

S: I'm going to explain to you just a basic rundown of what we're going to be talking about today. This project is about Latinos in Oregon and what I'm going to be asking you about is, primarily, differences in your life in Mexico and your life in Oregon, and what it's like to be bicultural, essentially. That's about it. I'll just ask you a few basic questions and you can talk about whatever you'd like to talk about. To begin with, I just want to let you know that I'll be taking notes during this whole process just so that I can make notes of things that I find interesting. So to begin with, if you would like to use your name, what is your full name?

E: Aurora López

S: So, Aurora, could you tell me a little bit about where you were born and what it was like growing up there?

E: Well, I [was] born in Mexico City, almost 43 years ago, and I was a very happy child over there. But, when you grow up, you know what is the situation in your country. So, I was studying my college, but then I decided to move from my country.

S: Could you tell me a little more about your childhood in Mexico. For starters, what kind of school did you go to? Was it in Mexico City? You grew up and lived there until... how old were you when you moved away from Mexico City?

E: I moved here in 1992. But when I was in Mexico as a child, I was in a public school with almost 500 in my school...so, many many children at my school. 50 kids in my class, so...big. Every class was very big and I was a really happy girl going to school and growing up with my brothers and sisters...because I have a lot of brothers and sisters...

S: How many brothers and sisters?

E: 5 brothers and 7 sisters. So, I had many friends at the school, but I also have all my brothers and sisters as friends at home too.

S: What kind of things did you do outside of school? What kinds of things did you remember doing with your brothers and sisters, with your family maybe celebrations or just things in your community?

E: I remember that my father and my mom took us to the park some Saturdays, and they had sandwich[es] for all the kids to eat. And we'd play fútbol and we'd play a lot of little things...and running around the park...

S: Fútbol, fútbol Americano?

E: Fútbol soccer. [That] was on weekends. During the week, after school, I had all my brothers and a few sisters going to the park or going to the...it's a special place...we'd play basketball. Every evening we're playing basketball, getting too tired, come back home, doing homework and ready for the next day. So I think I was a very happy girl in Mexico. Very busy..very busy days.

S: Very busy your whole life, huh?

E: Yeah.

S: I remember once you told me that your family moved from Mexico City to Hidalgo...

E: Mm hmm.

S: How old were you when that happened?

E: Well, I was...10 years old when moved from Mexico City to Hidalgo. It's like..3 hours from Mexico City...by that time I'm starting..umm como se dice que es el...

S: Es.. ¿secundaria?

E: Si, si.

S: O, primaria...o, no.

E: Secundaria.

S: ¿Secundaria?

E: Uh huh.

S: O, high school, or middle school, or junior high school...

E: Junior high school.

S: Oh, junior high school.

[both laughing]

E: So,...I'm starting junior high school in Hidalgo.

S: And you were 10 at the time?

E: Yah...or..no I remember I was like a [mumbles] something...ago.

S: Ok. And how did you feel about that? I mean, why was your family moving? Were you upset about it, excited about it or maybe both?

E: We move because in Mexico City was like too many children for a very very small house. So, my mom...decided to move to the side of the city and we had a little bigger house, but it's in the country. It's like...we started with no electricity or water. But, I was very excited because I felt I was in the middle of nowhere, but it was so exciting.

S: So, you lived in the city of Hidalgo, or the state of Hidalgo...?

E: State.

S: The state of Hidalgo...What kind of population was the city, or what was that like?

E: Ok, I think it was like, 1000 people over there.

S: Oh, very small.

E: Very small.

S: So then, you lived there until you were...how old?

E: I was 16 and I moved back to Mexico City for college.

S: To go to Universidad...UNAM

E: Yes.

S: At sixteen years old?

E: Ah huh.

S: Is that normal for someone that young to go to a..?

E: Well, um sorry, at first I was studying the Colegio de Bachillereto before going to the UNAM.

S: Ok, and so is that a different institution or a different university then?

E: Well, it's not a university, it's like a college. And then after that, I went to UNAM.

S: So it's like in between secundaria and uh...

E: Correct.

S: So... you get your more basic college education there,

E: Mm hm.

S: ...and then you go on to UNAM?

E: Uh huh. Correct.

S: And what was that called again?

E: Colegio de Bachilleres

(discuss spelling)

S: ...I know a lot of people don't really know what they're gonna do when they start college, bud did you start to think about what you wanted to do as a career? What were your thoughts at that time?

E: Yeah. I always thought that I would be like a...designer.

S: A designer?

E: Uh huh. So at the college I took graphic design.

S: At Colegio de Bachilleres?

E: Uh huh.

S: And then at UNAM?

E: At UNAM I finished my career...in diseño grafico...graphic design.

S: ¿Tuviste diploma?

E: Yes.

S: We've talked about your art before...Let's see, this was graphic design kinda before computers were really that advanced right?

E: Mm hm.

S: What years was this? Do you remember?

E: Ok. Was in the late '80s.

S: Yeah. Late '80s. So how much were computers a part of this...at your school.

E: How much what?

S: ...I guess...were you guys using computers a lot or just... like, graphing boards.

E: Graphing boards. We just had, like... a few computers.

S: So, when did you start painting?

E: I start painting since I was in umm... second grade. I fill all my papers with draws.

S: (laughs) So, you finished your degree at UNAM, and then what did you do?

E: When I finished, I started working a little bit as a...with a company, I started working as a, not designer, but like...drawing...

S: For what kind of company?

E: It was like um...this company called...

S: Too long ago?

(both laughing)

E: Too long ago.

S: So you were doing graphic design for this company, or just...?

E: ...I just draw, because they had, like... all those last names' histories... plus the drawing on top.

S: Ok. So, then they made those for the different last names and you could buy them and...?

E: Uh huh. So I was the person who was drawing all of those...

S: Ok. So you were making all the designs...?

E: Uh huh. Correct.

S: ...for each one.. And how long did you do that before you...?

E: I worked for 3 years.

S: 2 years doing that?

E: 3 years.

S: 3 years?

E: Uh huh.

S: So, then you did that job in Mexico City for 3 years?

E: Yeah. Uh huh.

S: So then, your family was still living in Hidalgo, or some of your siblings...?

E: Well, some of my brothers and one sister stayed in Mexico City, so I was living with them.

S: So they stayed in Mexico City the whole time...

E: Uh huh.

S: ...while the rest of your family lived in Hidalgo?

E: Uh huh. The little ones, we went to Hidalgo, and the older ones stayed

S: 'Cause they were...

E: They had already jobs and school matters...

S: Ok, so then is that when you decided to leave Mexico and move to the United States?

E: Well, no. Then I moved to Hidalgo again to stay with my mom.

S: How long did you stay there?

E: Well, I don't know exactly how many years I stayed there, but after that I decided to do something else. I just, like... I needed to...I felt, like...wings growing up on my back. (laughs)

S: (laughs) I love that. ...So, then what did you decide to do?

E: Because I was with my mom, and I have a sister here. So we just talk about if I can go over there...

S: Over here?

E: Uh huh. Over here. So my sister, "Come on, so you can give me company. I feel so lonely." That was an invitation from my sister.

S: Your sister... your older sister?

E: Mm hm. My older sister. She was here before me.

S: Uh huh. And that was in Klamath Falls right?

E: Uh huh, that was in Klamath Falls.

S: And how old were you at the time?

E: 25.

S: So, tell me what it was like when you got to Klamath Falls...and you had been living in Mexico for 25 years and living in a big city and you move to...very far north to a very snowy climate and a very wet climate?

E: Mm hm. I came here to Klamath falls in um...October. It was too cold, but it was really nice. Sunny, cold days...and I really liked the town. The most... things that impressed me was the roads.

S: The roads?

E: The roads, they're like, clean and big...

S: Compared to back in Mexico.

E: Uh huh...compared to Mexico and those roads...

S: Did you have a plan, I guess... or you were just going to maybe be in a new place?

E: Well my plan was to visit and just to know this country...just... the plan was only vacation.

S: Yeah? (laughs)

E: (laughs) I never thought like, "I have to stay and work."

S: Interesting...So...but then you did stay?

E: Then I did stay.

S: And how long did you live in Klamath then?

E: Probably I lived 3-4 years in Klamath Falls. It's a small town, but it's a cute, cute town.

S: So, then what brought you to Eugene?

E: Ok, my older sister, the one... she invited me here...she was studying over there at OIT (Oregon Institute of Technology) school, but she finished it and she needed some more, so she said, "let's go to...more to the north, because I'm looking for a school." And I said, "Ok, let's go." I didn't want to stay here alone. So she came here. She went to LCC and I decided to study too and I went to the UO to get my GED.

S: So, even though you had a college degree in Mexico, you had to get your GED?

E: Yeah. If you wanna do something here, you have to have your grades here.

S: Ok...I understand. Something I'm kind interested in... I just want to let you know it's 2:36 right now, so if you have to go pretty soon...how much more time do you think we could talk?

E: 5 minutes.

S: 5 minutes? Ok. Well, then I guess I wanna ask you about... generally, when you came here, did you feel like you were welcomed...or unwelcomed? (20:00) ...I guess, how did you feel about how you fit in the community in both Klamath Falls and here in Eugene?

E: Uh huh. I always felt that I am welcome. Yeah. That's why I'm still here.

S: (laughs)

E: Otherwise, I can go different places. There are many places in this world you can go.

S: Yeah.

E: So, because I like this country, and I feel welcome... I'm enjoying this country.

S: Very good. So, when you were living in Mexico, did you identify, for instance when you moved to Hidalgo, did you identify as and did they identify you as someone that was from Mexico City? Was there any difference there? Did you experience any different names, name-calling or things like that? Like, did they call you 'chilanga' or something like that?

E: No, because I never said where I came from.

S: (laughs loudly)

E: I just tried to be friendly and was looking for friends... because I was so young. I don't think those little guys...who were my friends, didn't care if I came... or any place. We just tried to play and have fun.

S: You are three-quarters indigenous?

E: Yes.

S: And your father is indigenous and your mother is half indigenous? Is that how it was?

E: Yes.

S: Ok. I'm trying to remember these things. Did you ever notice a difference in the way that maybe they were treated or in the way that maybe different family members who resembled more indigenaity or less were treated by other people? Or was that just kind of not something people really talked about or noticed?

E: No, I never heard from my mom or dad that they had any difference from friends or family.

S: Good! Good for you! (laughing)

E: Yeah. (laughing)

S: I just want to ask one more question. When you moved to Oregon,... you were still making art? You were still working on your paintings? Or what? How did you carry that with you, or maybe not carry it with you?

E: Well, when I was in Mexico I used to paint and sell my paintings because I needed money for my books and my school. So, that was making me feel like painting was to make money. So, right now, yes I paint. I do painting, but in my home, for fun. Yeah. My dream is to paint and to be a famous painter.

S: What kind of things do you paint?

E: Well, I paint anything. I can paint animals or ...fruits ...anything I can paint.

S: So, kinda like, more realistic stuff, realism?

E: Uh huh.

S: I guess,...we are out of time. (24:21)