clark County, Ohio

Del Pueblo Inc.

Immigration Reform

Cultural Festivals

Community

Viva La Iguladad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Don Victor Garcia, HST 708: Oral History Seminar, Dr. Marjorie McLellan, Spring Quarter 2011

Victor Garcia was born in the outskirts of Mexico City, Mexico in 1940. He spent his early years attending several different schools including a Catholic school, a boarding school, and a vocational school. He enjoyed having the experiences of growing up in a country where its culture is grounded in traditional practices. He and his family would often attend religious feast celebrations and festivals that celebrated Mexican history and culture. At an early age, Garcia exhibited his gifted leadership skills. He was a Boy Scout leader and a leader on his local neighborhood soccer team. When he was twenty- two years

old, he left Mexico with his father and immigrated to the United States. Garcia states that he “never forgets that day of March 8, 1962.”¹

Garcia and his father arrived in the small town of Canon Falls, Minnesota. Here his father bought and raised hosting cattle. After raising the cattle, his father transported the cattle down to Mexico. Garcia did not accompany his father on this journey and stayed with a Yugoslavian-American family in St. Paul, Minnesota. During his stay he became close friends with the Stanish's son and he attended special English speech classes at Macalester College. After honing his skills in the English language, Garcia enrolled at St. Benedict's College in Atchison, Kansas. During his undergrad years, he became the president of the Foreign Student Organization where he helped to disseminate and educate people about different cultures of the world. He also became a leader on the school's soccer team. After playing for three years, Garcia decided to quit his senior year and focus on his studies in order to get into a graduate program.

Garcia entered a Spanish literature graduate program at the University of Missouri - Kansas City. For a year and a half he studied there and then went on to get his PHD in Spanish literature and linguistics at the University of Missouri - Columbia. Before he finished his dissertation he was hired at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Garcia appreciated Antioch's emphasis on co-op and community programs as well as facilitating international experiences for students. Two years after Garcia was hired Antioch went through a difficult time period. Students, faculty, and staff went on strike because of unfair administrative practices. Garcia and other faculty members that went on strike were laid off. Fortunately, within the year the president of the college reinstated all the faculty members. During Garcia's time at Antioch, he helped implement programs and courses of study where advanced comprehension in a second language was emphasized. After thirty-one years of service, Garcia retired in 2002 from Antioch.

During the late 1990s several of Garcia's former students began to develop community programs for Latinos in the area. In 2002 they approached Garcia and asked him to participate in Del Pueblo Inc. and the following year he became the president of this

¹ Victor Garcia, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Iguladad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Don Victor Garcia, University Library, Wright State University, April 28, 2011.

non-profit organization. As leader, he began to network with all the Latino community organizations in the local area in order to obtain guidance and gain support. Del Pueblo provides educational programs in the local school districts, offers information and referral service, and presents lectures at agricultural and university meetings. According to Garcia, Del Pueblo's main goal and mission is to "to build the community and empower the Latino people so they can navigate in the system."² During the early part of the last decade, Latino businesses in Springfield were thriving. In order to develop a relationship with these businesses Steve Anzur, the executive director of the Small Business Development Center, wanted to increase his center's visibility in the Latino community. In order to help him accomplish this he worked "with Garcia and Marjorie Coleman, both from Del Pueblo, to gear SBDC's presentations to the Latino population."³ Del Pueblo also sets up an informational booth at local cultural festivals. Here visitors have the opportunity to learn about the services that Del Pueblo offers as well the different cultures they serve.

Outside of his work at Del Pueblo, Garcia has sponsored and directed an inaugural symposium at Antioch College on the daily struggle of immigrants. Audience members had the chance to learn about immigrant children labor and immigration reform legislation. Garcia has also helped with cultural festivals outside of Del Pueblo. He has helped assemble a Day of the Dead celebration and through this celebration Garcia finds and teaches "a vital holism. He explains in a past newspaper article that, 'In Native culture, the land is used to provide for the community in a sustainable way - not to make profits at the expense of the land. The universe, gods, people and soil are all connected in a cycle of life and death. There has to be reciprocity. In order to get from the earth, you have to give to the earth.'"⁴ People had the chance to learn about these wonderful ideas and practices of native cultures. As the board member of Dayton's Matricula Consular program, Garcia helps plan and work at this event. This program which is sponsored in Indianapolis, Indiana provides immigrants with passports and id identification papers. Garcia also teaches Spanish once a week at Wittenberg University and Antioch College.

² Victor Garcia, interviewed by Elise Kelly, *Viva La Iguladad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Don Victor Garcia*, University Library, Wright State University, April 28, 2011.

³ MB Hopkins, "El Dia De Los Muertos The Day of the Dead: Death is Part of Life in Mexican Celebration," *Dayton Daily News*, November 2, 2002, C1.

⁴ Elaine Morris Roberts, "Latinos Build Business Opportunities in Springfield," *Dayton Daily News*, April 26, 2007, 4.

Politically and economically, Garcia believes that Mexico needs to develop job growth so that Mexicans will want to stay and work in their home-country. In order to help Latino immigrants, Garcia believes that a comprehensive immigration reform plan needs to be enacted. Being involved in community issues and programs for several years, Garcia finds that the most gratifying aspects to community work is having the chance to help his fellow countrymen and make a positive difference in their lives. Through his work he has made deep-lasting friendships with many people. Garcia believes that community work is one of the most rewarding experiences a person can have in one's life.

While teaching at Antioch, Garcia married an American woman. They had two children together. His daughter lives in New Mexico with her husband and two twin boys, while his son lives in Michigan with his wife and two step children. Although Garcia does not have many opportunities to visit his children and grand-children he does savor the moments when they are all able to get together. Garcia's second wife, Erendira Garcia Lopez, immigrated to the United States from Mexico. She is a clinical psychologist at Wright State University and she is active in the Latino community. She also leads a women's organization that tackles women's issues and rights. They have a son together and his name is Emilio. Emilio attends Wright State University and he is in his second year of study.

Victor Garcia is incredibly self-giving, perceptive and supportive. As the leader of Del Pueblo Inc. and a participant in many local Latino programs and organizations, Mr. Garcia proudly and passionately empowers and helps "his" people. He greatly understands the importance of community involvement and is earnestly committed to helping Latinos educationally, economically, legally, and politically. Our local community is very fortunate to have such a positive, hard-working, influential role-model who embraces community issues without hesitation.

Oral History Interview

Name of the Project: ¡ Viva La Iguladad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities:
An Oral History Interview with Don Victor Garcia

Name of the project director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and
Geography, Wright State University

Archives or repository

Interviewee/narrator name: Victor Garcia

Interviewer name: Elise Kelly

Others present

Place: Wright State University, Millett Hall, Small Conference Room

Date: 4/28/11

Length of recording: 1:06:23

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Key words:

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Macalester College

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University of Missouri - Kansas City

University of Missouri – Columbia

Antioch College

Latino Community Issues

Clark County, Ohio

Del Pueblo

Immigration Reform

Discrimination

Community

Indexed by: Elise Kelly

Index

00:00:00 – 0:00:31 Introduction to the recording.

Information listed above

0:00:31 –0:05:41 Childhood

Mr. Garcia speaks about his time growing up in Mexico City. He discusses the schools he went to as a child and adolescent and the unique experiences of growing up in a country deeply influenced by tradition.

Keywords:

Mexico City

Institute de México [Institute of Mexico]

Internal México

Escuela Bancaria Comercial [Business School]

Day of the Dead

[V: Education] [E: Joy, Frightened, Excitement] [R: Assessment, Struggle]

0:05:40 - 0:15:50 Arrival in the United States and Education Background

Mr. Garcia explains his early experiences of living in the United States. From working with his father raising cattle to living with a Yugoslavian-American family in St. Paul, Garcia discusses his fond memories of this new period in his life. He goes on to explain how he attended St. Benedict's University in Atchison, Kansas for his undergraduate degree and how he attended the University of Missouri – Kansas City for his master's degree in Spanish Literature. He then started to attend the University of Missouri – Columbia for his doctoral degree.

Keywords

St. Paul, Minnesota

Atchison, Kansas

St. Benedict's College

Foreign Student Organization

University of Missouri- Kansas City

University of Missouri – Columbia

[V: Education, Relationships] [E: Excitement, Curiosity, Joy, Uncertainty] [R: Appreciation, Critical, Affirmation]

0:15:50 – 0:29:00 Work Experience

Mr. Garcia discusses his time while working at Antioch College. He explains the unique experiences (co-ops and international experiences) that Antioch offers to students. He also talks about the strike of 1973 at Antioch and how he and his fellow co-workers were fired for a brief time but were later re-instated within that year.

Keywords:

Antioch College

Horace Mann

Co-ops

International Experiences

Strikes

[V: Education, Cultural Experiences, Service, Justice, Equality] [E: Joy, Uncertainty, Frustration] [R: Struggle, Assessment, Condemnation]

0:29:00 – 1:00:28 Community Work

Mr. Garcia explains the work that he does in the community to help local Latinos. He explains how he is the Director of Del Pueblo Inc. which is a non-profit referral and interpreting company. He explains the many community involvements that Del Pueblo has been involved with such as cultural festivals. He also explains what needs to be done politically and economically to help the lives of Latinos.

Keywords:

Del Pueblo

Interpreting

Referral

The World A'Fair

Immigration Reform

Discrimination

Mexican Consulate

Legal Aide

[V: Service, Justice, Equality, Community, Relationships] [E: Frustration, Joy, Pride, Uncertainty] [R: Affirmation, Assessment, Struggle, Critical]

1:00:28 – 1:06:23 Family and Lessons

Mr. Garcia speaks about his family. He discusses how he has three children, two from his first wife and one from his second wife, Erendira. He explains how Erendira is also involved with community issues. Lastly, Mr. Garcia speaks about the lessons he has learned doing community service.

Keywords:

Wright State University

Women's Issues

Involvement in Community

[V: Family, Justice, Community, Service] [E: Excitement, Joy, Pride] [R: Affirmation]

Oral History Interview

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Name of the project director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs and Geography, Wright State University

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Interviewer name: Elise Kelly

Others present

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Date: 04/28/11

Length of recording: 1:06:26

Original format: wav

Transcribed by

Elise Kelly

Interview transcript

Kelly: My first question is, tell me about your childhood and adolescent experiences.

Garcia: My childhood, well I lived in a big city, Mexico City is one of the largest metropolises in the world. At that time probably there were three million people, it seemed like there was space everywhere. Well what I remember about my childhood is that I lived first in kind of a rural area within the city because the city's territorial is big but this area was like a small town in the city. So I was raised over there near a barn so we lived a little away from the barn area and we had a house. I remember we had chickens and everything like and we worked close to kind of like a sewage system that I would go over there. [It was] sort of like a channel that I remember and I guess I had a happy life there. I used to go and pick up the eggs sometimes and the hens would peck me and everything like that but that's what I was told. I used to be a very hyper kid. Then we moved to inside the city and then I went to – first I went to a kindergarten which was in a middle class area and then from there I went to a Catholic school it was called Institute de México [Institute of Mexico] for the first two years and then I went to Internal México which I – no, no I went to another school before. It was San Jose's and it was a boarding school for a year and then I came back again to Institute de México and then I went to Internal México. Basically I finished junior high and I started a little bit of senior high and then after that I then went to business school, Escuela Bancaria Comercial and there I had many friends. We played sports, we rode bicycles, we did a lot of things, and so I liked to be outside of the house playing. For me that was the best thing to play outdoors.

Kelly: What's it like growing up in Mexico?

Garcia: Well, it is a very interesting place because it has – it's like a modern city, we have a lot of influence from the United States with the music and other things like that, but it still keeps its own identity. We have a lot of feast celebrations and I remember when I was young when I could no longer, for example understand the celebration of the Day of the Dead. I saw people near my neighborhood that would go to the cemetery and then they would be there and they ate in the tombs and for me that was kind of bizarre but I could not understand it. So those were some of

the things that I was exposed [to] and there would be fairs in the days of the painter's hands of different churches in different places. So we have a lot of religious festivities and then we have also the festivities that have a historical base, a patriarchal base, like the independence, and the anniversary of the revolution, there would be parades and things like that. So my childhood I had a lot of exposure in those things and I think since I was a young guy I had this leadership notion because I got a boy scout group and I also in the team, I played an important role. So there were some people that were followers and I did some kind of leadership.

Kelly: I don't know when you came to the United States but can you tell me about your experiences coming to the United States?

Garcia: Yes, I can never forget that day, March 8, 1962. I came when I was twenty-two years old and by that time I was working in Mexico with the Pepsi-Cola Company in the accounting because I studied accounting so I was the assistant of an accountant. I stopped studying, I studied just three years and then I went to work there. First I worked for an airline company and then I worked there. When I was there, there was an opportunity but I didn't have the schooling so they gave the job that I wanted to somebody else and they deserved it, no doubt. He had finished his accounting degree and I was half way to there but [I] also wanted to have the experience. So it kind of hit me and my father was asking me "do want to come to the United States? Do you want to come to the United States," and I kept saying to him no, no, no. So he called me and told me the whole situation and I said oh, sure let's go. So the next day he got the tickets ready and then we left. If I had more days probably I could have backed up so my father kind of capitalized on my weakness and then I went to the United States and that's when I came. I came to small town of St. Paul Minnesota, no, Cannon Falls, Minnesota near St. Paul, Minnesota and then I helped my father because he used to buy cattle, hosting cattle. So one of his friends that he met in Mexico, an American person, he told him "Victor why don't you come, I know that you do business selling cows and selling milk. Why don't you come to the United States and try to buy some good hosting cattle there and then you can import them to Mexico. So my father liked the idea and began to do that. So one day I went to help him and so he was quite experienced because the snow was about two feet high, it still wasn't much but you know in Minnesota it's unusual not to have snow until May. So the snow was cold and it was a very awakening experience for me and everything. When he used to do this business and we would get up at six o'clock in the morning and we would not stop until six o'clock in the evening. We went like that for three and a half weeks until he had all the cattle bought and then ship it in a train to Mexico. So I don't remember if at that time I went with the cattle to the border and then I came back and then I started living with an American family in St. Paul, Minnesota.

It was the Stanish family, they were from Yugoslavia and she had a son and two daughters, both of them were married and the son was the only one living in the house. He was going to Macalester College so he became a good friend of mine. He started to introduce me to his friends and we went to play cards, watch baseball games, gatherings and parties and things like that so that was the way I began to learn the English language because it was very difficult. The way you learn in the schools is very different from when you have to put it into practice. Since I didn't have really any practice there was my first time. I was all alone and with this family it was wonderful and I was able to move along well. Then I went to the International Institute for special classes in English with other foreign students. I spent about close to half a year and then I was able to enroll in Macalester College as a special student and I took a class that was a speech class and I took a religion class. They let me audit some classes so that was good for me then I took the test, the admission test. That was tough. So because I have some kind

students and Antioch doesn't really emphasize in sports although as of late they have a women's rugby team. They have a rugby team because I think one of the Anthropologists was pretty much into sports and got other students who were very involved like that. But we have sort of like an intramural games and sometimes we play softball, basketball, and soccer but not like American football or baseball, traditionally those sports practically did not exist.

But basketball was the sport and when I was at St. Benedict's the basketball team won the NAAH championship which is a big thing. So we were happy and we were very excited and so senior year was incredibly good. Not only because of that but many things happened. I left the soccer team and I played for three years and I left the soccer team because I wanted to concentrate more on my studies. So my senior year will be good and I will do well on my exams and I could go up to grad school. So that was my objective and life was pretty good. We had – since it was a Catholic school, sometimes it was - this expectation that you had to go to mass and you had to [inaudible] sometimes, we escaped mass and we hid. But we went, sort of like a regular basis.

Kelly: I guess we can go back real quick, can you explain if you grew up in a religious family? Can you explain your experiences with that?

Garcia: My family is Catholic so we were raised with the Catholic Church from both sides. From my parents side although I knew very vague, my father's side because my grandmother died and my grandfather came with my father in 1901, 1900s, 1901 after the Spanish-American-Cuban War. So they came, so my father was just a baby when he got here and he didn't have the Spanish accent thetheo, [Spanish accent in Spain] he didn't have this accent but his mind was very, very Spanish. Very much following the philosophy of the individual and the masses so he was part of the individual group. So I didn't know much of the race but my mother's side yes, they were very Catholic. They would go to churches, funerals, vocational of rosaries and things like that, whatever activities that the church had in my neighborhood. Since we were educated in Catholic schools so you have that tradition but then when you get into college then you start questioning things and you hear about the history and some of the things that the Catholic Church did, the good things and the bad things and then you begin to have a debate. But basically yes, I would say that I still – I'm not one of those profound Catholics, I think I believe more in the actions that you do, that they are more valuable than being in the church and the mass and doing the confessions and taking communion. I do it occasionally but I don't do it often.

Kelly: So getting back and you were saying that Antioch is very much different kind of college and different kind of student.

Garcia: Yes, well they have the work-study program at Antioch and also the international experience and also they value a lot the community experience. So the curriculum, pretty much when I got there, it was tentatively more traditional like any regular college with the exception that they have the co-op and the international experience. As we moved on and some people came on the faculty and everything like that, the community came to be more emphasized. I guess there were certain courses, for example, I remember there was the, I remember if this is correct, Algo King, they used to take some of the students on a canoe trip and they began to inform them about Antioch. Taking that experience would serve as introduction to Antioch and then they created these introductory courses to Antioch and then they had different changes and variations because there were traditions of the general education. Other courses that would be good for the students like giving them support courses like writing and math and also it was critical thinking. So different track students and then of course it was also the social commitment

that you have from Horace Mann and then from the Morgan family that they were the pioneers of the co-op program. So the combination of the experience of the community, the co-op program, the academic program, and then the international experience which later it was also included the older proficiency in the language, not just to take a couple of courses in the language but to have a proficiency in the language and a cross-cultural proficiency too. You could do it aboard or you could do it in the college and through the co-op experience. For example you could go up to a site and there would be probably be a lot of exposure to Spanish and a lot of people that you would be interacting with would speak Spanish. So after the student was inside for a while they could considerably have that experience but at least they would have that cross-cultural experience of dealing with somebody from a different place. They would have to write a paper, they would have to demonstrate that they have really learned something from that experience. Then that was accredited to their transcripts.

Kelly: I know you said it was more traditional when you came, did you help implement those... [programs]?

Garcia: Yes, many things we helped to implement. We moved from areas to institutes and just different kinds of components. Then we were happy that the college was doing well and then in 1973 unfortunately we had a strike and we lost half of the population. But always the question was whether or not Antioch should have had two-thousand two-hundred students that they had. Then we went to eleven hundred students so with this shrinking because it was all around the financial aid. The administration told the students that they were not able to receive the financial aid and that was not true. What happens is that they wanted to get rid of some people that they brought from some ghetto areas. That they were trouble makers and they were into gangs and drugs and everything like that and things were beginning to get a little bit out of hand with some incidences, some problems with the police. So the president decided to use that trick of the financial aid and of course it was going to affect so many other students. So some of us, as faculty we were upset with that so we actually went into strikes. It was student strike, there was a workers strike because also the unions were affected, and then also it was a faculty strike. I was in the light side of the strikers because I was the [new] hire and with the condition that I would work with some minorities so for it was a very sensitive issue. So I stayed on this side and as the result of the interactions and since the college was practically closed, my interactions with the negotiators and all the negotiating with them then we were fired. We were fired and then some of the processes were wrongly done and then I was reinstated with all my colleagues. So from that moment on it was a difficult time for me in 73' then in 74' I decided to take a leave of absence so I could finish up my dissertation. So I went to Colgate University and then I came back after a year and they offered me a job over there but the level of racism was very bad there. So I said I better go to a place that I know – even if they think it's bad, that to stay in a place that I think is good and I know it's going to be very bad so I decided to go back to Antioch.

Then I stayed in Antioch and I started working and I also tried to help the college to rebuild and everything like that. So we went up and down, up and down, and a president came, President Guskin and things started swinging again but then you know how presidents are. They come and he got into a situation, it was a family thing, and then he remarried somebody else and I think he decided to go to Seattle. In all this distance then the college started going down hill until we got somebody else who began to strategize. But we went into different periods that were difficult and my role there was to try to lead a program. [It was] to be a new program in which language would be seen in a very different way. So we got some grant money and I did a lot of traveling and I saw different curriculums and so for me it was a very good experience. Then we

signed a whole new program based on oral proficiency and experience abroad. So with my other two colleagues we took leadership. We were only three faculty members; one faculty member taught a lot of the European languages and also knew Hindu and Hebrew, and then the other faculty member taught Japanese and I dealt with Spanish and little bit with Portuguese, at least in the guidance part, then we had some TA's to do the program so that was very good, very successful. Then we began to again send the students to Latin America and all over the place to have a combination of a co-op experience there and as well as an academic experience. So we created co-ops over there so I did a lot of co-ops in Mexico and other people created co-ops in other parts of Latin America and the world.

Kelly: So how did you get involved with Latino community issues and services in Clark County?

Garcia: Well, in Antioch I was getting close to graduate [retire]. I had maybe thirty-one years and I have some of my students - one of my students was got involved in the area near Medway, Ohio and then they began to see that there were - they were participating with the faculty members in the Head Start program. Then they began to see that there were a lot of children that didn't have a place, their parents would go to work, and they would live in the Church and everything like that so they decided to get involved with that. Then they began this organization which was Del Pueblo Inc. so there were actually three students from Antioch, Megan and...oh, what's her name. They were three young, very dynamic students. They began to organize with some religious peoples and then the Warder Literacy Centers in Springfield and some people in the [inaudible] community and they formed Del Pueblo, like a small group. Then also they have one of the workers being part of this core group and they began like in 1998 somewhere around there and in 2001 they finally became a non-profit organization. Then in 2002, I was approached by Palomar, who was sort of like the executive director of Del Pueblo and my student - my gosh I can't remember [her name] and one of my cousins that was also a student from Yellow Springs, she also was part of the organization, so they asked me if I wanted to participate. Then I came into the organization and basically the first year was learning and figuring out how things were over there. Then in the second year they wanted to elect somebody and I got the, of course the chair as president. They figured out that I had the most time than other people so I could do it. So I took that responsibility having a good support group, the executive committee. Then I got involved and my idea was to figure out what I'm going to do after I retire from Antioch so I said well, I want to continue doing something that connects me with Mexico and that connects me to the Latino community. That's the way I began. So in Del Pueblo of course we started to do a lot of networking and I met for example Hermana Maria, [Sister Maria] and then Rosa Caskey with LULAC, and then I met a few years later Francisco Pelaez and Tony Ortiz and then in Springfield it was David Smitty because they have the Latino Coalition there and in Dayton it's the Latino Connection. So basically those two groups and then I began to know different kinds of people. We began to do more networking and we have support from the attorney and the Springfield foundations at that time.

My work was trying to recruit people to be in the board, I founded out also that some of taxes have not been paid. We have an account and they were doing things pro-bono and so we owe something like fifteen thousand dollars to the IRS so we have to figure how to pay that and everything like that. We did it and we managed to raise money and do different kinds of things that we were able to do that and then so to begin to have some kind of position of stress. But because of that and a lot of problems that we had with the director that came there [he] wanted to separate our organization and start another organization, it was an awful thing. It affected us -

this was in 2004, 2005 then forced us to reorganize to figure ways on how to come back to where we were. To their surprise, we managed to come back and then we structured and we got a good board. We then were able to bring some finances in a very limited base and from that time on we didn't have really any staff. They were all volunteers and the board practically played the role of the organization of being this core group. So we began to continue doing programs; one program was the Adalante Program and it was with the county school district, and the other program was the information and referral program. Then we have also a childless program that we give presentations to different places; agricultural meetings, universities, etc. to kind of disseminate what Del Pueblo was doing. We also started participating in cultural events.

Kelly: Yes. Can you explain what Del Pueblo does?

Garcia: Well, for example we provide information and referral. So what we do is when the client's call us then for example, I connect them with the lawyers or I connect them with people, like for example, I got a call today, so I explain how this lawyer works and everything like that and who I trust very much. I have worked with him and we've had good experiences so I connect the client with the lawyer. Then we have for example an interview with the process and then the lawyers tell you this is what I charge to do this kind of service or if I do more then...and you know how it is. He's very reasonable and that's why I like to work with him. I know him as a friend for twenty-five years but I never... Then he was a lawyer and then he was a history professor at Miami University and he decided to come back and do law and to start doing things with immigration. I said why you don't polish yourself in immigration because I know you could have some – you could work in that area in addition to do other things. So he started doing that and we have consistently, every month there is one or two calls and this month has been four calls so you never know what is going to happen. For example, that's one area that we do information and referral. We have people with the schools, when they have problems with the schools we provide an interpreter for that and also transportation free of charge. We also for example, interpret in medical settings; so medical settings, school settings, courts, dental office, doctor office and those kinds of things. So pretty much covered, whatever the client needs to do or we don't do as much as we used to do when we had a staff there. [Client's say] oh, can you please talk to my landlord," little needed things. Then at the same time we are trying to help them to encourage them to take English classes, especially the young ones, the older ones they are not going to do it. So they are able to figure out how they can get into the system. The main idea is to empower them because our mission is – Del Pueblo is a non-profit organization dedicated to build the community and to empower the Latino people so they can navigate in the system. That is basically our goal and then also in cultural events for example, we got involved with DIFI, which is Dayton International Festival.

Kelly: Is that the World A'Fair?

Garcia: [Yes] The World A'Fair and they have a space and they were looking for somebody and somebody referred to me and I talked to them and I said fine. So we got into DIFI and this will be our seventh or eighth year, I can't remember that we have been doing this. So it's a foundation but it gives us a lot of exposure to community although it's in Montgomery County still. Sometimes I get calls from Montgomery County and sometimes I refer them to Sister Maria but I know Sister Maria is sometimes very busy. So it depends on the nature of the thing then or I talk to the East End Community Services, especially for example, if a woman needs a shelter or [inaudible]. So basically we have to have the knowledge of who is involved where and not try to duplicate things because if some people are doing the work there, they are going to do it much affective than you do because they know the people. Of course with time I have known a lot of

the people, they know me here and there but I think it's a good idea to use the resources. So that's what we are trying to do.

Kelly: What do you do at the World A'Fair?

Garcia: Well in the World A'Fair we have a space where we put up a cultural booth with the theme that is every year. This year is going to be weddings. So we are going to do...

Kelly: Oh, probably because of the Royal wedding?

Garcia: No it had nothing to do – that was a coincidence. It had nothing to do with the Royal wedding in fact this was planned like two years ago. But it happens to be the Royal wedding [the Royal wedding was taking place that Friday] but actually we are going to have a real wedding inside.

Kelly: Really? Wow!

Garcia: The people who are in the executive committee of the board, they got a limousine for the bride and everything is paid for them and even a trip some place over there. There were several people that wanted to get married, no I wouldn't be one, but some people because that's also a big thing but for some people it may not raise their... But anyhow, they decided to provide everything like that for whoever is going to get married. So the wedding is going to take place I think its Saturday, noon time or one o'clock or something like that and it's going to be there. They are going to have somebody who will marry them and everything like that so it's going to be interesting. So we are supposed to do some kind of display about the wedding. Since we have a person who is an artist who always does murals and involves her students to do the murals, we like it better. Then one person of the boys is involved with that and I don't know if you know Alicia Lohmar?

Kelly: Yes.

Garcia: Ok, so Alicia is the one that is involved and she does a good job with the cultural stuff. Like her husband is a musician so they would do story-telling and they sing and they do different things. So that's what we are going to be doing and then we also sell refreshments, beer, and then food. We have one of the restaurants in Springfield and he helps with those. We are partners in many different events that we do. So they are the ones that are involved with the food, so we don't have to be involved with the food because it takes too many people and they do it very well and very nicely.

Kelly: Tell me about the symposia at Antioch College, the Morgan Fellow Inaugural Symposia. The topic was about the daily struggle of the immigrant workers.

Garcia: Yes, we have a symposia and I think the Majka's were there too. Basically it was a presentation that we had an immigration night. I moderated the presentation and there was Linda [Majka], Theo [Majka], and there was a woman from Columbus who is involved in a community. I don't remember if there were four or five but there was another one. But anyhow, the presentation was centered on immigration because today it was one of the promises from the President of the United States that he was going to try to push immigration reform. I guess following that one that was in 1986 with Ronald Regan and unfortunately when Kennedy [Ted Kennedy] died, he was the main force over there in the Senate and things began to deteriorate. McCain, because of the elections, took the opposite side and it was just awful. For whatever was already – just like a statue, like ok, we are going to create this little nice statue and then somebody says no change that or take this from that and so it was destroyed. So from being something very well thought out because this guest program was going to be for three years and then it was going to be renewed and if the person had very good conduct and paid his or her taxes then they could begin the road for U.S. permanent residency and then eventually

citizenship. So the idea was very good and the idea was also that they could bring their families and then they could go back to Mexico during vacations because they work in the nurseries and it's more like seasonal work so that would give them an opportunity to go to Mexico and come back. So it was good [but] some people were skeptical because they said it was like the old proceeded program which it was not. It was a little different from the proceeded program and during the proceeded program of course there were many abuses from employers and employees and they didn't want to follow that route. So some people, the more radical ones were more skeptical and then the others that were in support of that but unfortunately after Kennedy died and there was not a mere force of energy. Kennedy was very instrumental in trying to pass the medical reform and then the immigration reform.

So basically I guess in this meeting I think Linda focused in the abuses of children. How children are used in labor and everything like that, Theo focused more on what has been the situation with the immigration reform and also talked about the deportations and the problems that the people had. In terms, for example, they could not go to work because of the driver's license and some of the legislation introduced here and then they knocked it out and then came the Arizona thing and that kind of thing worsened everything around.

Kelly: Yes, what do you think needs to be done politically or economically to help better the lives of Latinos?

Garcia: Well, economically of course Mexico and the United States have to work [on] better agreements, to make sure that a lot of Mexicans are not fleeing over here because I can see their basic concern into that. So they should not be so very relaxed in letting so many people coming out so they have to improve the conditions and they have to create jobs. Mexico was in a very bad economic situation since the Zapatistas in the south and also the problems with NAFTA, and also the President that became very rich and then left Mexico. So the Mexican government did not have reserves, their reserves were very, very minimal although they are now in a good shape now due to all the different people doing follow ups and they began to re-structure the economy and everything like that. But still unemployment is a problem and the ones that you have over here, you have relatives over here and they encourage people to come. The other day I heard this from when I was at an agricultural meeting doing a presentation and I was one person for immigration and for every immigrant, forty-two come afterwards because the family comes and the second-generation and etc. It is true, I don't know if it is the same pattern today because you are dealing with a younger generation but there are a lot of young people who don't find jobs or they pay so dismal that they are not able to provide money for their families so that is why they're here. So the idea is for them is to get a good job so they are able to send money to their families there so they can live. What has improved the economy in Mexico has been well, the oil prices, higher oil prices and then they were making some money and tourism helps too but tourism has gone down now because of the other problem that we have.

Kelly: Drugs?

Garcia: Drug traffic and the cartels and everything like that which has done a very detrimental affect to Mexico.

Kelly: What are some of the obstacles and frustrations that you face doing community work?

Garcia: Well, the main frustration – not really doing community work, is the Del Pueblo – because of the whole situation in immigration, we don't get enough support to do that, to be able to have an executive committee. So I should be doing other things not to do the information and referral, somebody should be doing the information and referral and have somebody permanently in the office and start to build the infrastructure. So we have like a flooring structure basically

with a cell phone, that's like my office and when I have a chance then I go to the office and I try to put the paperwork and everything like that. We have our board meetings there and everything like that but we have to operate it in a different way to be able to operate affectively. It seems to be working well but one of the frustrations is yes, money, to be able to get money from people that people don't want to give money for immigration purposes. Some people do, friends that you know, people that you know, and people that you have nurtured. We send a newsletter, a yearly newsletter that we do and always with a theme and we invite people from the communities sometimes, we have invited lawyers even from Arizona to write something for example the Dream Act and other things like that. The frustration for us is because of the legislation and because of all this reactionary and racism that is in the country, it's making our work a little more difficult. Hopefully it won't prohibit us to do different things. Up to this point, I don't feel like - nobody's going to stop me from doing whatever I believe to do but maybe at time that this could happen but I hope it doesn't happen. That would be very devastating for the clients because they would not have the support that they need to have. So those are the two major frustrations and the third thing is to see young kids, that they are very intelligent and that they should be going to college but they can not go to college because they don't have the means. So I would say those are the three main obstacles.

Kelly: You were talking about racism. Have you personally or have you known people who have faced discrimination because your ethnicity or your background.

Garcia: Well if you are like well established, people know you, and everything like that you are fine. But if you are not, yes, you sometimes confront this kind of situation, racism. I would say during the election, for example Obama's election, it was very clear because I volunteered to go into different people to try and raise the people to vote and everything like that. In some places you could tell that there was a lot of racism and the way they talked to you. So you just walked out and left. And this was - but in the group there were more traditional democrats so within this group also you find some people who were very racist and others not, others were very nice and very pleasant. So you were able to able to do the job. I personally have not gotten any experiences of racism but I have seen for example in other places where I have traveled like Florida. I have been, even my mother-in-law got very upset with this one woman and I told her this will be the last time I come here and I told the owner that she didn't like the way that the woman... Or our experiences for example, the waiters in restaurants. The way that they serve and throw the cups and everything and I got very upset in a place near Cairo where the Klan is over there, all this area. So yes, I think I sometimes - very little I have experienced directly but most of the time I have seen it through clients or through other people. And sometimes even with our own government, like the Mexican Consulate. The way sometimes some of these people treat some of the clients.

Kelly: Yes, can you explain how your work with the Mexican Consulate?

Garcia: Well, with the Mexican Consulate we help them - they move the consulate sometimes to areas so that they can give the opportunity to people that say they cannot go to Indianapolis to be able to go into a place. So these people come to a place and there will be four-hundred people that come or three-hundred and some people to get some documents. Basically the metricula consular or a passport, those are the two documents. In those two documents they just take four-hundred documents, that are what they do because they have set a number of personnel and that's what they do normally in a day. So they duplicate or replicate what they do in the consulate in Indianapolis. They do it in different places like Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton and so people come. We try not to have people from other places to come over here because they

have the opportunity to go there but sometimes we get people and we have to take them. But they have to call and they then give an appointment and then they come. They take a count and so no more than four-hundred, so if somebody else comes and they don't have an appointment, they will not take it. Unless they have space and maybe they'll take it but we don't try to encourage that because then it will be a problem. But basically we assist them and we organize a place, I don't know if you are familiar with ISUS?

Kelly: Yes.

Garcia: Ok, so that's the place we organize and we have a group, a committee and in this group is Rosa Caskey representing LULAC, Antonio Ortiz, Francisco Pelaez representing the Presbyterian Church, and then it used to be also...

Kelly: Hermana Maria? [Sister Maria]

Garcia: Yes Hermana Maria, with the Ministerio Catolico Hispanic and then Del Pueblo and it used to be Jane Reece but Jane Reece is not here anymore. But Francisco basically takes her place and there are other people who contribute. So this is the core group who basically does the planning and says you want to do this, you want to do that. So everyone takes the role seriously and then we bring a lot of volunteers to help. By the way do you want to help? (laughs)

Kelly: (laughs)

Garcia: We could use your help.

Kelly: Ok, ok. I helped bring in the food that they were going to have. I couldn't do the day of it but I helped the day before when they were bringing all the water and all the food and stuff.

Garcia: So you helped Bea?

Kelly: Yes.

Garcia: Yes, you could do that or do something else.

Kelly: Yes, definitely.

Garcia: Do you speak Spanish?

Kelly: A little bit.

Garcia: A little bit. Yes maybe you could help when people need to be helped with the forms.

Kelly: Yes. So what are some of the most gratifying contributions and accomplishments that you've...?

Garcia: Well the gratifying is when they recognize you in the community. You know you get recognition from the University of Dayton. I'm going to get recognition in this LULAC meeting and also from Antioch with working with the minorities and everything like that. So those are very gratifying. To me the gratifying things are when I can solve problems for people. When they can become U.S. citizens, when they become U.S. permanent residents, and when I can solve problems in the courts. When we can accomplish things, I am a person that likes to accomplish things. Whether it takes a lot of time and effort still I'm going to put my energy there to do it. So that's the gratifying thing and the gratifying thing is when people I know refer me sometimes as Don Victor. I don't like to be Don but it's a sign of respect. They respect me like they respect Hermana Maria; they respect Tony Ortiz, and Rosa [Caskey]. Those are the leaders and I guess I am one of them so I guess that's the gratifying thing that you are doing something for your people and you are making a difference in their life. As long as I feel that I'm going to do this then I'm going to be doing it. If I get up in the morning and I say do you want to continue doing this and the answer is yes, then I'm going to continue doing it.

Kelly: Yes. So how does this make you feel when you hear the respect of Don Garcia?

Garcia: It makes me feel good. I want them not to see me as somebody that is trying to solve problems but as a friend. I have established good friendships with people. They invite me into

their living room and when you sit in the living room of their house it is a good sign. When they open the door and you sit down and then I always like to have a conversation with them. I don't start right away in the business. I think I learned that from the Japanese and I learned that from other people that this is the way that they like to do things. No rushing into that and sometimes I struggle a little bit with the lawyer or with somebody else and [they say] oh, we want and I say no. No, be patient. We are not going to take an hour but this is very important this, thirty minutes because they have to also feel comfortable with you. I don't have any problem but you may have a problem so this is where you have to go through this process and it is fine. Once they know him they already know him, they feel comfortable with him and they refer him. Or they call me and I do the referral.

Kelly: So tell me about your family, your wife and I don't know if you have any children?

Garcia: Yes, I have three children with my first marriage. I married an American person that lives in Yellow Springs and we have two children. My daughter is now thirty-nine and I have two grand-children. Two twin boys which are almost four years old [and they] are going to be in July and I love them and I enjoy being there when I can because they live in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Then I have a son who lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan and we call each other and sometimes I visit or sometimes he comes and visits. He is married to a woman that already has three daughters so they are like my step-granddaughters and its fine. I get along very well with them and those are my two older ones. Then I married almost twenty-five years ago, it would be twenty-five years that I've been married to a Mexican woman that came here to Ohio. We have a child and Emilio goes to Wright State University. He's studying business here. He's in his second year and she works also here at the university as a clinical psychologist. So Erindira is very active, very busy with also the community, not just doing her professional work. But also she leads a women's organization in the state of Ohio and they're having wonderful connections and she was telling me yesterday that they heard that the university in San Diego was very interested in her interview because they were having some women issues there and apparently they saw that interview and they were very happy. So I guess now she is connected in other networks and so she's doing very well. In addition to her private practice she spends time with the community trying to empower women, giving presentations, she does a number of presentations that have to do with psychology and cross-cultural and multicultural issues, and women's issues. Or sometimes shallow views and men's violence towards women, battering a woman.

Kelly: Well, that's great. So this is my last question. What lessons do you carry away in community and community service?

Garcia: Well I think being active in the community, this is something that I would recommend to anyone who retires or wants to do something different from what you ordinarily do in a job. A job is good and you fulfill it and you go but if it's not connected with the community then you are missing a big piece, a big, big piece because sometimes you can be in a university and be very involved with research, you can be very involved with teaching but you are not connecting your students with the outside world. That is very important that they know this outside world. Or you can have international experiences and everything like that. But there are groups of people that come from different countries that are here and some how you can have those connections. That inheritance that you have, sometimes you question oh, I am Irish and I am this and that, yes, but what are you doing with these people? What things can you do that can enrich your life? Like for example the people that participate in DIFI, they want to bring their cultures, the good things of what their countries do. Sometimes we tend to look at the bad things and not

the good things. So that part I think of the community has been one of the most rewarding things for me, to be able to connect with people, to be able to be active within the community, to be able to make a difference in their lives.

Kelly: I think that's wonderful. You've done so much.

Garcia: And of course I still like teaching. Teaching is also very rewarding for me.

Kelly: Yes, and you're teaching at Wittenberg now?

Garcia: I teach at Wittenberg and I teach at Antioch University Midwest.

Kelly: The Spanish?

Garcia: Spanish, for people who want to use Spanish in their context of work whether they are educators or whether they are social workers, or whether they work in the medical profession that is growing immensely so there is always a need.

Kelly: That's wonderful. I mean you're so busy and that's just wonderful that you did that after your retirement that you decided to...

Garcia: Yes, well it gives me a lot of energy. My friends say that it keeps me young.

Kelly: Well the only thing is we have to ask this, do you have any questions about the release form?

Garcia: No, no, no I understand and I think it will be useful for somebody who is doing research or wants to figure out where to get in touch with people where they can follow up. Who knows maybe what I said today might make a change later on.

Kelly: Yes, yes!

Garcia: No, I think it's - I know the university will use it [at] good use; it will not be of bad use.

Kelly: Ok, well I'm going to turn this off.

Garcia: And I don't have anything to hide.

END OF INTERVIEW

Glossary (Any special terms, events, people referred to in the interview and/or transcript)

Mexico City, Mexico

Immigration

Roman Catholic

Macalester College

St. Benedict's College

University of Missouri - Kansas City

University of Missouri – Columbia

Antioch College

Latino Community Issues

Clark County, Ohio

Del Pueblo

Immigration Reform

President Barack Obama

Horace Mann

World A'Fair