Tony Ortiz interview for a Wright State University History Course

Elise Kelly

Tony Ortiz

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On February 18th, 2011 I interviewed Tony Ortiz at his office, which is in the Nutter Center on Wright State University's campus. In 1955, Ortiz was born in a northeastern Ohio steel city called Lorain, Ohio. The city of Lorain during the late 1950s and 1960s was a "truly a melting pot,"¹ and Ortiz's neighbors consisted of Latino and Eastern European immigrants. His parents were immigrants from Puerto Rico. His father worked at the steel mill while his mother stayed home taking care of all thirteen children. Throughout his childhood, his family attended and participated in activities at his local Catholic Church. Coming from such a large family, this church helped Ortiz have the opportunity to experience childhood activities such as attending baseball games and movie matinées. During his childhood and adolescent years, Ortiz attended Lorain City Public Schools. When he decided that he wanted to go on to college to study athletic training, a person from his local church helped him acquire that opportunity. In 1973, he attended Lorain Community College for two years and then he went on to Bowling Green University, where he majored in Education and Athletic Training. While at Lorain Community College and

¹ Tony Ortiz, interviewed by Elise Kelly, ¡Viva La Igualdad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Tony Ortiz, University Library, Wright State University, February 18, 2011.
Bowling Green, he was the president of the Latino student organizations. These organizations performed advocacy efforts for Latino students on campus as well as for local Latino communities in the area. While at Bowling Green, Ortiz obtained a large amount of experience in athletic training. He performed eighteen hundred hours of training and worked in local high school settings as well as with the Philadelphia Eagles. Ortiz decided to continue his education at Bowling Green and in 1980 he obtained his Master’s in Health Education.

After obtaining his master’s degree, he accepted a teaching position at Beavercreek High School. During his time there, he taught Spanish and was the athletic trainer. Ortiz was impressed not only with the education standards at Beavercreek but also with the close vicinity of local colleges. He eventually wanted to work at the college level and in January of 1985 he became the director of athletic training at Wright State University. At the time, the program only had two classes and six students. Now after twenty-six years the program has five full time staff members and seventy students. As the program grew and became more successful, at one point “eighty percent of the colleges in the state of Ohio had one of Ortiz’s graduates.”2 As an instructor and program director of the athletic training program, “he is responsible for the athletic health of over 250 student-athletes at Wright State. In order to stay at the top of his profession, he continually attends and conducts sports medicine clinics throughout the country.”3 Because of Ortiz’s diligent commitment to the profession, he has received several awards which include the Ohio Athletic Trainer of the Year Award (1989); the National Award of Excellence as the past president of the Ohio Athletic Trainers Association; the National Athletic Trainer’s Most Distinguished Award. He has also been inducted into the Ohio Athletic Trainers Hall of Fame.

Working eighty hours a day, Ortiz found little time for community service work. However, three years ago with the encouragement and help from some local Latino friends, he decided to lessen his professional work load and dedicate more time to local Latino advocacy programs. In 2007 he established the region’s first Hispanic Education Career Summit. This meeting is held annually at Wright State University and it brings together local high school Latino students and their parents with university staff and faculty. The purpose of this summit is to inform and assist with the admissions process as well as provide detailed information about the programs and assistant services that are available to Latino students. Because of this leadership effort, Ortiz was honored in April of 2008 by the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs as one of the 10 Most Distinguished Hispanic Ohioans.

In 2009 Ortiz established the Latino Dream Team. According to LatinoDayton.org, which is a website that Ortiz also started, the Latino Dream Team is, “composed of several organizations, business leaders around the Dayton area. In addition, the full support through the Wright State University further strengthens the organization’s major goals.”4 The goals of the organization are to strengthen and preserve the Latino culture and to help facilitate the assimilation of this culture into the different cultures of their communities. Several personnel members of Wright State are members of this organization and have helped develop a cohesive

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2 Tony Ortiz, interviewed by Elise Kelly, Viva La Igualdad! Leading and Empowering Latino Communities: An Oral History Interview with Tony Ortiz, University Library, Wright State University, February 18, 2011.
strategic outlook and plan for the organization. The Latino Dream Team has been able to garner the attention of important political figures such as Senator Rob Portman and Governor John Kasich. In order to meet the Latino community’s needs, members of the organization have discussed issues and solutions with these government officials. The Latino community’s needs consist of approving the Dream Act and Immigration Reform. The Dream Act is a legislative entity that would allow Latino students who are undocumented as chance to attend a college or university. At this point, undocumented children are not allowed to continue on in higher education. Immigration Reform is another legislative article that would alleviate the exploitation of undocumented workers and expunge the out-of-date laws and policies that keep families divided. The Dream Team has also been able to bring together and integrate the local colleges and universities such as Wright State, with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce promotes the economic development and growth of Hispanic businesses. In 2010, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce named Ortiz the Government Hispanic Business Advocate of the Year.

Ortiz is also the President of Dayton’s League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). As president, Ortiz chairs the scholarship committee and frequently makes “house calls” in order to help immigrant families through the university application process. Also as president, he envisioned a LULAC funded learning center for local Latino students. El Puente Learning Center developed in 2009 and the program is a collaborative effort between Wright State’s College of Education students, Dayton Public Schools, local Catholic schools, Dayton’s Catholic Hispanic Ministry, and AT&T. The center, which is located at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, is directed by Ortiz. The after school program not only tutors but feeds all of the children. The Wright State education majors serve as the children’s instructors and the computers that were donated by AT&T, serve as interactive educational and communicative tools when the children are finished with their studies. Because of his leadership skills and continual dedication, LULAC awarded Ortiz the Ohio “Man of the Year” award in 2009. Another organization that Ortiz is involved with is BACO. This is a Puerto Rican and Caribbean organization that performs Thanksgiving drives and the Three Kings celebration (Christmas gifts are distributed to Latino children). BACO also organizes and manages the annual Hispanic Festival in downtown Dayton. At this annual summer festival, residents of the Miami Valley have the opportunity to try Latino food, listen and watch Latino music and dance, and purchase artisan Latino products.

Mr. Ortiz lives in Beavercreek with his wife Lillian, who is a pre-school teacher. He has two daughters who, like their father, are interested and involved with Latino community issues. His oldest daughter, Maria, is completing her master’s degree in Screen Writing. She hopes to be able to eventually produce Latina films. His youngest daughter, Melissa, is completing her bachelor’s degree at Wright State University in Political Science. Through policy writing, Melissa hopes to strengthen and empower Latino communities.

It was a tremendous honor to interview a man who is completely dedicated to his professional career as well as to community leadership and activism. Mr. Ortiz is incredibly self-giving, understanding, and supportive. As the leader of many local Latino organizations, he wonderfully “demonstrates a capacity to empower Latinos, inspire change, and envision challenging opportunities for all.”5 He has inspired me to help empower our minority

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communities through educational, social, and political advocacy. Through Mr. Ortiz, I have learned the value and importance of education and why this should be a guaranteed right for all.
Index

0:00:00-00:52 Introduction to the recording.
Information listed above.

0:00:52-09:30 Childhood
Mr. Ortiz speaks about his experiences growing up in Lorain, Ohio with two parents who were immigrants from Puerto Rico and thirteen siblings. He discusses his early education experiences as well as his experiences with the Catholic Church growing up. Mr. Ortiz also speaks about the discrimination he faced as a Puerto Rican-American when he was young.

Keywords:
Puerto Rico
Fruehauf Trucking Company
Immigrants
Latinos
Lorain, Ohio
Melting Pot
Spanish [language]
Catholic
Racial tensions

0:09:30-17:40 Education Background
Mr. Ortiz discusses how he went to Lorain Community College as well as Bowling Green University to study athletic training. He explains the intensive training and preparation that he completed for athletic training. Mr. Ortiz also talks about the Latino organizations that he was involved with in college and what they did to help local Latino communities.

Keywords:
Lorain Community College
Bowling Green University
Latino Students
Athletic Training
Philadelphia Eagles
Los Unidos
La Unión de Estudiantes Latinos
Puerto Ricans
Mexicans
Spanish [language]

17:40-26:41 Work Experience
Mr. Ortiz discusses how he first taught at Clearview High School in Lorain after graduating from Bowling Green University. He discusses how he then came to teach at Beavercreek High School [taught Spanish] in 1980 and how he was the athletic director there. He then goes on to explain how he came to Wright State University in 1985 and his experiences of being the athletic director.

Keywords:
Beavercreek High School
Clearview High School
Jim Place [Previous coach at Beavercreek High School]
Wright State University’s Athletic Training Program
Ohio State Physical Therapy Program
Cleveland Clinic

26:41-1:03:40 Volunteer Experience
Mr. Ortiz discusses how he got involved with many Latino organizations and volunteer activities. He explains establishing the Latino Dream Team, which is a non-profit organization that helps to empower local Latino individuals, and how this organization is starting to get some headway in the local and state level political arena. He explains the Dream Act and how this legislation would help undocumented Latino students, as well as other legislation such as immigration reform and health care. Mr. Ortiz also explains the website he started for the local Latino community as well as the organizations he is apart of such as LULAC and BACO. He goes on to discuss the education center that he created, El Puente Learning Center, which is an after-school learning center program for local Latino children. He explains how he is able to connect the Wright State community with the local Latino community and what activities and events he has established at Wright State for Latinos. He explains the obstacles and frustrations he faces doing
community work, how he overcomes them, and what motivates him to continue his community work. Furthermore, he discusses his gratifying accomplishments and he explains what needs to be done politically and educationally.

**Keywords:**
- Dayton' Latino Community
- Community service
- Latino Dream Team
- LatinoDayton.org
- Hispanic Chamber
- Immigration
- LULAC
- BACO
- El Puente Learning Center
- St. Mary's Catholic Church
- Dayton Catholic Hispanic Community

1:03:40-1:07:51 Family
Mr. Ortiz speaks his family. He has two daughters. The oldest daughter, Maria is in L.A. working on her master's degree in screen writing. The youngest daughter, Melissa is finishing up her bachelor's degree in political science at Wright State University. His wife, Lillian is a pre-school teacher for special need kids. He explains the difficult time period that he went through when Melissa was diagnosed with colon cancer.

**Keywords:**
- Wright State University
- Latina Movies
- Michigan State University
- Political Science
- U.S. Department of Education-Hispanic Outreach
- Policy Writing
- Latino Communities
- Latino Issues
Kelly: Tell me about your childhood and adolescent experiences?
Ortiz: (Laughs) Where do I start? Childhood, I was born and raised in a steel city up north called Lorain, Ohio. I was one of thirteen kids. Neither of my parents spoke English so I grew up learning Spanish first at home and then English at school. My dad worked at a trucking company that closed and then he eventually worked at the steel mill. My mom primarily was at the house taking care of all thirteen kids.
Kelly: That’s a big job.
Ortiz: So I can’t say she never worked. I grew up, I went through schools, Lorain City schools all the way through and I graduated from Lorain South View back, way back. Do you want the year?
Kelly: Yeah.
Ortiz: 1973, then I stayed there for two years in Lorain Community College and then went on to finish everything up at Bowling Green [University].
Kelly: So, your parents were both immigrants?
Ortiz: Yes
Kelly: And could...
Ortiz: They’re both from Puerto Rico, both Puerto Rico. My dad was, basically at the time this trucking company started up in Lorain. It was Fruehauf at the time, the name of the trucking company was Fruehauf. They recruited workers from Puerto Rico to come work making these semi-trucks. Basically that’s how he got there. He came first and then my mom came a few years later. But that was in the fifties and they just stayed there forever. There’s a huge Latino, especially Puerto Rican population up there. Well, it was bigger then than it is now. They’re all legal documented or legal residents. Basically Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. A lot of folks don’t understand that, but we are U.S. citizens.
Kelly: What was it like living with thirteen siblings?
Ortiz: (Laughs) We always had play partners, had a lot of tag team, wrestling, broke a lot of windows. My dad would go out and get groceries and it would be cases not just bags. Milk, we went through probably five gallons every couple of days. Then at that time we had a milkman who delivered them in huge containers, I remember that. Every time – we never had any leftovers cause if you didn’t eat the food when it was hot, you didn’t eat (laughs). It was good—it was a challenge, but it was fun. It was a real big Catholic community so there was other—we had other families in the area that had large number of kids too. There was one that I remember that had twenty-one kids; another family down the street had fifteen kids. So it’s pretty common at that time. Now a-days you can’t—it’s unheard of, you just can’t afford to support that many kids.
Kelly: And did you live in a neighborhood with a lot of...?
Ortiz: I lived in a real neat neighborhood. There was a lot of Latinos but also a lot of folks from a lot of other European countries. We had Polish, Ukrainian, Slovenian. All sorts of folks from all different countries and again, they were immigrants that did not speak the language nor did they eat the same foods. So growing up we really got an opportunity to eat a lot of different foods cause we would just become friends with all these different people and we were all just sharing the same kind of experiences. It was truly a melting pot up in Lorain. And my parents never had to learn to speak English much. My dad did
cause at work but my mom didn’t because the grocery stores, there were Spanish vendors, the Churches, there were like four masses every Sunday, they were all in Spanish. There was Spanish newspapers, Spanish radio stations so-and a lot of our neighbors spoke Spanish. My mom could understand the language but she never really grasped to speak, to speaking it. She never- she always made us speak Spanish and it was good because we all learned to speak Spanish. But I always make fun of her because she never learned to speak English (laughs).

Kelly: What were your early education experiences like?
Ortiz: Well, (laughs) I started off at a Catholic school but I was too young and they found out and they kicked me out (laughs). But I wasn’t ready for that yet. I think all my-my oldest brother, my oldest sister, and I we all stated, but we knew we couldn’t. The more people that we kept adding to our family there was no way that my parents could afford to keep us in a Catholic school. Then I went on to public schools and the schools were ok. If I look-the way I look back at it now, they could have been a lot better. There I had some good teachers but I also had my share of bad teachers through that process as well. I compare what I had to what my daughters had at Beavercreek schools; they went through Beavercreek schools all the way through, vast difference, huge difference. I think early on, I probably had more opportunities if I would have gone on to better schools but I’ve taken advantage of what I had and I had a lot of people help me along the way too. Especially from the church, my mom went to church everyday so we were drove along to go with her.

Kelly: What were your experiences like as a child with the Catholic Church?
Ortiz: Good, yeah I mean most of what we did socially was with through the church. They would take me to games; they would take me to things that I never would have had a chance to go to otherwise because coming from a huge family like that, that wasn’t possible economically. So I went to baseball games. I remember seeing Doctor Zhivago when it first came out through a trip that the church arranged and they did that for all the kids in our area. It was neat.

Kelly: So tell me about your-I know you mentioned it before- well I actually did have- I wanted to go back to, you were saying that many people don’t know that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. Did you face- could you tell me if you faced discrimination when you were young, or your parents?
Ortiz: Oh, yes (laughs). People would look at you and say-and they would always assume that we’re all Mexicans. They would always say “go back to your country,” or “go back to Mexico,” and it was more on one side of town. When I first grew up-and at the time there were a lot of racial tensions as well. Not so much-it was more black, Latino thing at that time and some Anglo-American. But it got bad there for a while but we survived it. My father moved us from one neighborhood to another for that reason. When we moved to the second neighborhood it was more of a mixture of everybody, which was better.

Kelly: Right. So the first town that you lived at it was...
Ortiz: Well, we still lived in the same town but we moved to a different part of the town.
Kelly: Oh, ok. And there was a lot more...
Ortiz: Yeah, there was a lot more issues in the first part. We lived in the West side of Lorain and there was a lot more issues there and when we moved to the South part of Lorain it wasn’t as bad, not for us.
Kelly: So for your education-now I wanted to ask you about your...
Ortiz: And there was another incident there too. When we lived on the West side, my oldest brother got drugged and he spent probably seven, eight years institutionalized as a result of it. They never knew what it was but that had a huge impact on us moving and also just what happened with our family-what went on with our family. It was a traumatic time.

Kelly: How did it make you feel?
Ortiz: Unsafe. We were real limited on what we could do after that. We weren’t allowed out of the house and it was just-it got to be bad. But, it’s crazy.

Kelly: And has it still been affecting your family? Or was it...?
Ortiz: No, not too much. My older brother still has never been the same but I have a huge distaste for drug-dealers. I just-after that happened I says, one of things that happened that you got to live with.
Kelly: Right. Tell me about your educational background? I know you mentioned it kind of earlier.
Ortiz: Ok, yeah. I went to Bowling-I went to Lorain Community College first and basically I went there as a result of somebody from the church helping get us through school. So I went there for a couple of years and I knew I always wanted to be an athletic trainer even then, so I started going around and visiting schools even my first year at Lorain Community, trying to decide where I was going to go. So I went to five different schools and I eventually ended up at Bowling Green because of proximity to the house or to the home. Ohio U [University] had a great program at the time too but it was five hours away. So then also
at that time Bowling Green was also recruiting a lot of Latino students as well, so it was a good blend just
to feel more like at home when I went there.
Kelly: Why did you choose athletic training?
Ortiz: I always liked the medical part and I always liked being around sports. But at that time I was always
the smallest guy in class I could never participate as an athlete so I says, it’s one way of gettin in and I
enjoyed it.
Kelly: Can you explain about your training or preparation for your work outside of the classroom? Did you...
Ortiz: Oh, yeah (laughs). Part of the training and even to this day there are a lot of clinical hours. Our
clinical hours involved, at that time-now it’s only like nine-hundred to a thousand hours. At that time it
was-you had to do at least eighteen hundred hours but we-part of the program, we did over three thousand
clinical hours working with different teams, different settings. Most of our settings was there at the
University though. I also had opportunities to work with other places though too, other high school in that
area, with the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFL, some other colleges, but it was a very neat experience. I was
very well prepared at the time.
Kelly: What is-what did you do during your preparation? What does...
Ortiz: At that time I was what they called a student athletic trainer but now they are called, the official
name is now called athletic training student. I basically worked with the teams, worked with the athletic
trainer that was in charge of a team. I would basically assist them in everything that they were doing and
learning the trait as I went along.
Kelly: And assisting them...
Ortiz: Well, taping, stretching, making pads, doing rehab with the athletes, taking kids to the doctor,
assisting a doctor whenever their... all sorts of-watching a lot of games, watching a lot of practices,
traveling a lot. Like, I’ve been to all fifty states through my work in athletic training. But yeah, I just
completed number fifty in May or October.
Kelly: That’s amazing!
Ortiz: Yeah, and I’ve been to Europe three times. I’ve been all the way through Mexico, South-most of
South America, so I’ve been all over.
Kelly: Through all your...
Ortiz: Through athletic training.
Kelly: Through athletic training, wow.
Ortiz: Yeah.
Kelly: Wow, that’s great. Tell me about your experiences with Latino organizations in college?
Ortiz: Ok. College we had, yeah this gets good (laughs). When I was at Bowling Green, when I first got
there, there was a Latino organization. Well, at Lorain Community we had one first. That was called, Los
Unidos [The United], yeah that was Los Unidos and most of that consisted of a lot of Puerto Ricans from
that area. When I got to Bowling Green, that group was called La Unión de Estudiantes Latinos and I got
there it was mostly Mexicans. So it was a clash between Puerto Rican and Mexicans at the time because we
were different and we didn’t know how to act around each other, to put it bluntly. But a couple key people
though that, that I went to high school with also came to Bowling Green. They were Mexicans, they were
my best friends so they, they basically were the guys that united both groups together. It was neat, we did a
lot of things together, we had a lot of parties at our house-apartment. We had a lot of events that we did, we
did a lot of functions that we put together. We also did a lot of stuff in the community helping, Latino
families.
Kelly: Can you explain like what activities or...
Ortiz: We did tutoring. We did food drives, we did a lot of advocacy work and that’s a lot of stuff that I’m
doing now as well, but I started then.
Kelly: Weren’t you the president of one of the organizations?
Ortiz: Yes, I was president of both the Lorain Community College group, Los Unidos, and I also became
president of La Unión de Estudiantes Latinos at Bowling Green.
Kelly: How did that make you feel being-having to be the president?
Ortiz: I’ve always, I guess have been blessed with having good vision on the way it can look like. Most
organizations that I’m part of or have become president or one of the leaders, like even the Ohio Athletic
Trainers. That’s a huge organization that I eventually became president of that too. I started some other
organizations in this area too that we started for athletic training- we’ve also done that as well.
Kelly: I wanted to go back and ask you why was there, or were there, or is there still today a difference between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans?

Ortiz: First of all, in the-there are a lot of cultural differences. Language, there’s difference, there’s different dialect for what they speak in Puerto Rico and even while they speak Spanish in the United States that are Puerto Ricans, a lot of Spanglers is spoken. Also there’s a huge difference in dialects of what’s spoken in Puerto Rico and the United States, through what’s spoken in Mexico. Then there’s-the food is different. There food is completely different. Some of the-a lot of the holidays are different. The music is different, even the dress is different. So there’s-basically you get the Chinese and Japanese and they’re a lot of differences there too. The same exists between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans.

Kelly: Was it hard to-can you explain if it was it hard to-I know you had best friends that were Mexicans but was it hard to...? How did it make you feel having to assimilate?

Ortiz: Well, basically when I was growing up the Mexican community we really didn’t- we got along pretty good together. I mean every once in a while there would be people that would make fun of the folks that were undocumented or take advantage but that was just stupidity on some people’s part. That was just being vicious, that was kids being vicious. My best friends, one was Mexican, one was a Dominican, and the other one was Puerto Rican. There was four of us that grew up together and we all went to each other’s houses and we ate each other’s foods and stuff like that. We made fun of how each other talked but that was just part of it (laughs).

Kelly: Tell me about your experiences working at Beavercreek High School?

Ortiz: Yes (laughs). You must have my resume somewhere huh?

Kelly: Well, I’ve been researching you and there’s a lot on the internet about you.

Ortiz: Ok (laughs). Beavercreek High School was a great-well before I came to Beavercreek, I went to Bowling Green and I went-after I got my bachelor’s degree I went back to Lorain. I taught at Lorain Clearview High School. At that time it just wasn’t a very good school at the time. So I says you know I’m going to-but I had an opportunity to back to Bowling Green and get my masters as a graduate assistant and I went back. Then while I was at Bowling Green, I was finishing up my course of study- I was finished right around August and I had choices of places to go. I think one was Toledo, another one was Lorain, and Beavercreek was my third choice. Oh, Lima was there too, so there were four choices. While I was at Bowling Green, for like two weeks straight, Jim Place, who was the coach at the time at Beavercreek, kept calling me, kept calling me. Eventually I said ok I will come and see the school. So I came and I saw the school and I said there’s now way that I’m going to come back here. I told my wife this place is a dump. But then he kept callin and callin. There was another guy, Dr. Romano, and that’s Tony Romano, and he kept calling me. And so I said God, these people must really- I got to give them a chance. So I came and it was the best move I ever made.

Kelly: Why was it?

Ortiz: It was a great school and the people that were there were very, very supportive. It just helped me see a whole-a completely different way schools are supposed to be like. I compare that school to where I grew up, Beavercreek was a ten. Lorain probably was a two or three. Clearview was like a two or three, just the emphasis on education, the support of the families, and it was just completely different. I had some extremely bright kids there. I had kids that their parents were generals, engineers, but we also had a lot of other kids too that were down the middle of the rope. But it was just a great school. I taught Spanish there and that was like stealing candy from a kid (laughs). But it was easy-it was really easy, but it was fun though too. Then I was the high school athletic trainer there as well. There weren’t-after I did my research I looked at Beavercreek, and I looked at Lima, and I looked at Lorain, and Toledo. What really drew me here was all the area colleges that were around here and I says I knew eventually that I wanted to go on to college setting. I would have more opportunities here and it really worked out that way.

Kelly: How did you decide to come - like you just said you wanted to eventually come to a university? How did you decide to come to Wright State?

Ortiz: I got to Beavercreek in 1980. In 1983 I had an opportunity to leave then to go back to Cleveland to work at the Cleveland Clinic and a college or high school there at the time. But I turned it down because I just bought a house and I says, I’ll just wait. So then about 1984, the guy that was here, who really made a big difference on me coming to Wright State and coming to Beavercreek too, I called him and I said- I ran into him at a conference in Philadelphia, and I said hey tell me about this school. He’s the one that said it’s a pretty good school. So then we came pretty close when I first got here, then he called me and said that he was leaving, and then I said I’d be interested. Three or four months later I got the job here. I started in

Kelly: What was it like starting Wright State’s Athletic Training Program?
Ortiz: Well, when I first got in, there was two classes. I had one graduate assistant, and I had six students. It was tough because I was working a different sport every season. I get done with soccer, I work basketball, and then I get done with basketball, I do baseball. It was tough; it was a lot of hours. We tried to do the best we could as the time and it was really hard. But as time—compared to then and now, now there’s (laughs) – we have five full time people, three graduate assistants, and seventy students. So it’s come a long way.

Kelly: How did you get to build it up?
Ortiz: It took time and you just had to take baby steps. I had to have support from people within the department here that put it into a strategic plan and then there was an accreditation process that was brand new that we went through it and we did well. But it’s gradually been built up, a lot of support within and also externally as well.

Kelly: Can you explain your experiences working as the director of athletic training and education?
Ortiz: I mean there’s been some great moments but also some troubling times. Again there’s - I try to surround myself with the best people that I could and most of the time we did. I have had to let very few people go, I’ve had some, but for the majority of the part we screened them well from the beginning and they’ve done well. They’ve represented us well. I mean from the time we started till now I can’t— I’ve lost track but we’ve probably have had two-hundred and fifty certified athletic trainers around the country, and really covering this area well. There’s not-everywhere you look around here one of the schools here has one of our athletic trainers. Now one point, eighty percent of the colleges in the state of Ohio had one of our graduates, and I’m proud to say that. I think that was- they did good work. I mean just last week, we had two of our kids that have finished our program from last year’s class or just graduating now, got accepted into the Ohio State Physical Therapy Program and they only accept forty-four and they took two from our program and that’s probably out of seven-six to seven thousand applicants. That says a lot for that type of kid, that quality of kid that we’ve been able to get. It’s been a lot of fun but again there’s always been battles along the way too that I’ve had to fight.

Kelly: Can you explain?
Ortiz: Well, there was a group of doctors here, that helped me put the program together and the School of Medicine decided that they wanted their folks in and so they kind of booted these guys out. That was tough for me. I—when I heard that, I made one call and I had another job the next day. But these guys talked me into—said “don’t do that,” and they said “just give it time.” That’s the old guys and I respect them for that. I went home it was up in Cleveland, back to the Cleveland Clinic. I was going to work for them and I went home and I told my mom but she says, “No, you can’t do that.” I was moving back because of her, I wanted to be closer but then my daughters were a junior and senior-sophomores and juniors in high school. They said “dad were not moving,” and I said ok (laughs). But that was probably one of the hardest things that I ever had to do, to see that happen to all of those guys after they were here after like twenty-five years.

Kelly: How did that make you feel?
Ortiz: Oh, just- I was devastated. I didn’t know what to say and it was just some politicking too that some folks just took advantage of the situation to benefit themselves. But that’s life (laughs). You got to move on.

Kelly: Moving kind of towards a different direction. How did you get involved with Latino community issues and services in the Dayton area?
Ortiz: I have some friends here in the area that have been here for a long time, forty, fifty years and they have always been on me about getting involved, getting the University involved. But when I was working basketball, I gave up basketball three years ago. I had no time. I was working eighty hours a week and I never knew what my schedule was going to be. I says ok when I do that, I’ll get more involved and I started getting more involved then, and it’s just been— it’s taken off.

Kelly: When was that?
Ortiz: About three years ago. Let me see, this group right now, were freshmen, yes so three years ago. This group that’s playing right now was—that are seniors—was my last-when they were freshmen, was my last year of playing basketball. But yeah, it’s been taken off and we’ve had a lot of success in such a short period of time.

Kelly: Can you explain what you have been involved with?
Ortiz: Well, we have Latino Dream Team. I don’t know if you’ve seen—if you go to LatinoDayton.org you can see our whole plan. But we’ve had some big heavy hitters come in and talk to... What I did is like I said, I’ve been here since 1980 and I knew all these people were but they were all over the place. What I did was I brought them together and we made a strategic plan as a result of and we called it the Latino Dream Team. That was helped through Robert Sweeney [Professor of Finance at Wright State University] but also the folks who really got me started on it at first though was Kathy Davis, our admissions director and Jacqueline McMillan [Vice President of Wright State University]. They were the ones that really made it happen to begin with and then Robert taught me with the Dream Team a strategic plan. But with that we basically brought all these groups together and we all had a common goal of things that we are working on. And it’s reached some really important people now cause their calling us to meet with us. Like Senator Rob Portman, his office just called. We were supposed to meet with him next week but it has been postponed till March but he’s-he wants to come in and talk to us cause he knows we have a captive group now that he can reach. Whereas before he was dealing with a lot of different people but now we’ve brought all these folks here on the campus and he knows there’s some legitimacy to the group. Even like the Hispanic Chamber [promotes economic development through growth of Hispanic business and the Hispanic market], when they first started, they didn’t have any colleges within that Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. But Wright State jumped aboard, when they first started - I first started within three years ago and now all the area colleges are on that, are apart of the Hispanic Chamber. I mean it’s just - they see the value in it when we bring things together like that. We were at Columbus the last two days. Well, yesterday I was there all day but we met with a lot of Kasich [John Kasich, Governor of Ohio] people, some of his representatives to give him our input as to what we need and what the Latino community needs. But also how can we help him as well, that’s part of the process.

Kelly: Just for our listeners, can you explain again what the Latino Dream Team is?
Ortiz: Yeah, Latino Dream Team is made up of the leader—basically a representative of every Latino organization in the Greater Dayton Area. Basically I hand picked all these people and I knew some wouldn’t get along and I knew to place them at different tables when we do have meetings (laughs). But our goal is to- with the Latino Dream Team, is to recognize who these people are first, to recognize what resources we have, and then to basically establish a networking system to being able to tie the two together. That’s essentially what we were doing.

Kelly: You were saying when you met with Kasich...
Ortiz: We were supposed to meet with him here in the next couple of months through the State Hispanic Chamber. We met some of his cabinet people yesterday.
Kelly: Right. And you were saying, wanting to meet the Hispanic needs. What are the Hispanic, Latino’s needs?
Ortiz: First and foremost was probably the number one issue is the Dream Act cause it affects everybody. Do you know about the Dream Act at all?
Kelly: I do vaguely. It would be nice if you could...
Ortiz: Yes, see I met with these kids here last week; they’re graduates from local schools. They’ve been through the system from kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade. But they were brought here at a real young age, undocumented and now they don’t qualify to go on to school.
Kelly: To go on to college?
Ortiz: To go on to college.
Kelly: Because they’re undocumented?
Ortiz: Both of these kids are 4.0 kids. One wants to be a doctor, the other one wants to be an engineer but they don’t qualify because they’re undocumented. With the Dream Act, what it’s attempting to do is kind of come to some compromise. How do you take care of these kids so they can move on? But yet there still has to be I guess some kind of penalty or some kind of consequence for them coming here illegally. Well, it was no choice of theirs. Their parents brought them here for- and unfortunately they’re caught in the middle. That’s a big issue, immigration reform is another issue. Immigration reform does not only affect the Latinos, it affects everybody. Like, my daughter is dating a kid from Ireland right now. To bring him over here is a major hassle and it’s a long tedious process. Again it’s just trying to address the issues to make that system better. Education is another, there’s a huge gap, achievement gap between these Latinos that are born... Like, these kids that are born to parents that don’t speak English, go home, they can’t get any help with their homework. Or even through the college- to get the kid does well- let’s say a kid does well in high school or all the way through school, when it comes to going to college and nobody in their family ever has gone to college before, they don’t know the process. Those are similar things that we’re
trying to address, some things that I’m doin’. Health care is another issue. Minimum health care is an issue for everybody but when it comes to health care for some of these folks if they don’t speak English, interpretation, process, that’s there. That’s a legal right for anybody no matter if you’re Latino or any language that you don’t speak but there are services there but folks don’t know about it. But we’ve met with ‑‑ we’ve met with the head of the Republican Party, he came in, Kevin DeWine. We met the head of the Democratic Party, Chris Radford came in. We met with somebody from HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development], the assistant director from HUD. We’ve met with Frank Perez, who basically was in charge of overseeing ‑‑ oversaw Kettering Hospital until recently. We met with President Hopkins, [President of Wright State University] we’ve met with a lot of different folks.

Kelly: How do you get your message across?

Ortiz: Well, we have a website right now, LatinoDayton. But I make it a point to try to ‑‑ I’m president of the local League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) so we have a lot of those folks that belong to that group as well. But I’m out there a lot now, like Hispanic Chamber meetings, LULAC meetings. There’s a new Puerto Rican restaurant in town, I go there. BACO is another huge group that does the Hispanic Festival downtown, does Christmas ‑‑ Thanksgiving baskets, they give Christmas gifts. I’m involved as much as possible with those different groups and helping to support those activities that they’re doing. But it’s been good ‑‑ we have a huge Latino population on the base [Wright Patterson Air Force Base].

Kelly: We do? I didn’t know that.

Ortiz: Oh, yeah. And a lot of those folks are recruited by ‑‑ and the Puerto Ricans that were recruited, most of them are engineers. We have more advanced degrees amongst the Latino population here in the Dayton area then we do anywhere else in the state of Ohio.

Kelly: Wow, that’s amazing.

Ortiz: Yes, I had no idea.

Kelly: No, you don’t. You really don’t know.

Ortiz: No idea, until I started getting out there and I started talking to these people and they said ‑‑ and I asked them what you’re doing and tell me what their background is? And I says, wow, I had no idea.

Kelly: I had no idea.

Ortiz: We had a reception in December in the president’s box and we had sixty people come out and some of these folks I had never met before, but it was neat. One of my other jobs too though is to try and bring these kids here, to a school.

Kelly: So you’re ‑‑ can you explain...

Ortiz: By helping them and also by helping folks that are first generation college kids. I’ll go to their homes and show them what they have to do. And I’ll pull out my laptop and show them the process of filling out an application for admissions or filling out an application for financial aid. We also have a center, I don’t know if I told you ‑‑ do you know about our center at all?

Kelly: Oh, El Puente?

Ortiz: Yes. Yes, that we started, this is our second year? Yeah, second year in existence and it’s a collaborative effort between Wright State’s College of Education students, AT&T provided all the computers, LULAC provides a huge grant, and then another local foundation that they like to stay anonymous, so I honor that. But they’ve helped us as well.

Kelly: Can you explain your experiences being the director of El Puente?

Ortiz: It’s been awesome cause we’ve had probably ‑‑ we have a kids program now. We got thirty, thirty ‑‑ five kids that come everyday and then we also have a parent program now too, where we’re teaching them computer skills, skyping, emailing, all that kind of stuff. We also have like a bridge program where we have parent meetings trying to get them to help their kids ‑‑ teach them how to help their kids. Like this last week we had a session where two of our psychologists from our school, from professional psychology, that did a seminar on how they can help their kids, especially in times of separation. Cause right now there’s a lot of deportations, sometimes the fathers ‑‑ they come and get the father but the mother and kids are still here and they have to deal with that. So that’s what they were ‑‑ and basically that whole session was about that was powerful. I left there, I mean during that session some of those people were got real emotional and teary eyed but you could see what they’re going through. It was very powerful but I think these two psychologists were able to reach them and at least give them some transition skills. But yeah, that center is at St. Mary’s [Catholic] Church. Hispanic Catholic Ministry is another partner. You met ‑‑ yeah, you met Sister Maria [Director of Dayton’ Catholic Hispanic Ministry].

Kelly: Yeah, I wanted to ask you how did you meet Sister Maria and what’s your relationship?
Ortiz: When I first started this, I went out there and everybody kept saying Sister Maria. I says well - I made a call and I went over and I met with her. We probably met for about two or three hours. I explained my background, she told me hers and it was just a hit right off the bat. So I help her a lot and she helps me a lot though too.

Kelly: How do you guys help each other? I know she has...

Ortiz: If she has a family in need, she calls me or if I have a need for a particular program or something we’re doing I’ll call her. She’s part of our Dream Team too and she’s one of our four leaders. So she’s been extremely helpful.

Kelly: Was it difficult—could you explain if it was difficult getting started El Puente?

Ortiz: Funding, probably the most difficult to begin with.

Kelly: How did you...?

Ortiz: But once we got going though, we’ve had little resistance at all. Yeah, most of it is all grant-driven. The foundations, AT&T, and LULAC are primarily sponsoring—basically paying for everything.

Kelly: How did you tell the kids? Or how did you recruit?

Ortiz: Well, our other partners are Dayton Public Schools though too and some of the Catholic schools. When I first thought of the idea and it was similar to a program that was - when I grew up in Lorain there was a similar program that helped a lot of kids. I says, why can’t we have that here? I went to meet- I met with the three principals and I told them about the idea. They all loved it and then from there on I started applying for the grants and hitting on some, not hitting on all of them and that’s how we got started but they bought into them right away because they needed help and I knew these kids needed help. So I was just basically the man in the middle just to tie them together.

Kelly: What do they do during the...?

Ortiz: They— you ought to come out and visit if you can. Fridays usually are not good days because that’s play day. There are other days though that basically— I have a gal that’s there that Sister Maria told me about. Her name is Alyssa Wagner and she was very fluent. She had a boyfriend or something, Dominican and spent some time there part of the study abroad program. She’s a University of Dayton grad but very tied in to what’s going on in the community. So last year it was somebody else was doing it, her name was Rosa Caskey and was one of my really mentors as well. But this year Alyssa’s doing it and she’s there everyday and I’ve hired four or five kids from Wright State that are there everyday as well. Then we get service learning students that are there everyday as well. So we may probably have a staff of about eight everyday and kids bring their homework. They break down the groups into three different categories, you have the K through three or four in one, the middle five through - well no the next group four, five, and six are the majority of our kids, they’re in another room, and then seven and eight are in another room. We break up the tutors into each one of them and they all have to bring their homework, they all have to sit there and do homework. We feed them, there’s this local program that we found out about that would feed these kids after school, so they get fed and if they do well then they’re rewarded, they can go into the computer center. But they have to earn their way in there. But they’ve done extremely well, one of the little girls, fifth grade from Patterson Kennedy won the spelling bee for all levels, one of the kids from the program.

Kelly: Wow.

Ortiz: I was very impressed.

Kelly: Yeah, that’s great.

Kelly: Has your—I guess you said that you started about three years ago?

Ortiz: Yeah, I started—I’m supposed to do one day a week (laughs). I started about three years ago, in this process.

Kelly: How has it changed? How has your involvement changed since then?

Ortiz: At first I really had to go out there and peddle a lot but as time has gone on I’m getting a lot of calls versus having to go out and make calls. A lot of people are calling me with their needs and so it’s more streamlined now then it was. So it’s been good cause a lot of people have been calling me that need help or want to connect to something on campus or want to do something here, cause for the most part the university has not—there’s an Asian/Hispanic Center, but it’s really never connected to the Hispanic community. We have probably- and when I first started I think there was like two-hundred, around two-hundred Latino students and now were at about close to five-hundred Latino students over that short period of time. But our next level of where we have to hit is that we have to develop more infrastructure, programming to be able to keep these kids here, graduate them and get those kids involved also with the Latino community. That’s the next step.
Kelly: And how do you...?
Ortiz: We’re in the process of discussing those types of things, that type of infrastructure that needs to be developed within the university.
Kelly: How do you try to connect the Latino community with the community here at Wright State?
Ortiz: We’ve had more, what do we say, activities? In the last three years, we’ve had more Latinos come on this campus than ever.
Kelly: What are the-what were the activities?
Ortiz: Some of them-let’s see if I could go back. Let me start over, the first year we had the state LULAC convention which is all the LULAC members across the state were here. We had a job fair, we also had a seminar, and we also had a huge scholarship campaign. That first year I think we gave away like eight thousand dollars in scholarship. This year I’m already at fifteen thousand and probably will reach twenty thousand here in not too long. We had that - we’ve had different entertainers come in and do events here. Hispanic Chamber has come in every year through the college of business. That helps them both. We’ve had a lot of organizational meetings, strategic meetings with the Dream Team, but also other groups have come in here and have done their strategic planning, and again different Latino groups. We’ve tried to anytime there’s an activity, I’ve tried to get the Latino community involved somehow, somehow. But over the- we’ve had our banquet here every year now. Our scholarship and awards banquet has been here.
Kelly: Right.
Ortiz: And in LatinoDayton.org, that is huge.
Kelly: How did you start...?
Ortiz: That started out of the Latino Dream Team.
Kelly: Are you the one? Who was able to start - or we’re you the one who started the...?
Ortiz: I started it and I have a webmaster that does it. But I stay behind the scenes (laughs).
Kelly: And I wanted to ask in your opinion, what are some of the most interesting programs or events that you’ve been involved with?
Ortiz: Probably the scholarship, cause most of those kids are coming here. The scholarship, the, I think BACO, doing stuff with BACO.
Kelly: What’s BACO?
Ortiz: BACO is a Puerto Rican and Caribbean organization. You know the Thanksgiving drives that they do, the Christmas- or Three Kings Day [Religious Holiday celebrated in Puerto Rico. Commemorates the three kings that visit the new-born Christ as they bear gifts] activity that they do. But I think just getting—probably the number one activity was the Latino Dream Team, getting all those people talking and working together. That’s probably more than anything. It’s probably our fame to claim for Wright State.
Kelly: And so the Latino...
Ortiz: Also the other thing too is connecting - being around here for thirty years, I know a lot of people so I can connect people like students to things they may need. We had somebody that needed an internship and was very interested in radio and T.V. I had a former student who is the news director of Channel 2 and all I said was that we had to call him and within a day it was done. Just simple things like that.
Kelly: Right, that’s good. What is - could you explain to me what is the Hispanic Education and Career Summit?
Ortiz: Yeah, that was the big event that we did with LULAC. That went extremely well, we probably had about two-hundred and fifty people here that took part in the career, basically the career fair/job fair. There was about twenty-five companies that were here that were looking to talk to Latino, potential employees but also to talk about different career opportunities as well. But prior to that though, we also did an education summit that we need to revisit. Education summit is when we brought all the professionals in the area and then roundtables with the kids but we need to probably re-do that at some point cause we had a lot of interest from the community but we didn’t have a lot of the kids. We didn’t have as much kids as much as we thought in order to make it a success. We’re probably another year away from doing that but even then - that’s done on an everyday basis trying to connect. If a kid, like in our athletic training program, if a kid wants to really succeed we have internship opportunities and where they go to their internship, will eventually lead to a job and that’s what I try to do. That’s why I have kids all over the country as internships but I want to try and do the same thing with the Latino kids. I know all these different companies out there and once I know who the kids are, I can tie them to these- and that’s what we were trying to do. Internally we don’t have that place, for the kid. They can go to career services but if a company is looking for a specific - for a bilingual kid. Like right now, Home Depot is looking for a lot of bilingual workers right now at different capacities. I’ll call the kids that I know but I also know that there’s also other
kids out there that could probably benefit from it as well. Or they even don’t have to be Latino. If a kid is interested in working in the Latino community or in a Latin American country in the future, if you have a space or somewhere where these kids can go visit and talk to somebody, it will happen. And that doesn’t exist right now.

Kelly: And you’re trying to work on that?

Ortiz: That’s what we’re trying to work on. And that’s - the career job expo, all that was part of it but that’s just the start of it. That’s just planting the seeds but there still has to be some nurturing that goes along with it. I also tie in the services that are here, why re-invent the wheel. We’ve met with career services and trying to help them out but also to help us out as well.

Kelly: Why is education such an important element in your community involvement?

Ortiz: I think it’s important in any community if you want to elevate them from where they’re at. If you want a get out of where you’re at, the only way you can really get out of there is to get an education and be able to do things for yourself. If you rely on the system, the system drags its feet and you’ll never get anywhere. But if you know your ways in and out of situations, you know how to get from point A to point B and someone doesn’t have to hold your hand there, that’s what we’re trying to do.

Kelly: Right. So, can you explain what are some of the obstacles and frustrations about doing community work?

Ortiz: I don’t know how to put this. Probably the biggest obstacle is people look at you and say “why are you doing this, and why are you here?” “Why aren’t you in your own country,” that prejudice that’s out there. My grandfather would never come to the United States because in Puerto Rico you don’t experience that, whereas when he came here, he experienced that right away and he went right back. But that’s probably the biggest obstacle and another strange thing too, is when I go out there and represent myself as the athletic trainer here, I get a lot more, versus when I go out there and tell them that I’m doing this Latino work, I get these strange, odd looks. And they says “why are you doing it,” and my answer is hey, somebody did it for me.

Kelly: Yeah, how does that make you feel having...

Ortiz: It’s frustrating at times but I know that you can’t change them so we’ll just move on.

Kelly: Why do you think there’s that prejudice?

Ortiz: I don’t know. I wish I knew - well a lot of times I think its how an individual is brought up. To constantly have that, that these people are lazy, they’ll all just take your jobs, they’ll do this, they’ll do that. That’s what they eventually learn and it’s hard to break that.

Kelly: Do you think it has to do with maybe negative media or...?

Ortiz: Yes, I think so too. Yeah some of it is, yeah. \You may hear if an undocumented person or let’s say a Latino does something bad out there, then it will get publicized big time but if they do something good it gets buried.

Kelly: Right. We were, with Sister Maria we were talking about how with Lou Dobbs and

Ortiz: Oh, yeah.

Kelly: They-Sister Maria said that since he’s on television then he has the authority or he’s right. Or he has the authority that he can’t be wrong. What do you think about that?

Ortiz: Well, I think the media - those guys again are going to report what they believe but I don’t think there’s enough reported on the other side. The folks that have the means to communicate in that arena have more of a say than those folks that - and I venture to guess there’s more folks, like the majority of us are in the middle that don’t think that way. There is some of these people that are still so far out there on the right and so far on the left but the majority of us are right in the middle and don’t feel that either way (laughs). But that’s a- we have to live with that because there’s nothing to change it.

Kelly: So...

Ortiz: Except, the way I look at it is, I can only do what I have control of and I try to do as much as I can of what I can’t control. Those other folks I can’t control, I don’t waste a lot of time with them. There’s nothing I can do except waste my time and get angry (laughs).

Kelly: How do you think that we - people can overcome those negative media or...?

Ortiz: I think the more they get informed and if they go in with an open mind and listen and really get to find out what people that are different and how they really are different and they’re really not that bad. I think they get a better understanding. Again you’re fighting their upbringings and that takes a long time to chip through.

Kelly: Yeah.

Ortiz: Unfortunately.
Kelly: I guess, what are the young Latinos and Latinas main concerns with education and careers?

Ortiz: Paying for school, finding a job, just like anybody else. I think though, there is always that fear going through all the school and getting close to being done and not finishing or not being able to pay back the loans that you have. Again, that’s a fear for any group. But I think over time though that will get better and we’re just in a huge, horrible economic time right now. But I think it will get better. But there’s got to be collaboration, cooperation, it can’t be the same group getting everything just because they have more money.

Kelly: Right, and how do you think it’s going to- I guess through your programs and through you’re working with Wright State, little by little I guess or sewing the seed?

Ortiz: My goal through Wright State is to really educate not only the Latinos but also to educate other folks about Latinos. To be able to relate to the Latino population but also realize that we all want the same thing. We all want what’s best for our family; we all want a comfortable life. We ought to be able to live in a place like Beavercreek where you feel safe, your kids are going to school and they’re going to get a good education; to be able to feed them, some entertainment. But that’s- I think everybody wants that (laughs).

Kelly: No, I agree, definitely. What helps you to overcome the obstacles that we talked about?

Ortiz: Probably talking to others to see how they handled it, like Sister and I probably talk a lot. Then there is Grace Ramos [Commissioner of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission] who’s my other mentor and if something comes up and I really hit a dead-end I’ll talk to them and they use to get me through it (laughs).

Kelly: How do you-what do you do when you talk with them? Do they...?

Ortiz: They just give me other ideas and other options that are maybe available that I’m not thinking about.

Kelly: Ok. So, what motivates you to continue to keep doing this work?

Ortiz: Watching those kids - watching that light go off. I don’t know, if you’re an educator or if you’ve ever been in education, or if you’re dealing with anybody and you’re helping a kid and eventually they say “you see that light go off, you see their eyes open big,” that’s what motivates me. Or when they get an opportunity that you’ve helped them, then they get an opportunity to help somebody else. So that’s just paying it forward.

Kelly: How doe is it make you feel when they- when you see that light in their eyes? I guess it just makes you feel good knowing that you were able...?

Ortiz: Oh, yeah, like I got a drawer full of cards here from kids like that. When I get a card like that I keep it and they tell me what they’re going through and they’re thanking me for doing this or that and that’s a big difference.

Kelly: Definitely. I guess what are some of the most gratifying contributions or accomplishments that you’ve - I know that you won many awards.

Ortiz: I don’t really do it for that.

Kelly: Well, right.

Ortiz: What are the gratifications?

Kelly: Or what are the most gratifying or accomplishments that...?

Ortiz: Seeing a kid get a degree, seeing a kid get a job. Seeing someone become a positive influence, a good mentor for somebody else, those are the good things. Those are the things that people have done for me and so it’s just a payback.

Kelly: I guess what I as wondering is, what do you think needs to be done politically, or educationally to help young Latinos?

Ortiz: That’s a good question. We’ve met yesterday for eight hours and we talked about this. The Latino community has the power to influence probably most political races in the future, one way or the other. But what has to happen is we all as a Latino community, have to agree on certain things and quit dividing our votes which will become meaningless unless we’re trying to get the same things. That’s what we were talking about yesterday, how can we do that and it’s an ongoing process. The thing about it though too is with any group is - you get people that get - that eventually get fed up that things don’t happen for a reason and then they don’t vote and that’s the worst thing you can do. When we get them out there to register to vote but they don’t go out to vote, then that power is lost and educating the folks not only about the process but what they can do to make their voices heard. Like this meeting with the representatives, they have that right but as a Latino population we haven’t done that much in the past. We did it the last two days in Columbus but that more and more has to happen. We can’t become the silent majority because that ain’t gonna help any and unfortunately that’s happen with some racial groups out there. They have - they fought so much amongst themselves that they’ve never been able to overcome differences to take advantage of that power they do have.
Kelly: What were the dividing issues that divide...?
Ortiz: Well, you still have folks that are real strong democrats and you’ll still have folks that are real strong republicans, where the majority of us still are independent. Instead of looking at an individual, they’re voting as a party and that’s probably one of the biggest problems. Again, I’ll vote on both sides but I’m not voting for a party, I’m voting for an individual who I believe is going to help not only my situation but our communities as a whole. How they going to help us, like here, if you’re in Greene County and you’re a democrat it’s going to be very difficult to get elected, whereas if you’re up in Lorain County and you’re republican, it’s going to be very difficult. But again, you have to look at individuals and what happens with this Democratic Party here, not only are they going to lose, they just may throw somebody into the ring but yet they’re going to get people to vote only because it’s a democrat or vice versa up there. That’s how I look at it. I’m looking at the qualifications of each individual.
Kelly: Definitely. So I guess, can you tell me about your family and the impact your involvement has there been an impact with your involvement with the community on your family?
Ortiz: My oldest daughter graduated here from Wright State and she’s out in L.A. She’s working on her master’s in screen writing and her agenda is Latina movies. But that depict the Latino that is real and not somebody walking around with a sombrero or eating tacos or stuff like that. She -one of hers, her first one I think is going to be called “Brown Christmas.” It’s just basically how the Latino families celebrate Christmas, how they really do it. Again some of it is not that much different but hers is more of a comedy that’s similar stuff to write. She wants to break into the Latino market and that’s what her goal is. My youngest daughter who was at Michigan State, just about finishing, but she got colon cancer in August. But she’s going to finish up here, this quarter and she’s got two classes. She had two majors but she’s had to drop down to one but she’ll be done and her future is politics. She spent last year, last January through May at the U.S. Department of Education with the Hispanic Outreach office there. But her goal again is similar to a lot of stuff that I’m doing. But she wants to get into policy writing because she knows that’s where all the decisions are made and if it’s not policy, it’s not going to happen, and she realizes that. But her goal is to be involved more in politics and leading Latino communities. My wife’s a pre-school teacher with special needs. We basically just a-she rolls along as we go.
Kelly: Was it difficult with your daughter having colon cancer? Was that a difficult...?
Ortiz: Oh, yeah.
Kelly: Yeah, I can imagine.
Ortiz: When they told us about it I couldn’t talk, but I think she’s coming around now.
Kelly: Good.
Ortiz: And she’s gone through the chemo which is very difficult to watch, watch your daughter lay there and there’s nothing you can do (tears up).
Kelly: Yeah, I agree. That’s excellent that she back...
Ortiz: She’s doing pretty good.
Kelly: Good, very good. So have they been affected at all with all your involvement? They just roll with it I guess?
Ortiz: Yeah, I mean athletics, I mean they were involved- I mean they went to a lot of games. My youngest one won’t go to anymore games (laughs). But the oldest one became a big sports fan but then the youngest one is more involved in the Latino issues, whereas the oldest one doesn’t really - she’ll do the- she likes the Latino- she doesn’t like any of the politics. One wants to become a politician the other one hates politics (laughs). They have different ways though of reaching - wanting to do the same thing but different ways of doing it and getting... One is through the policy and politics and the other one is through movies.
Kelly: Yeah. Well, that’s neat, it’s a different balance.
Ortiz: And they’re completely different (laughs).
Kelly: Are they?
Ortiz: Oh, yeah.
Kelly: Well, that’s good. Really that answers really all my questions. I just wanted to ask you, do you want to add anything or...?
Ortiz: I don’t think so. I think we went over most of it.
Kelly: Yeah, yeah. I guess just did you have any questions about the release form?
Ortiz: No, no I’m good. I’ve done a lot of those (laughs).
Kelly: Ok, well then I’ll turn this off.
Ortiz: Ok.
Glossary
Lorain, Ohio
Puerto Rico
Immigrants
Catholic
Latino
Lorain Community College
Bowling Green University
Athletic Training
Beavercreek High School
Wright State University
Dayton’s Latino Community
Community Service
Latino Dream Team
LatinoDayton.org
Hispanic Chamber
Immigration
LULAC
BACO
El Puente Learning Center
St. Mary’s Catholic Church
Dayton Catholic Hispanic Community