

Manuel P. Guerrero
Narrator

Lorena Duarte
Interviewer

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Manuel P. Guerrero - **MG**
Lorena Duarte - **LD**

LD: My name is Lorena Duarte and I'll be conducting the interview today for the Minnesota Historical Society's Latino Oral History Project. It is Saturday, December 18, 2010 and I am here with Manuel Guerrero in his home in Saint Paul. And first of all, I just want to thank you on behalf of the Historical Society for taking the time. This is a really wonderful thing and it's a real privilege to be able to take your oral history today. So thank you very much. And first, can I please get your name and how to spell it?

MG: You may. [Chuckle] It's a pleasure to have you here, too, in my home. My name is Manuel Guerrero. And we're here in Saint Paul on this snowy day.

LD: It is indeed. Can you give me your date of birth please?

MG: Yes. My date of birth is May 31, 1935.

LD: Okay. And let's start off with where you were born and a little bit about your family. Your mom and dad and if you had any siblings.

MG: My birth was in Marion, Indiana. My parents were Niceforo Guerrero and my mother was Francesca. Or Nick and Frances, as it was Anglicized. Dad came to this country when he was fourteen years old from Mexico. He was from Guanajuato, or a small town outside of Guanajuato called San Francisco del Rincón. He came alone, by himself at the age of fourteen, not knowing a word of English. He came all the way through Texas and up into the Eastern part of the United States and landed in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he worked in the steel mills. When he was twenty-one years old he was coming back through Indiana to visit his brother Amos, his older brother, and he stopped in Indiana and met my mother. There were actually some other Mexican families, and among them was my mother. They met and married in the late 1920s, and he didn't make it back to Mexico. He was on his way back to Mexico, back to his family, but he never went back. He stayed there in Indiana. Dad married my mother and they started their family right away in Marion, Indiana. It wasn't until several decades later

that Dad had the opportunity to go back to Mexico, at which time his parents were dead and only a couple of brothers remained.

MG: My mother came to this country in 1918 with her brothers and parents and a cousin. They paid their dime and came over the bridge and into Texas, and they made it all the way to Indiana to work in the migrant fields. So that's how we ended up in Indiana. Dad worked all of his life in a foundry, in two or three foundries in Indiana. He raised his family and lived paycheck to paycheck, but he and mom were able to raise nine children.

LD: Wow.

MG: This was in the 1930s, 1940s, and the 1950s, and the thing that's significant about that is that Mom and Dad had no formal education. Mother went to the third grade and Dad went to probably less than that in Mexico. But all of their nine children, back in the 1940s and the 1950s, graduated from high school – and they graduated on time. The reason that's significant is when you consider that today the high school dropout rate for African-Americans and Latinos is about fifty percent.

LD: Yes.

MG: Here you had, back in the 1940s and the 1950s, a family that was living from paycheck to paycheck, and yet were able to graduate all of their nine children. Most of them went to college and three of them became lawyers.

LD: And where did you fall among the nine?

MG: I'm the third of nine.

LD: Okay. So tell me a little more about growing up at that time. What kind of kid were you? Were you a studious kid? Did you like sports? What was growing up at that time like?

MG: This was back in the 1940s. The war was still ongoing—the Second World War. I was passing papers at the age of ten when the war was declared over in 1945. The end of the war ushered in a relative economic boom, and people were able to get jobs and it was a time of no drugs. A relative calm, I think, for families, compared to today. And I think one of the things that helped our family succeed was the fact that, most importantly, we were enrolled in Catholic schools. And we all graduated from the Catholic high school, save one. One of my siblings graduated from the public high school.

The other influence was that back in the 1940s there was an effort by the police department to involve kids in sports. And we were part of that. So we played sports and we, at the same time, knew the police officers, so it was not a situation where we were separated from the police force. I mean, we were part of their lives and we knew the people who were serving as police officers. They sort of watched over us and kept us out

of trouble. I think that was a leveling influence for us. Rather than become delinquents, we were actually supported by the law enforcement people. And then, with the influence of my mother and dad, which was always constant and loving, we were able to succeed as a result of that. And we also had my mother's side of the family, the Castillos, who were also a leveling influence and a matter of stability for us. Aunts and uncles and, in some cases, cousins provided for the basic family network that is so important to most Latinos.

I guess it was a childhood where we mostly felt secure, but we also had some hard times. I remember three or four summers that we would all pile in the car and go out and work in the migrant fields. And we'd be gone for the whole summer. June, July and August and come back in September, and sometimes after school had started. But I remember fondly those particular summers when we all piled into cars and lived in either tents or abandoned houses during the time that we were working in the migrant fields. That is among the most warmest and dearest memories, because we were all together. And we were working - we were on a common mission. And none of us at the time thought we'd ever go to college.

We never really thought too much about graduating. My oldest brother and sister were ahead of me and they graduated. My oldest brother, Mitch, was the president of his class and a very talented young man. I think the influence of the religious orders, the nuns in particular, during those crucial years, high school years, enabled us to get through high school.

I particularly remember when I was in about the tenth or eleventh grade, my baseball coach just offhandedly or casually asked me what I wanted to be, and I said, "I want to be a lawyer." And I don't know, I can't tell you, Lorena, why I said that. Because I didn't even know a lawyer what a lawyer was.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: I didn't *know* a lawyer. But it was that same coach that got me a scholarship to Notre Dame back in the early 1950s. He was also able to get some businessmen to put together some financing in order to allow me to go to college.

LD: Wow. That's pretty incredible.

MG: So off I went. When I graduated from high school I went to the University of Notre Dame. With all my clothes in a cardboard box

LD: What was that like? And roughly what year would that have been?

MG: 1953.

LD: 1953. What was that like? Were you the first of your siblings to go?

MG: First of the family, yes.

LD: Tell me a little bit about that experience.

MG: Well, I thought I was pretty cocky, actually. Playing second base, at Notre Dame, but very naïve.

LD: Baseball?

MG: Right, yes. Baseball. And I also had the opportunity that year to make the basketball team. I know there was a freshman team of about fifteen players, and I think I was about the thirteenth or fourteenth.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: And of course I was the smallest one [chuckles] at the time. But it was quite heady, and it was only due to this coach, my high school coach, who had enough interest in me to round up a half scholarship and some additional financing that I was allowed to go.

LD: Were there many Latinos there at the time?

MG: I don't think there were any.

LD: You were the only one?

MG: I remember one guy who was from Spain. We all ate in the common dining hall, and the reason I noticed him was because he would always walk around when we were having lunch or eating meals and he would eat what other students had left. He'd just walk around and pick the food off. But I don't remember meeting any Hispanic surnames except for that Spanish boy.

There might have been others, but I don't remember any. All during my college years I worked during the summer. Actually, it was true for the most part during the high school years because, as I said, there were nine of us, and we lived on Dad's paycheck from week to week. We lived in a four-room house, the same four-room house, for years. I'd say from the early 1940s until the early 1960s. I was the first to go to college. I graduated from college and then went right into law school.

It was the first time my parents had ever been on a college campus, when I graduated from college. I remember that my dad went down to the local finance company and borrowed a hundred dollars, and he gave me that hundred dollars for graduation. I used that hundred dollars to enroll within a week in the law school at Indiana University in Indianapolis.

LD: So from that moment when your coach asked you what you wanted to be, and you said a lawyer, and through your college years, and then to enrolling into law school, had you clarified for yourself why you wanted to be a lawyer, what it was that interested you?

MG: I still hadn't. But I maintained that goal. I remember I started in June of 1959, because I'd spent two years in the Army. I interrupted college to go into the Army for two years to get the G.I. Bill.

And so it was not 1957, but 1959 that I graduated from college and went into law school. I think I was still rather naïve about the law, and I still didn't know any lawyers. I met a couple in the Service, but I don't think the fact that they were lawyers, really stuck with me. I was more interested in them as individuals rather than because they were lawyers. But nevertheless, I did start law school and went for three years at Indiana University. I started my law practice in 1962 in Marion, Indiana.

Marion, Indiana was interesting, too, because it was a city that in 1930 had hanged two African-American young men. They almost had hanged a third, but the third teenager was rescued by the local sheriff. But on the courthouse lawn in 1930 the mob committed this crime for a shooting and, allegedly raping a white girl. The latter charge was a rather dubious charge, because it was never proved. And I don't think anybody was ever prosecuted for doing that. It was a somewhat racist community, and yet we were somehow able as a family to prosper and to become more than what we started out to be, which were migrants. There were also many good and generous people as in any city.

LD: Was the town very diverse? Were there many other Mexican or Hispanic families there?

MG: No. It was just north of Indianapolis, which is central Indiana. It was mostly a white community. There were very few Mexican families. There were, of course, African-American families. For the most part it was relatives, family members, who were Latino in Marion, Indiana during those years of the 1940s and the 1950s.

LD: Did you feel separate? Did you have a strong sense of being other? Or did you just simply feel like an American boy?

MG: I felt, I sensed the fact that I was different. I knew that I was Mexican. I knew that my parents were from Mexico, and that they spoke Spanish, and that we ate different foods. We had tortillas and we had beans and rice and chiles, and those were our staple foods. And it was different from what I saw my white friends eating. So I knew that I was different. But I never felt like I was inferior as a result of that. I just felt like I was different, and I sort of took some strength from the fact that I was different from everybody else.

LD: So, once you graduated from law school, what made you go back there?

MG: My family. And I married a person who was from Marion. She had also just graduated from college, from Miami University. So we went back and raised a family. Actually, my first son, Dan, was born the year that I graduated from law school. So we went back. My immediate family was there, and Patty's family was back in Marion. And oh, I still didn't know any lawyers.

LD: [Laughs]

MG: [Chuckles] I went back with a law degree and a couple of lawyers took me in and I started practicing law.

LD: What did you focus on?

MG: I did mostly bankruptcy and domestic law.

LD: And how long did you stay there in Marion?

MG: Well, after two years I was elected as a state court judge, in 1964. You probably don't remember the fact that the whole country went Democrat that year. Well, in the history of Grant County where I was born and grew up, they never had a Democrat judge. It was a Republican county. And that year, right at the very last moment, I called the county chairman because nobody was running for judge as a democrat, and asked the county chairman if he'd put my name on the ballot. It was right at the last moment, the last day. He came out and got my signature on the application and and filed it. This was in the latter part of September, and in the first part of November I was elected judge. The first judge ever elected as a Democrat. And I was just turning twenty-nine. [Chuckles]

LD: And what was that last minute decision about?

MG: I don't know.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: It wasn't something that I had consulted anyone about. I called the county chairman on the telephone and said, "I'd like to run for judge. Could I do that?" And he said, "Sure." And I did it because I was motivated by getting my name out there for business. Getting the publicity of running for judge. I had *no* idea that I would win. I was more shocked than the incumbent. But it was the year when the whole country went Democrat.

LD: Sure.

MG: That swept me into office, and there I was.

LD: [Chuckles] What was that like?

MG: Well, it was another heady moment when all of a sudden you have all this power at the age of twenty-nine.

LD: Yes.

MG: The circuit court judge was the most powerful person in the county. He appointed the probation department, the library boards, the assessor boards, plus the fact that he had jurisdiction as a judge, a fact finder, and a lawmaker. Fortunately, I was selected to go to the national state trial judges' college, so within two months after I took office I went off to judges' school. That lasted for six weeks and it was very beneficial to me. So there I was, at the age of twenty-nine, a state trial judge. I had a general jurisdiction, and I handled all the major criminal cases and all the major civil cases, I had probate jurisdiction and exclusive juvenile jurisdiction during those six years.

At the end of that time I really felt that I was too young, and I didn't like being judge because I was isolated. It's a very lonely job. Rather than people being attracted to you, people, they place you at a distance because of your position.

LD: Yes.

MG: Even lawyers didn't pal around with me. And so I thought, at the age of thirty-five, I didn't want to be judge anymore. And I ran for Congress and was defeated. Then in 1972, I was practicing law in Marion when I got a call from a friend here at the University of Minnesota who wanted to know if I'd want to interview for a job as a visiting professor in criminal justice. So I came to Minnesota, interviewed and was hired, and for a whole year I commuted back and forth between Marion and Minneapolis.

LD: Wow. How long was that?

MG: Well, I commuted by plane. I'd come up on Tuesday, and I'd teach a course on Tuesday and Wednesday and then go back on Wednesday night.

LD: And you had a family.

MG: Right.

LD: How many kids?

MG: Oh, then we had six. Yes.

LD: Quite stressful, I imagine. [Chuckles]

MG: In 1971 I taught for one year going while commuting, and then there was a hiatus of one year. Then in 1973 I got another offer to come back for a job at the University, and so we moved up here in 1973.

LD: Permanently?

MG: The whole family, yes.

LD: And what about teaching attracted you?

MG: Being around young people. The whole experience of being in a university setting was very attractive to me. And being in Minneapolis and Saint Paul compared to Marion, Indiana, it was actually no choice.

LD: Really. Tell me about that. Tell me about your first impressions?

MG: I thought it was a state—this was 1973—that it was a state that was in the vanguard of just about everything, particularly in education, public education. It was a place where they actually cared about education - where they talked about issues politically and it wasn't so much a personal situation as it was an interest in the common good. I also had this notion that we were, in fact, in the vanguard in corrections, we were in the vanguard of medicine, politics. You know, this was the politics of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, and Gene McCarthy. I thought Minnesota is a place where you can grow and they don't care what you do as long as you behave yourself and don't hurt anybody else. And I thought it was a perfect spot as opposed to the conservative, somewhat backward town of Marion, Indiana. I thought it was a wonderful place to raise a family. And so we moved.

LD: Where did you move to?

MG: Crocus Hill in St. Paul.

LD: Okay.

MG: Yes. We bought a home over on Oscela, not too far from here. And that's where my kids grew up. I now have two kids that are lawyers, one is a businesswoman in L.A., one is a nurse married to a lawyer here in Saint Paul, and one is a carpenter, a graduate of the University of Saint Thomas. And then my son Mike, who is a tiler, and works in construction.

LD: So six?

MG: Six.

LD: So you taught at the University. How long did you teach there?

MG: During the 1970s. I taught a course in criminal justice, it was a department in the CLA [College of Liberal Arts] at the time in the 1970s. I taught a course in criminal procedure, criminal law, and juvenile court law. I developed the course on juvenile court law, and that was just the beginning of the juvenile court movement in the 1970s. Now, of course, we have a general court and devoted to juvenile law, a body of law in that area. Books have been written on the subject - textbooks. But then it was new, in 1973. Also in 1973, I was also offered the chairmanship of Chicano Studies at the U.

Both of those departments were in the College of Liberal Arts, and so that's what I did. In 1978 I received a Bush Leadership Fellowship.

LD: Oh yes?

MG: I went to Georgetown for a year to get a second law degree.

LD: What did you focus on?

MG: Juvenile law. When I came back after my fellowship, I went into the practice of law for a year. And I was sort of lost for some reason. I went back to Indiana, in 1979, after my year at Georgetown. And from there I went out to Arizona where I practiced law with my two brothers. There are nine lawyers in our family now - in our immediate family. They are either my sons or my brothers or my nephews and nieces. I was the first, of course. And so I went into the practice of law with my brothers out in Arizona. I left the University in 1978 and went into the practice of law in Arizona and Indiana until the latter part of the 1980s. I came back here in 1990, and took a job with the University.

LD: Did your family move down to Arizona?

MG: No, they stayed here.

LD: Okay. And what did you practice? What kind of law did you practice in Arizona?

MG: Personal injury.

LD: And what prompted you to come back?

MG: My family. [Chuckles] In 1990 we were at Sweeney's [Saloon, in Saint Paul] for a pre-wedding dinner. My daughter Ann was getting married. And we were having a dinner for my daughter and her husband. And my Mother said, "What are you doing in Arizona? I mean you've got this wonderful family and kids here. Why don't you come back? You belong here. You should be here." And it was like a lightning strike. I thought, well, you know, you're right. So I packed up in Phoenix and came back here to St. Paul.

LD: What was your second impression of Minnesota upon coming back?

MG: I thought it had changed somewhat. It still beat Arizona in terms of quality of living, quality of life in the same sectors that I mentioned earlier. We're still ahead. Certainly far ahead of Indiana. And it was a favorable impression.

When I got back, I thought, you know, I'm home again. It feels good. I remember my younger brother and I drove across the country from Phoenix in the dead of winter. It must have been a day somewhat like today when it was extremely cold. But we came in at night. We drove in about three or four a.m., and it was cold and snowy, and I was just so relieved to be back home. That's the kind of reaction I had.

LD: Wow.

MG: My brother stayed for a couple days and then he got on a plane and went back to Phoenix. But that was my second impression of Minnesota.

LD: And so you went back to the U. Still teaching the same kind of courses?

MG: No, I taught one course. I took a job as the Director of the Chicano Latino Learning Resource Center and then I also taught a course in criminal justice.

In 1991 I taught a course at Saint Thomas, business law. I also taught a course in juvenile court law in the sociology department at the University of Minnesota. And a course in criminal law, too. I'm still teaching, of course, in a program called, OLLI [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute] or lifelong learning for seniors. And that's a course in criminal justice.

LD: I'm curious. First you were head of the Chicano Latino Studies Department?

MG: Right.

LD: Right. And then when you came back you were the head of the Chicano Latino Resource Center.

MG: Resource Center, yes. A learning center for Latino students.

LD: I'm wondering, what was your impression of Minnesota's Latino community? Were you connected with it?

MG: Well, I was very much connected with it back in the 1970s. I knew your father and I knew Maria Calderon. Maria was just coming back to the community.

LD: That's my aunt. Just to clarify, that's my aunt. [Chuckles]

MG: Right. And I knew that she was petitioning to bring her family from El Salvador. In fact, I've been her lawyer for years.

LD: Oh! I did not know that. Well, I guess, thank you! [Chuckles] Seriously.

MG: So yes, I was very much connected to the community. I worked, you know, with a lot of these businesses as a lawyer when they first started, like Guillermo Frias.

LD: Oh, sure.

MG: Who owned the Boca Chica.

LD: Yes.

MG: I knew Rudy Garcia, who had a restaurant downtown Saint Paul, and the West Side. I incorporated him. A guy by the name of Israel Bravo who had a construction company, I don't know what's happened to it. Juan Moreno, who is from Mexico—not the El Salvadorian is still in business. Not to be boastful, but I formed the Minnesota Latino Federation back then. I was one of the two or three who got the Legislature to enact the ethnic councils like the Chicano Latino Affairs Council.

They founded one for the Native Americans and one for the African-Americans, and also for the Latinos. I remember going to Fred Norton, who was a member of the House, and asking him to carry the legislation to create these councils. And he, together with Nick Coleman, who at the time was the Senate President—this was in the 1970s now, late 1970s—worked to form the councils. The Minnesota Hispanic Bar was founded in 1991, and I was privileged to serve as the first president for two years.

LD: Let me just go back to the 1970s. Why was it important for you to be involved?

MG: In the community?

LD: And to help found these organizations. Why was that important to you?

MG: The 1970s was a period unlike today. It was a period of activism, with a great deal of pride about being Latino, about finding ourselves, about demanding our rights. And I was a totally different person. I wore a beard. I wore bellbottoms, I wore denims, unlike today when I'm clean shaven. And those were different times than they are today. There was all of this creative energy. The Chicano Studies Department was created at the University of Minnesota.

LD: Yes.

MG: I wasn't part of the group that founded it, but I was the Department chair in the second year of the department. And there was all this civil rights movement. Vietnam

was going on. It was important to be involved. And not only I, but other people who were involved in Chicano studies spent a great deal of time on the West Side. But more importantly, it was also a period of time when we were finding our own identity as Latinos.

LD: Yes.

MG: I know that was my experience. Because up to that point, although I was proud of the fact that I was Mexican and sensed that I was different, I operated mostly in a white society.

LD: Right.

MG: When I came here in the early 1970s it was a period of self-identification for me. And then other leaders from the Latino or Chicano community were also involved in founding these community organizations. We were trying to find ourselves, to find a place for ourselves in society, but at the same time we were trying to get ahead. We were trying to get more students, for example, into the University, and into places like Macalester. So those were times when we were very active and we were creating all of these organizations. It was important to me to use my legal skills to help in organizing these groups.

LD: So when you came back, I mean about 1991, roughly?

MG: 1991, right.

LD: That was the real start of the wave of new Latino immigrants.

MG: Exactly.

LD: Tell me about that.

MG: It was more diverse. I remember an experience I had when I came back from Georgetown in Washington in 1978. I'd landed at the airport and I came through the gate into the terminal and I thought: there's something strange here. I looked around and it was all white people. And I realized that's what was different. Because I was coming in from Washington, D.C.

LD: Yes. Yes.

MG: Where it was largely people of color.

LD: Yes.

MG: That was 1978 - but that was the experience even more so back in 1971.

LD: Sure, certainly. Yes.

MG: I remember when I was practicing law in the 1970s here. People couldn't believe that I was Mexican, because I was a lawyer.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: I remember even into the 1990s, when I came back and would go outstate and into the courthouses, people would stare at me simply because I was a Mexican lawyer. That was different. They'd never seen that before. There were only two or three others in Minnesota.

LD: Right.

MG: So we have gone through some changes and difficult times as Latinos. And you're right, when I came back in 1991, the Twin Cities and Minnesota was much more diverse than when I had left.

LD: But 1991 was really when, not only was it more diverse, but that's when the real upswing, that's when you really began to see the changes, for example, in Minneapolis. Because when I was growing up on the West Side, there were no Latinos in Minneapolis, I mean, that was our perception. So you came right when that change began to happen. and you went back to working at the U.

MG: Right.

LD: Tell me about, you know, from what you were doing at the U, etcetera, your perceptions of that change in the community.

MG: My perceptions back then, and in the early 1990s, which was almost twenty years ago now, was that there had been great change on the part of other ethnic communities like the Somalis. We had the Hmong, and we had a major increase of Latinos in the Twin Cities. We had more students of color at the University of Minnesota, and that's whom I was primarily concerned with. The success of Latino students attending and graduating from the U.

There were now many more students of Latino descent, and so we had come full circle from not only having the Chicano Studies Department but also a Learning Resource Center whose purpose was to make sure that these kids stayed in and graduated. At the same time I perceived that there was less commitment on the part of the administration for students of color, and I found that discouraging. I also found that more difficult because it was not what I had originally experienced in the early 1970s.

I mean, Malcolm Moos, who was the president at that time, indicated that the University should, in fact, place an emphasis on different cultures. He's the one who actually ordered the creation of the ethnic studies departments. The U was one of the first in the Midwest to have ethnic studies departments.

LD: Right.

MG: And it was all due to Malcolm Moos, who said, "Get it done. That's what we're going to do." I found a tremendous commitment on the part of the administration at that time for students of color.

LD: And so when you came back, that was a real shift.

MG: Right. That was the major shift. Because to some extent I felt that in the 1970s the white structure was not threatened, or did not feel threatened, because there was a lesser number of ethnic people here, people of color.

LD: Yes.

MG: That attitude had changed by the 1990s where you had an influx of people of color. And so I think there was less commitment on the part of the white people for affirmative action as they had in the 1970s.

LD: So take me through kind of, you know, career-wise. You were at the U. How long were you there in that position?

MG: I was there until I retired in 2000. I've been practicing law part time since 2000. And I practice criminal defense law and, for the most part, represent Latino people.

LD: Why?

MG: Because I thought then they were getting the worst treatment. That's what motivated me to go outstate and represent people who were of Latino descent; because they were getting the worst end of the criminal justice system.

LD: And why outstate?

MG: Because they weren't being served adequately out there.

LD: So it's even worse out there then?

MG: It is, right.

LD: Yes.

MG: I've practiced out there now for almost twenty years. My practice is all by word of mouth. People tell others about me and they call me. I don't advertise or promote myself.

LD: Do you think that, since 2000, has it gotten worse, better, about the same?

MG: I think it's gotten better. The criminal justice system has acknowledged them. I use Willmar as a gauge for that, which is where I usually practice, out in Willmar. It's in Kandiyohi County. But there are pockets of Hispanic people, who are mostly Mexican people, out in the Western part of the state in many towns, who work in the food production businesses as well as in the migrant fields, and who've settled there. But there's a lot of legal work. It seems to me that if I were a younger person, that one of the places I would go. I like living in Saint Paul and Minneapolis and the benefits that that offers as opposed to a Willmar, but I think the work is out there for younger lawyers.

LD: What are some of the challenges that Latino communities in outstate Minnesota face?

MG: Well, discrimination for one thing. They're not readily accepted in smaller communities. And they usually have the most difficult, most arduous jobs, the worst jobs, like working in chicken factories or doing the migrant work in the fields - working on farms, picking rocks and that sort of thing. You see, the people we get from Mexico are not the educated class. The people who need that work, and who can only find work of that type, are not the people who come from Mexico with degrees or with high school diplomas.

LD: Right.

MG: So because of the lack of education they are compelled to take those kinds of jobs. And that also may tell you why they become involved in the criminal justice system. They do stupid things.

I mean, that's what happens when you drink and use drugs. There are a lot of drugs out there. That was another thing that I found, one of the differences. When I'd been here before in Minnesota there weren't as many drugs as in the last decade and in this decade that we're just finishing up. There's a huge influx of drugs, and they're being brought in from Mexico. And a lot of the people I represent, both in federal and state court, are Mexicans.

LD: So those are some challenges outstate. What about challenges to the Latino community either here in the Twin Cities or just more generally? What are some of the challenges you think the community faces?

MG: Well, the big issue has to do with immigration. People who are of Latino heritage and who are educated and have a high school diploma or a college degree generally are accepted and tolerated in the metro area. If you do your work, if you get a job and if you

behave yourself, you're treated like anybody else for the most part. That's not as true in outstate Minnesota as it is here in the Twin Cities. You know, I always advise people who live out in Willmar or Moorhead or Redwood Falls, to move to the Twin Cities. Nobody bothers you there.

I mean, the police don't bother you. Latinos are bothered out there.

LD: Just the simple fact that they're?

MG: They're brown.

LD: Yes.

MG: They're different. They speak Spanish. [Chuckles]

LD: Yes.

MG: But I think that's going to change. As you get more and more people, and as the community becomes browner, and it will, you know, they can't build a fence big enough and tall enough and wide enough to keep us out.

LD: Right.

MG: And our birthrates being what they are, we're going to take over.

LD: Certainly.

MG: Politically and, hopefully, someday economically. We've got a long way to go, but I think our grandchildren will see that. Maybe you and I won't. I don't think I will, maybe you will.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: But it's going to be different.

LD: Talk to me about the contributions that the Latino community has made.

MG: The contributions that I see are in terms of values. For the most part, Latinos are good people, are family-oriented people. People who love life. People who work hard. People who are willing to contribute to the common good politically, economically, and educationally. These are the contributions that I see on the part of Latino people, There are many intellectual people like yourself. I mean, you're making a contribution just simply by what you're doing. This is a bias that I have, and I know it's not completely true. I've led a life of service, for the most part, service to other people.

LD: Yes.

MG: What I've done is serve other people. And I think most Latinos are like that, that they're willing to contribute, and what other group of people can you say that about? They love their families; have respect for their mothers, their parents. Maybe we're not all engineers and maybe we're not all mathematicians or educators or innovators, but I think what we have to contribute more is to a richness of life. Like Mario Duarte and many others.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: I mean, you know, he liked people.

LD: Yes.

MG: And he liked his family. Those are the kinds of values that I see are really important.

LD: You were talking just a little bit ago about perhaps how our grandchildren will see a different Minnesota or different culture.

MG: Yes.

LD: What's needed to get there?

MG: Well, the sheer numbers will force that result if nothing else. But what we are really talking about and what we need really is to change are perceptions and attitudes.

LD: Yes.

MG: And those are the most difficult. But they do and they can change. I think one of the factors that makes education so critical is that the more educated you are the more tolerant you become. And if you have an educated society then you're going to find this greater acceptance. And that's what I see among young people. You know, we couldn't have elected an Obama without the young people.

LD: Sure.

MG: And someday we're going to have a Hispanic president. And I think she'll be a woman.

LD: [Chuckles]

MG: [Chuckles] Don't you?

LD: I hope so. As you look forward, what are some of your hopes and aspirations personally, professionally, and for the community?

MG: Well, professionally, I'm ahead of the game. I could die tomorrow and I'd still be ahead from my experiences. You know, basically I've been allowed to become educated, have a good education with a college degree, two law degrees. I've been a professor, I've been a judge, I've been a lawyer. I didn't mention the fact that I had the privilege of serving ten years as a foundation trustee for the Edward W. Hazen Foundation in New York.

LD: So a philanthropist as well.

MG: That experience was important because I not only gave away money but I met a lot of great people. People who were also serving in philanthropy - these were the giants of philanthropy. So that was important to me, and it was a privilege to do that. And then there is my family. You know, I've got a great family. We've been very lucky. And so I really don't have future aspirations at this point. If I can continue to serve in some way, some public way, I will do that. But I'm okay if I don't.

I would like to serve in Governor [Mark] Dayton's administration, for example. But I don't know what that would be, or whether it would be practical. I don't know whether or not I could go to work every day at nine o'clock, for example. And so I really don't have any personal aspirations. My aspirations for my family are that they live in peace and that they be happy and healthy. You know, if you can have that, you've got it all. [Chuckles]

LD: What about any aspirations—?

MG: And for the community?

LD: Yes, yes.

MG: We're going to continue to prosper as a brown community. And we're going to intermarry and we're going to become whiter and in some cases darker, but we're going to be a community of color. That is because of the people are going to continue coming north from places like El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, and Central America. It's all going to continue. You know, when you have the disparity of wealth like we have, there's no other answer.

LD: Yes.

MG: People want that - like your parents, and my parents. We came north because that's where the opportunity was.

LD: Yes.

MG: And we're going to have that, that's going to continue. Why do the people risk coming across the border? It's because they're stimulated by the opportunity to improve their lives, to improve the lives of their families. And that's going to continue. No immigration laws or walls are going to prevent that.

LD: Just curious, from your perspective as a lawyer and a judge. What needs to happen with immigration reform?

MG: I don't know. And the reason I say that is because what I have said already. What I think will happen is that you're going to have a continuous number of people who are going to continue coming north to the United States. You can't have unlimited people moving north, because it's going to impact adversely the economy and the education system, so you're going to have to have some sort of shift economically before you can stop that wave of immigration coming north. It's unfortunate that we didn't have enough foresight, in the 1940s, when we could have done it easily, more easily. We didn't have the foresight then to have some sort of a Marshall Plan where we could place Mexico and Central America, and South America for that matter, on some sort of equal basis with the economic conditions here in the United States.

LD: Yes.

MG: We did it in Europe, we could have done it in Mexico and we could have done it in Central America if we had the motivation, if we had the will, and we didn't. So you've got that disparity, the economic disparity between that world and our world. And it just makes sense to have a prosperous neighbor as opposed to a poor neighbor living beside you.

LD: Sure.

MG: And so you say, well, how does that address the immigration, present day immigration? I bet we've got more than twelve million people here in this country without papers, without legal status. And you don't have the resources to send them all back to where they came from, so it makes sense to me to put them on the road to citizenship, make them citizens, and then do something about the present conditions. We had the chance to do that in 1986 but we didn't. We passed NAFTA [the North American Free Trade Agreement] and NAFTA then created worse conditions in Central and South America.

LD: Yes.

MG: So that you had, as a result, greater pressure to come north than you ordinarily would.

LD: Yes.

MG: But we've got to solve that problem. You can't have twelve million or fifteen million or twenty million or however many it is living in the shadows like they do today. They can't get a driver's license, they can't get a good job, they can't even send their kids to college. That's what you have to fix first. Politicians think that you have to shore up the borders first. I think the borders are relatively secure. What you need to do is address the problem that's right next door to you.

LD: Are there any other kind of topics that you'd like to address or share? Because we really are kind of wrapping up. [Chuckles]

MG: None.

LD: Is there anything else kind of that you'd like to discuss, you know, any particular topics or thoughts?

MG: Well, we've discussed education, we've discussed immigration. One area I'd like to see changed is a greater participation by Latinos in the political system and our governments. We need to do that. Traditionally Latinos have had a mistrust of governments and therefore they don't participate, even in this country, like they should. In order to achieve, to succeed, we're going to have to change that attitude and become more involved. That means we've got to become educated, we have to become involved, and we have to be registered as voters and participate as voters. Only then can you make good on the promise to be fully integrated in this society. We need to do that because there's so many of us, and there are so many young people. We need to do that, and we need to do that here in Minnesota.

We struggled back in the 1970s with the Minnesota Hispanic Federation, and that's, I think, what we were striving for, but we'd meet month after month and really couldn't come up with an agenda. We should have focused at that time on a voter registration program, or some ways in which to involve our communities politically, and we didn't. As a result, in the late 1970s, the Federation was allowed to disintegrate because we really didn't have a purpose.

LD: Well, thank you. I think this is a really remarkable kind of journey through not just your story but the story of...

MG: Yes, the story of Latinos in Minnesota.

LD: Absolutely. So, once again, on behalf of the Historical Society, thank you so much.

MG: Thank you.