

Rosalinda Gonzalez
Narrator

Abner Arauza
Interviewer

February 15, 2010
Moorhead, Minnesota

Rosalinda Gonzalez - **RG**
Abner Arauza - **AA**

AA: There's one form that I thought I had with me but I don't.

RG: Okay.

AA: It's a form that I'll need for you to sign that will say that you authorize the Minnesota Historical Society to use the audio as well as the transcription for the projects that they're working on. So I'll come back, if that's okay.

RG: Sure.

AA: Then, I'll come back and have you sign that later. I'm off Friday afternoon, so if you don't want to go past a certain time, we can stop and we can come back and finish the interview later on.

RG: Okay.

AA: It doesn't have to be finished today. I know that it can get lengthy. Some questions will be easy ones, short ones, and some of them may take a long time to answer. Take your time. Don't feel like they have to be short. If you're going to need to leave at whatever time...

RG: I do need to leave at four o'clock.

AA: Okay, then we'll stop a few minutes before four o'clock. Whatever we haven't done, if you don't mind, then I'll come back and we'll finish at another time.

RG: Fine.

AA: I'm going to start. I've got a list of questions. Some of them are just for obvious information. Number one is I want you to say your name.

RG: My given name... Rosalinda B. Gonzalez.

AA: And known as Rosie Gonzalez.

RG: Yes.

AA: For this one, I'll cover my ears if you want. How old are you and your date of birth?

RG: It's nothing. I'll be sixty in September. My birthday would be September 10, 1950.

AA: You're only two years younger than I am. Good.

Your place of birth?

RG: Mercedes, Texas.

AA: Mercedes. Okay, the place of Pato Tacos.

RG: And then, of course, *La Reina del Valle*.

AA: Si. Wow.

RG: Yes.

AA: That's right. I've been down there and I've heard that.

Now, education level?

RG: In English or Spanish?

AA: Let's keep it English.

RG: I have gone through the technical school training and two years of college at Moorhead State.

AA: How about the name and ethnicity of your spouse?

RG: My spouse is Mexican American.

AA: And his name?

RG: His name is David Gonzalez.

AA: Number of children?

RG: One.

AA: Her name?

RG: Desiree Gonzalez Perez.

AA: How much education does she have?

RG: Hopefully, she'll be graduating this year with her bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

AA: Wow. That's really great. Congratulate her for me.

RG: Yes. I don't mind telling you that I'm worried because she's got a full time job and it's hard with two kids.

AA: But, you know, the thing is that she'll value her education even more if she struggles.

RG: Yes. I've been telling her, "You have to get back to school. You have to get back to school, and here she is."

AA: Great. What is she doing now?

RG: She's CD [chemical dependency] counselor for the Center, the chemical dependency program in Fargo [North Dakota].

AA: What year did your family settle in the area?

RG: We arrived in Moorhead, Minnesota, in 1977.

AA: In 1977. Okay, now, had you been elsewhere in Minnesota or is that where you arrived when you came from Texas?

RG: We had done migrant farm work back in the 1970s, actually in the 1960s and the 1970s, throughout Minnesota and North Dakota.

AA: So you would be here during the summer?

RG: Yes. I would imagine we would arrive here in May, right after school was done, would leave the area and travel to Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois to do the rest of the crop, like tomatoes, strawberries, raspberries and, sometimes, we would do the potatoes and the tomatoes. We'd end up finishing up at the Del Monte warehouses doing tomatoes there in Illinois.

AA: And then go back to Mercedes?

RG: We'd go back to Mercedes in October. We did sugar beets, too, in Montana, now that I remember.

AA: But you would do Montana before coming here then?

RG: Yes.

AA: So that was like May?

RG: Yes. We used to be under a crew leader back then in those years. We would all travel in back of a big truck. My father would stay behind. We would travel to Montana and work with a couple of sugar beet growers there. Then, after that, we would travel to the Dakotas.

AA: The same group?

RG: Same group.

AA: How was it traveling in the truck?

RG: Well, it was an adventure for us 'cause we never knew what it was. It only took us a year or two to find out the gaps, what would be best for the family. On the third year, we did things on our own, my mom did and my oldest brothers. So that's when we decided to explore and were able to line up employment for the following year, and we found out that it was best to be on our own. So we did that. I remember, on the third year. That's when we really made the money, you know. That money...we were so proud because we made \$25,000 that year, back then.

AA: In the summer.

RG: I mean just for the sugar beets, from sugar beets.

AA: Wow.

RG: There was seven of us working on the fields. That was how we ended up going back and kind of making sure that my mom got her house. We built a brick house for my mom, and we paid *cash* for it. [laughter]

AA: Ohhh.

RG: Back then, it was a lot of money.

AA: Yes. It still is. [Laughter] Yes.

RG: I can't say that we spent money, because we limited ourselves, you know making sure that we had enough. Our goal was to go back and build this home that my mom

wanted and that we all needed, because, before then, we were living in three-bedrooms and there was twelve of us. So we were very poor.

AA: Do you remember what year that was that you built the house?

RG: It was, I believe, in 1974, 1973, something like that. My mom already paid that house.

AA: Do they still live there?

RG: Yes. My mom still lives there. My baby brother, who is now going to be forty, is with her.

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: The rest of us all have our own homes. We all have our own families, and we all work in different educational careers. Four or five of my brothers and sisters work for the Mercedes School District. I have a sister that works for BN. As a matter of fact, she graduated from Moorhead Tech.

AA: BN?

RG: Burlington Northern Railway.

AA: Okay.

RG: She's been there for almost thirty years, ready to retire at the age of fifty.

AA: So she lives here?

RG: No, she worked in Minneapolis and when that administrative office closed, then she was moved down to Dallas. So she's in the Fort Worth/Dallas area. But the rest of us are in education.

AA: Why did you choose to stay here?

RG: Opportunities, going to school first. We were recruited through the Migrant Farm Workers Program. Back then, it was the Migrant Council. We thought...well, I thought, and my husband has always given me the privilege to make the decisions, so... [laughter] ...which is not very common in an Hispanic family. I said to him, "You know, I don't want to go back to fields anymore. I think they're giving us the opportunity to get educated." Not only education but weather-wise... I remember our first year here; we got blisters all over our legs as we were trying to get to school in blizzard conditions. We didn't know what a blizzard was and we got blisters all over our legs.

AA: From frost bite?

RG: From trying to walk to school. [Laughter] We were so dedicated to not miss, just because of minor reasons.

But, yes, he went into the diesel mechanic program, graduated from there and I went to the legal secretary position and got a position with legal services as a legal secretary. I was there for twenty years until I moved to this position.

AA: When your family decided to settle here, what were your thoughts? Why here? You went to Montana, then here, then Illinois and other states. Why Moorhead?

RG: Why Moorhead? Well, honestly, we didn't know whether it would be different anywhere else. Our primary focus was education. I wasn't the only one that stayed here. I stayed here with three of my brothers. I think that was also a big plus in staying here, that I had part of the family here, as the oldest daughter... They felt that our families would be separated, but there would at least be family here.

So my brothers all went through Moorhead Tech. One graduated under sales and marketing, which was Roland. He's now the district manager for U-Haul in Dallas. Roy is head of the carpentry department. He graduated in the carpentry program here. Now, he's head of the carpentry program for the Mercedes School District. Reed and Rebecca are paraprofessionals in the schools and have been there over fifteen years as paraprofessionals in elementary teaching. Then, of course, Rachel graduated in communications and is now at BN. I wanted to do legal work. I graduated in that field.

But Moorhead had the opportunities for us. I don't think that we had any plans of staying. Our plan was to get educated and move on and go back and do what we wanted to do, you know, and kind of find jobs in the field that we were educated in. But, for some reason, for *me*, it was more the fact that I could be helping the community grow in a way that promoted *la cultura Mexicana* (the Mexican culture), too.

I did feel a lot of prejudice, a lot of racism, a lot of comments that were not welcome. But, to me, it was very easy to get mad and upset and try to fight back, but, then, as the years went by, I realized that the only way that the animosity would be dismantled was through education. Instead of getting mad, we would educate them. We would let them know why we feel or felt the way we do, especially about our language, our culture, our religion, our morals, and values, instead of trying always to bicker and bicker and not get anywhere. And then there are families here that feel that we will never accomplish anything. But I feel now, after thirty some years here, that we have accomplished something. We have grown. We are able now to at least sit around a table and discuss and be civil about situations. We can talk about the fact that there is prejudice and racism and you don't need to get upset, because it happens, but what are we going to do about it, to dismantle it? I think that the only way we can do that is to talk about it and be civil about it and learn through those experiences and try not to do them again.

AA: So when you decided to stay here, was it a family decision? Did you talk to mom and dad and your brothers or just kind of gravitate to that decision?

RG: My dad wasn't part of the decision, because he never used to travel with us. He would always stay behind, mainly because he was a carpenter and he had to maintain his job security. But it was my mom and my brothers that would always come. When I came up here, I was recently married, so I came up here with my husband. My mom has always made it known to us that education was very important and that we should do what was necessary so that we would not end up having the barriers that they had to go by and live by and never accomplish getting an education because it was so hard for them to be able to do that.

AA: What kind of adjustments did you have to make when you settled here?

RG: Well, when we settled here, first of all, I was amazed that there wasn't a Spanish church or there wasn't a grocery store, nothing that we were so accustomed to having. Back home in Texas, just about every corner has a tiendita (little store).

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: We have H-E-B that is known to be *the* Mexican store for us, because they have all our Mexican products there. I think now if you look at every store, every store has a Hispanic food aisle. A lot of our traditional foods are now available. We have Mexican stores, Mexican restaurants.

The only thing we had back then was Mexican Village. That was like the treat of the family to meet at Mexican Village [laughter] because that was the only Mexican restaurant. Now, you know, we have a variety of them. We feel that it's growing for that reason, because now, we have more families and newer families, not second or third generation. Now, there's even more generations staying here.

AA: So the adjustment was in finding groceries that you needed to cook the food.

RG: Or welcoming, I think, too. I know that I went through several situations where, you know, people had a lot of animosity about us.

AA: The local people?

RG: Local people...being in stores or buying or whatever. A couple of bad incidents I remember - one where there was a lady... I don't know whether you want this information or not.

AA: Sure.

RG: This lady, she was wearing a fur coat and it was her turn to pay for her groceries and she took out food stamps. Nothing was said or done. It was accepted. Then it was my turn

and the lady's comment to me was, "I suppose you want to pay with food stamps, too." I said, "No, I wasn't found eligible." [laughter] I was going to school and both my husband and I were getting paid so we were not eligible to receive food stamps, but I knew what they were, you know.

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: So she just turned red and didn't say anything. You see... I didn't know how to respond to her other than the truth.

AA: Sure.

RG: I guess she learned. I hope she learned that just because I was a Hispanic, it doesn't mean that I, too, was receiving food stamps. That's just the way you learn, I guess. You ask the wrong questions at the wrong time and, sometimes, you don't like the responses.

AA: Aside from adjusting to not having like Mexican food restaurants and the groceries stores, there was also the behavior of some people where you had to adjust?

RG: Yes.

AA: What did you do to adjust?

RG: I started to get involved with community organizations that did a lot of involvement in social justice and social change. So that taught me how to be diplomatic and *Minnesota nice* when I responded.

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: Based on that and through the educational experiences that I have had and all the community services that I've been involved with, I learned that educating people in the right way was more beneficial than snapping at them. I learned that everybody had a mind of their own and that if I wanted to be respected for who I was, I needed to also respect others. If it was a comment that was not welcome, I learned to respond, like I said, diplomatically. I'm not saying that it was easy. There were times that were hard.

AA: How about for your husband?

RG: My husband has always been very quiet, totally the opposite of who I am. He's, like I said, always given me the privilege to do what my family needed. The decisions were all based on... I would consider his input, but I was given that responsibility to do what's best for Desi, what's best for us. Extended family had a different opinion. They had their own ways of doing things, too. I tried to kind of be there for my other brothers and sisters that were in the area, but, also, tried to wean them so that I would not give them the opportunity to be irresponsible for their actions or their choices in life. When we had

Desiree, you know, we decided to just concentrate on us and see how we could handle our own situation at home.

Then, my brothers decided to move back to Texas when they found jobs. The only ones that stayed here were Ricardo, myself, and Robert. Those are the only three that are up here. Robert works for the public school and Ricardo, he's a supervisor for the union in electricity, so he travels around the state. He's a foreman.

AA: Were there things that you did differently between living in Mercedes and then in Moorhead?

RG: I am a lot wiser. I mean, I think that I have made a lot more positive decisions living up here. When I go to Texas, it's not the same. After three days, I'm ready to come back. Then, after I get a blizzard experience down here, then I'm ready to go back south.

AA: [Laughter]

RG: So I don't know... I keep saying that when I retire I'm going to go south, but I don't know. Something about up here just grabs us. You know, most of my life, I've lived up here. Thirty-three years in the community is a *long* time to just say, "I'm packing up and leaving and forget."

AA: There will be some things that you will have to change in moving back, but there were things that you changed moving here that you did differently, like, let's say church or...?

RG: Well, yes. In Texas, the churches down there are so motivated in doing *jamaicas* (festivals) and a lot of fundraising and all this concentration on family positivism. Up here, you know there are some congregations that do that, but it's not from the heart, I feel, because there's not the support. Our ministries in Moorhead, our Hispanic ministries, we need to do so much, and I know what I need to do, and I wish I could do it, but I can't do it myself. It seems like when you approach, let's say, like a pastor, you make them feel like they're not doing their job, you know, and they get kind of offended by it. So you kind of walk back and say, "Whoa, I don't want to really offend you, but we should be doing this and this and this and this." You don't get that support, because you don't have the community kind of supporting you, too.

People feel around here that going to church is a responsibility of one hour and that's it. They don't seem to understand that there's more in our faith than that, in our Catholic faith. There are so many ways that we can help. We're going through a change of Hispanic ministers right now, and I'm already working. My mind is working how I would like to see the new person when selected...how we can help that person grow and how we can be able to get the numbers to come back, because we were losing numbers, losing big numbers.

RG: I don't know why they go to another church and, then, when we have the Holy Sacraments, they come back to our church to get them. So I don't know, I don't know how some people are thinking.

AA: Maybe there's one other thing that we were thinking of when we thought of this question: How do we do these things differently? That is an example. In Texas, they wouldn't do that.

RG: No.

AA: If they going to another church, they go to another church, and they stay in the Catholic Church and they would do the Sacraments there. Why would they do that? Did you find yourself doing that in the church or in other areas?

RG: No. I, personally, would never leave my Catholic faith. But I know of friends, I know of comadres (special relationship in Latino culture; similar to godparent), I know people very close to me that started going to the Catholic Church and now they are going somewhere else. But whenever their children or their grandchildren, they come back to the Catholic church and get the Holy Sacraments. To me, I thought they were somewhere else—but they don't ask questions, so I guess it's okay, you know. But if you really put yourself to studying the Bible and our religion, especially the Catholic religion, once you're baptized as a Catholic, you can't just say, "I don't want to be a Catholic anymore."

AA: Maybe another example might be: You know in Texas, we probably would not go to Taco Bell very often but, here, for a few times, we may be thinking Taco Bell is not so bad after all. [Chuckles] Were there adjustments or changes that you found yourself making?

RG: I'm selective of where I go—and Taco Bell is not one of them. I don't like the advertisements. I felt it was racist, just like I've always said that everybody who uses the little *hombre* (man) sleeping by the cactus is insulting to my culture, because we're very hardworking people.

AA: Yes.

RG: And that, to me, is nothing to laugh about; there is nothing cute or funny about it. People who use it, you know, call it cute. Well, to me, it's not. It's offensive. I made that known when it was one of the graphics that was accepted in one of our stores here, but they never thought anything of it. They just thought it was cute. But, yes, I do not go to places that I hear or know that there is prejudice or discriminatory comments that are offensive. I'm pretty good about keeping my ears open about that. There's a couple Mexican stores here that because they have done something that is illegal, I don't go there. I don't support their actions. There are some other organizations that I don't agree with and I just stay away. I can't fight their battles, you know. There are people in the community that I stay away from.

It's offensive that some people may think just because I have this kind of job that I know it all. Well, no, I learn every day. My challenge is every day. I have families that I work with that I need to be ready for and I need to know answers to things that their challenges are all about. I need to guide them. I feel that this is what this job is all about. I'm not here to play no kind of popularity contest. I'm here to do a job. When I took this position, it was really tough for me, because working in an organization that is very prestigious, I felt that I had a big challenge on my shoulders because I had to prove myself—not because it's a difficult job. I'm not saying that it is. I feel that the challenges are still there. I challenge it all the time, because I want more Hispanics in this job. We gave it a try and it didn't work. I'll tell you privately why. It took me about three years to get another Hispanic woman hired. We finally did and it didn't work out. Now, it's hard for me to go back to administration and say, "Get another one." We need it, or get a Somalian, Kurdish, or African American. We have the need here.

We have the need with 4-H. How many of our kids are making choices that they later on find out that it wasn't a wise one or a good one? We provide them with scholarships. We have been able to do that so that they don't feel like they don't come because they can't afford it.

AA: Scholarships to college?

RG: No, to join the 4-H, to join programs in the community like Moorhead Health Initiative. We work with the other agencies so that the children have that opportunity to join positive programming or summer programming. Sometimes they come; sometimes they don't. I want them to feel that there should not be any reason or no barrier, no obstacle to not be able to do what they want to do because I feel that this community has all of those resources.

AA: Yes.

RG: If it's not a church, it's a program. Sometimes, it's even a person or even a private organization like the Kiwanis. This community, one thing that they do is they provide. It's the individual's choice wanting to be involved and wanting to feel responsible in accomplishing what they want to do in life. I don't know that we could say that there are obstacles. Yes, there are reasons sometimes, but we need to work with and against to *resolve* those obstacles to be able to accomplish what we want. That's how I feel.

AA: I should have asked you this way at the beginning. Describe what you do here. What's your official title and what do you do here?

RG: My title here is nutrition education assistant. My primary job is to work with families with limited resources or families who are eligible for food support so that they would make choices to enhance the positive decisions that they can make not only for themselves but for their family, whether it's through financial resources, whether financial management, food support, community service, healthier choices in nutrition for

a better lifestyle. We work in the schools. We work with private organizations, some of the private organizations, some of the organizations like CCRI [Creative Care for Reaching Independence], the chemical dependency programs, The Shelter. We work with the community at large. But the majority of our participants, fifty percent or more, have to be food support eligible, not receiving, eligible. So most of the children that I work with in the schools or the schools that the principals approve are either receiving free or reduced lunch.

AA: That's through the University of Minnesota?

RG: That's through the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

AA: So, you get to touch all areas of the community and not just Latinos?

RG: No. I have Somalian, Kurdish, Asians, Hispanics, African Americans, Caucasians. We have a couple of families that are gypsy, a couple of students.

AA: Oh.

RG: Yes.

AA: Now, you told me that you lived here and that you ended up also north of here, but how many total years have you lived here in Fargo/Moorhead?

RG: In Fargo/Moorhead, I lived fifteen years.

AA: Okay.

RG: Well, in Moorhead, and, then the other half, I moved to Fargo.

AA: Also, you got fifteen here. Okay. But you told me had also moved north.

RG: When I arrived in 1977, we went to Hallock, Minnesota. That was the first area of sugar beet employment that we lined up through the American Crystal Sugar Company.

AA: Oh, so that was before you settled, actually?

RG: Yes, before we settled here.

AA: Then before you settled here, you were living in Mercedes?

RG: I was living in Mercedes.

AA: How long had you lived there?

RG: Oh, my goodness! Ever since 1950, when I was born. [Laughter]

AA: Oh, so you were born there.

RG: I was born there, yes.

AA: Okay.

This is a question that I know needs an explanation. So let me ask the question and then I'll explain it. Do you perceive your stay in Moorhead as temporary or permanent? That means like when they ask me... I've been here now twenty-one years. It's going to be twenty-two years this next summer. When they ask me, "Where's home?" Before I say, "Moorhead," you know the impulse is to say, "Crystal City [Texas]." So although somebody that would ask me this question, I would say, "Permanent. I've been here almost twenty-two years now." The truth is that inside, it's...

RG: *Tejas.* (Texas)

AA: *Tejas.*

RG: Mine is the fact that my mom is still with us, you know. I don't know whether it would be the same when my mom wouldn't be there. My mom just turned eighty. I keep telling her, "As soon as I'm able to retire, I'm coming back."

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: But will she be there? With me, it's been thirty-three years that I've been, I left the Mercedes area at the age of twenty-six. So the majority of *my* life has been spent up here. I've been up and down other places, but not as long a period of time as I've spent in the Fargo/Moorhead area. So you could say home will always be where your heart is and that would be Texas, but I don't know that I would go down there and stay. My plans are to go to Texas but to visit, because I don't have my roots there like I have here.

AA: So this is home to you?

RG: Has been.

AA: Here's a two-part question. It has to do with have you maintained contact with your home area, in other words Mercedes? But, also, have you maintained contact with your extended family and how? Give me some examples?

RG: Well, the contact with my home town has been because I'm involved with *Abriendo Fronteras*. (Opening Frontiers)

AA: Ohhh.

RG: It's an organization that we started about six, seven years ago locally trying to build relationships between the migrant farm workers that come from Texas into our Fargo/Moorhead area. What I would do...we would do missionary trips, and we would go to the Rio Grande Valley. Because prior to me coming to Minnesota, I used to work with Texas Migrant Council as a day care coordinator, I knew the area both at Winter Garden and my area. I learned how to collaborate with the communities of faith where missionary work was being done. We went to *Colonias*. I explored and I did my outreach and that's how I've been able to communicate back and forth. We have not done this the last two years, because of all the issues, the border issues right now.

AA: Oh, sure. You're referring to the crime?

RG: The high crime. But we do have *Hermandamiento* in Ciudad Juarez. As a matter of fact, right now, we're sending a big trailer of medical supplies and clothing and blankets and coats that we are getting as donations, and the trailer is leaving on March 13 and 14 and will be delivered at *Hermandamiento* in Ciudad Juarez.

With family and extended family, we are a very close family. Friends, *compadres* (a special relationship like a godparent, that can serve as a co-parent), *madrinas* (a sponsor for a religious ceremony, also like a godmother), we're very close. I come from a family of eleven. Because we only have our mom, I strongly feel that once my mom is not with us, our family are just all going to go their separate ways. I hope not. I have a very close relationship with my sisters, with my brothers. There's one brother that has been given the authority to make all the family decisions, you know. He's my brother Rudy that's in Texas. He takes care of my mom. With all the issues with my mom, we have given him that responsibility. Up here, it's me. My brothers always talk to me. Whenever there's an issue with the family, we get together. We decide what we can do, where we can help, and we all do that. But you could say that communication is very close. There's very few things that we don't know about each other.

AA: That's through actual visits or phone or email?

RG: Phone, visits, family get-togethers. I make it a point that we spend our holidays together in our different homes. I'm *always* the one that's trying to organize it, because I feel it's very important. I don't want to break that. That's how my family in Texas spend it when we're not there. My sisters are individuals that think and do things the way I do things up here.

We weren't able to go to Texas in December because we went to my mom's eightieth birthday in October, so what did Rosie do? I rented a hotel. I got all the kids to go swimming.

AA: [Chuckles]

RG: I did all the food. I rented a room that had kitchen facilities and because it was so cold, you know, they didn't want the kids to end up being sick, so I said, "What's the best

thing to do in a place like this where it's cold and you can't go anywhere? A hotel that has a swimming pool." [Laughter] Everybody came.

AA: And the kids loved it.

RG: And the kids loved it. It was not about receiving presents. It was about having fun and eating together like we always do.

At Thanksgiving, I rented the Dilworth Community Center for all our families to get together. *Everybody* brings dishes and we invite other families that we know that are close.

AA: That's great.

RG: That's how I spend my holidays.

AA: Well, you're trying to replicate what happens in south Texas.

RG: Yes.

AA: That's what I see down there.

RG: Yes.

AA: Describe the language you use at home.

RG:

AA: Strictly Spanish?

RG: Strictly Spanish.

AA: Okay.

RG: I've had to do things different with my grandchildren because their first language is English. But I don't want them to forget where we came from and I want them to learn Spanish. I feel that Spanish eventually will be, you know, the number one language. We're seeing it happen. It may be in small, you know, times in our life, but there's a lot more of it now than when I arrived here.

AA: Yes.

RG: I see more educational experiences in the schools, too, that I didn't see back then, a lot of teachers that are now teaching bilingual education that I didn't see when I started to live here. There's a lot of families that don't need interpreters anymore because they're now taking the responsibility to learn the language. So things are slowly changing but

they're changing and they will be mastered. I think that by working harder with our younger generation, they, too, will come to an understanding that it's important to learn more than their basic language.

AA: So you do it for a practical reason?

RG: And, also, for tradition.

AA: Okay.

RG: It's important that we retain our native language and values and morals.

AA: I know you're going to have to go. So just the second part of this question, and then we can stop so you're not late to where you're going. Describe the language you use outside the home.

RG: English, because I have to. My job requires it, you know, but I also try to teach staff here my language and my culture.

AA: How about when you meet other *Mexicanos* (*Mexicans*)? Let's say you're out at the grocery store and you run into a *Mexicano*?

RG: I'm the kind of a person that I don't need to know a person in order to exchange hellos. I don't care who they are, where they come from, you know, which families they're from. I feel that it's just like a welcoming gesture that we do. I think I acquired that from my mom.

My mom is part German, you know, and Mexicana. My dad is Mexicano from Tampico. My mom talks about when she met my dad and the only way they had communication is through a fence because he was always deported.

I hear of all those stories, and I hear about all what's happening with our families right now, some of them, where our families are separated because of immigration issues. How can I forget that? How can I not feel what those families are feeling right now?

AA: But when you greet somebody, like say at the grocery store, and you can tell that they're *Mexicanos*, do you greet them in English or Spanish?

RG: En Español, *¿Hola que tal? ¿Como esta?* [Hello, how are things? How are you?]

AA: Yes, okay.

RG: And, I had one who said, "No hablo en español." (I do not speak Spanish.) Well, then, how are you?

AA: And, that's fine.

RG: Yes, that's fine.

AA: Okay. It's seven minutes till four o'clock, so I'm going to stop here.

Thank you so much for the interview!

RG: Thank you also.

Lideres Latinos Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society