

Interview with
ROBERTO PIEDRA, JR.

June 5, 2023

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This program has received funding from Utah
Humanities and Utah Division of State History.

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ROBERTO PIEDRA, JR.

Content warning: Contains words/images that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful.

Roberto Piedra, Jr. was interviewed by Caitlinn Grimm on June 5, 2023 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his experiences coming to live in and as a police officer in the St. George area. Kathleen Broeder also participated and Genny Schmutz is heard making library announcements.

KB: Recording.

CG: Okay. Hello, this is Caitlinn Grimm at Utah Tech University Library. Today is June 5th, 2023. Kathleen Broeder is also here and we will be interviewing Roberto Piedra today.

So, Roberto can you please state and spell your full name?

RP: Yes. My full name is Roberto Piedra. First is R - O - B - E - R - T - O, last is P - I - E - D - R - A.

CG: Thank you. What languages do you speak?

RP: I speak English and Spanish. Took four years of Japanese, but I don't remember much [laughter].

CG: [Laughter].

RP: I was in high school, so I know how to spell my name. That's about it.

CG: And where were you born?

RP: I was born in Acapulco, Guerrero, in Mexico.

CG: I'm just gonna switch to the more open-ended questions now.

RP: Okay.

CG: So can you tell me about your childhood and family?

RP: So, I was born in 1994. When I was two, my parents immigrated to the U.S. We came to California, to Anaheim, California, so I pretty much grew up there about literally five minutes from Disneyland. You know, it was kinda of an apartment area, more of a lower class, you know? So we were across the freeway, right next to the freeway. The cool part I like to talk about is we like to watch the fireworks every night 'cause Disneyland had fireworks every single night, so that was like our daily thing, you know? Grew up lower,

you know, poverty area. We lived there for eleven years – no sorry, it was till I was eleven.

CG: Hmm.

RP: So I was in sixth grade and then we moved to Utah in 2005. So actually, when I was younger, my parents were super strict with education and I was the only kid, you know, so –

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: So, I would have to study every day. They were pretty hard core with ‘the chancla,’ you know? [Laughter.]

CG: [Chuckles.]

RP: That’s how I learned. Quick. Right? I ended up skipping a grade. So I went half a year to kinder–, half a year to first, and then went to second. In California, they have like a advanced program called the GATE [Gifted and Talented Education] Program and I was on track with them from third grade till sixth. It was, like, way different education that I got here [laughter]. It was like over there I didn’t know what calculator was because they didn’t let us use one. We had a question about how to spell a word, the teacher would point out our dictionary wall, go find it, you know. And when I moved here, my first day, teacher’s passing out calculators. Kids asking how you spell that, you know, the teacher helping them out. I’m like, “Wow. That’s different” [chuckles]. But yeah, we moved here in 2005. I think I was eleven, so I went to middle school and high school, and my other half of my life I grew up in Hurricane.

CG: Okay.

RP: Hurricane, if you wanna call it. [Laughter].

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: But it’s Hurricane. I graduated in 2011, and I actually got married my senior year.

CG: Oh really?

RP: Yeah. Just crazy, me and my wife were [laughter] were like, “Let’s get married.” Like okay. [Laughter] We were seventeen. Well, she was sixteen and a half. I was seventeen. So, it was just a crazy experience, you know, we had to have our parents’ consent signed. Sign the form for us to get married.

Sorry, did I go off the [laughter] –? I went off the –

CG: No, you’re good.

RP: – the whole thing here. But, yeah I was born in Mexico [laughter]. Was that the question, right?

KB: [Laughter].

CG: No [chuckles], that's fine. So, you talked about the difference between school in California and here.

RP: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

CG: What was school like here in, like, high school?

RP: So, I thought I was pretty smart in middle school. [Laughter]. Because the standards were way lower, I feel like I got way more relaxed.

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: On top of that, I have a brother. So, I grew up by myself until I was five.

CG: Okay.

RP: So, talkin' about the chancla probably till I was five, and then they were too busy [chuckles] –

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: – dealing with my brother, right. And here my parents weren't as strict, school was more relaxed. I started off in– what was it? In sixth grade, I think the advanced math was pre-algebra. So, I started in pre-algebra, but then slowly I just started falling, the grades, you know? Just a – what do they call it – a chit chat box, they call it. They call my daughter that.

CG: [Laughter].

RP: Chit chat box, that's probably what I was, and then I saw my grades falling, you know? And going into high school, I got into the ETS, is that what they call it? Is it ETS? If I remember right.

KB: I think so. There is one like that.

RP: I don't remember. Educational talent search, I think. Yeah. I think so. They do – they have a – It was through Dixie, they had a college outreach program, where tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, they would take you to different universities and tour, and they would help you prepare for college. So in tenth grade, I started – no, I started in middle school with them. Then in tenth grade we started doing the tours and I started getting

more interested in college. And when you're, you know, in tenth grade is when your grades actually matter. So, that's when they started to comin' back up and I started taking concurrent enrollment classes. So I was taking, I took biology 1010, English, math. So then I started having— by the time I got to senior year, I just had a half schedule.

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: But still, it wasn't — I mean the classes were pretty similar to what I was taking, 'cause in high school I was in Honors English; that was pretty close to English 1010. My biology. I took high school biology; it was the same teacher as 1010 and it was the exact same class —

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: — that he taught. I don't even remember who taught that class. But it was awesome, I liked it. The teacher was awesome. But a lot of the stuff was pretty similar. I don't feel like I was too advanced in it. But then I got married that senior year. It was actually May, that graduation month, I got married. My wife was in eleventh grade 'cause I graduated a year early. So we got married. I've been working —

I grew up working since I was young, you know. And so I can remember, even in California, I would sell little trinkets, candy. You know, go door to door sale type stuff.

CG: [Laughter].

RP: I remember I was averaging like seventy dollars a week

CG: That's pretty good.

RG: For being ten. That's pretty good. And here I started working when I was twelve or thirteen, just putting up ads for yard work or whatever kind of work, and I ended up getting hired in — have you heard of Sky Ranch, in Hurricane?

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: Yeah, it's a little airplane community. They have a landing strip between all the houses and everybody owns a plane and a huge house. Well, they had a HOA [homeowner's association] where they had to keep their tumbleweeds down, so a guy called up like, "Hey, I have an acre I need cleaned." You know, and this guy's a millionaire, you know, and he hired me at six bucks an hour. Like, okay. Me and my friend, we did that for a while, and then the neighbors started seeing us. So every neighbor that would hire us, I would go up a dollar an hour, you know.

CG: [Laughter].

RP: We ended up making like nine bucks an hour. It was a good experience, you know, it was working long hot days. I got to – the HOA let me drive a truck around the air strip. I was twelve, just having the time of my life. Making money and hanging out with my friend. I think one of the last times I went over there, one guy gave us a ride in his airplane. Took us around the town. I never asked my mom if I could get on, but [laughter] –

CG: [Laughter].

RP: – but, I told her after [laughter]. It was fun. But, yeah.

CG: So, what brought your family to the St. George area?

RP: It was work.

CG: Work.

RP: Yeah, just growing in California, my parents always had – my dad tried to go to college, but you know the rent's so expensive. The cost of living there is so expensive. He couldn't make it on just one job, so he had to quit college and get a second job. He didn't have a car so he rode a bike everywhere. And then my mom ended up working full time as well. So, it was kinda like my grandma lived in the area so we kinda took turns on taking care of us. Over there they, just how the Hispanic community is a lot of the times when – they're very ignorant. Especially, when you live in poverty areas, everybody, it seems like they don't like to see people succeed, you know?

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: They always tell my parents, “Well, you can't get a house; it's too expensive. You can't get a better job, you know? It's too hard.” So they had that mindset that they couldn't do it till 2004. My dad had the opportunity of going to Salt Lake. They invited him over there for a construction job. He went. He left us in California to come check over here, see if he liked it well enough to maybe move. He found out how way cheaper it was to live here. In '05 everything was blooming, you know, construction, there was great jobs. And he liked Salt Lake, but he ended up stopping here in St. George on his way back to California. 'Cause he would come back and forth every week or so and he ended up liking St. George a lot better than Salt Lake, so that's kinda how he found this place. He tried looking around St. George, but then fell in love with Hurricane. Cheaper houses, you know? Big lots. Farmland. Living in the middle of the city in California, with no little seven hundred square foot apartment, you don't own anything, you can't have a pet. So he was pretty happy with the spot he found. It was on a half-acre, everybody has farm animals and horses next to us, and he ended up settling in Hurricane, finding a house for us, and we celebrated – I remember we celebrated New Year's Day in California, and then right after that we drove over here. So, it was New Year's Day 2005 that we moved here. And you know, they figured out how to break that curse, I would say.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: You know? And learned how to not be that kind of person, you know, that's very negative and puts others down, you know. They figured out that it is possible to own a house, to find a better place. You know, you can't just be stuck in your situation forever. If you don't do anything about it, you know, nothing's gonna change. No one's gonna change it for you.

CG: Right.

RP: That's what that taught me, you know?

CG: Can you describe some of your favorite religious or cultural traditions you grew up with?

RP: I was baptized Catholic, but I didn't grow up practicing the religion. I think mostly 'cause my parents just worked; in California Sunday isn't anything special, it's just another day to work. You know, nothing's close. So we were in shock when we came here. Sunday, everything's dead. Everything's closed. We were like, "What is going on?" We didn't know. One funny thing is we would see these Native people, Navajos, in town and they look Mexican to us, so we would talk to them in Spanish and they would just look at us like, "What?"

KB: [Chuckles].

RP: To us, it's like the biggest insult for a Mexican person that doesn't speak Spanish [laughter].

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: So, we thought, like, "Wow, these guys are —" [laughter] , you know, "they're bad."

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: But, we didn't know till later on, we're like, "Oh, they're not." They don't know Spanish. Okay. But, yeah, religious, I mean, I didn't. I grew up around the Mormons [members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] here and didn't have a problem with them, but I never went to church or anything like that. I've been to mass before, but I don't really know what's going on, you know? [laughter].

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: Yeah.

CG: Did you have any festivals or anything you did growing up?

RP: Festivals?

CG: Yeah. Like, did you do any altars for Día de los Muertos?

RP: Even that, like – I don't know my mom never – like, she grew up with all that. You know, she grew up with going to church every Sunday and the altar and everything like that. Here, she never adopted it until recently.

CG: Hmmn.

RP: Like, when I watched the movie *Coco*.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: I learned a lot. [Laughter] I was never taught about all that stuff. But now, my mom, I don't know, maybe she was a little superstitious, about – kinda scared to hang up pictures of her loved ones that died. You know? I don't know. I don't know why she never did until prior. She's been doing it, like, three, four years now and we showed our kids what, she has the altar in our house. Especially now, my grandmother passed last year, so it's extra special now. But I haven't really had a lot of close relatives die. You know, I haven't experienced that too much, except for my grandmother.

CG: Gotcha. And have you picked up any religious or cultural traditions with being here or –? Or as an adult?

RP: I mean, I would say I believe in God, right? I believe in doing the right thing, but it's just church, it doesn't convince me.

CG: Okay.

RP: You know? [Laughter].

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: It's just growing up here seeing my friends going to church – 'cause here it was a limited population of Hispanics. Everybody pretty much knew each other, whether you lived in La Verkin or St. George. It was just a real tight knit group that kinda saw each other everywhere. And I did, in middle school, I did go to church a couple times with a – I was dating a girl. I did it to go with her, you know? But it, to me, going there, I just saw a lot of hypocrisy, you know? A lot of the people that would go to church would just go to talk crap about the other ones, see what the other one's wearing, you know, it's like – I don't know, I didn't have good examples, I guess, of why church is good for you.

CG: Right.

RP: My dad, kinda, he grew up knowing the Bible and stuff like that, and not really going to church. But when we moved he would be the guy that would argue with whoever came

knocking at the door, you know, whether it was Jehovah's, or Mormon, or anybody. He knew more about the Bible than them, right? [Laughter].

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: So, I have that example. But, it was surprising, I think it was our, maybe, second or third year here, Jehovah's Witness, I say, got my dad, and they flipped him. So, he never – he decided to join that religion, which I think benefited him a lot, 'cause I saw him calm down a lot. Like, he had long hair, he cut it. He used to be super strict, you know, he would punish us with the belt and stuff like that, and when he joined the religion he stopped. So, he was a lot more calm, you know. Which, I wouldn't say he was violent or anything like that. If I got the belt, I probably deserved it. [Laughter]. But, we saw the change in him and it did benefit him. But he always, he was always adamant not to force us into a religion. He would invite us to go, and we would go once in a while, but it was boring.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: There was no window in their church.

CG: Really?

RP: [Laughter]. It's weird, but whatever. If it works for him, cool, I support him. You know, the only sad part with that religion is that they don't celebrate holidays. They only celebrate graduations, weddings, and something else, but no birthdays or holidays.

CG: Interesting.

RP: Have you heard of that Stevie Wonder song? That "I Just Called To Say I Love You"?

CG: Oh, I have. It's been a really long time since I heard it, though.

RP: You remember how it starts? [Singing] "No New Year's Day."

CG: Oh, yeah.

RP: I tell my dad that's a Jehovah's song.

CG: [Laughter].

KB: [Laughter].

RP: 'Cause he names all the holidays that you can't celebrate.

CG: Oh.

RP: I'm like, "That's your song." [Laughter]. But, I don't know. That too, growing up with him joining that, he wouldn't be there for birthdays. Like, he would just lock himself in their room. So, I was, eh, that kinda sucks to me, we're all family and we're hanging out for Christmas or for Thanksgiving and he would just lock himself in the room. You know? Until recently, he kinda – I think he opened his eyes a little more where he'll, he won't dress up for the occasion, but he'll eat with us, you know? Or like when my daughter, when my first kid was born, my daughter, he gave her Christmas presents that weren't wrapped and that was like a couple days later. And I'm like, "Come on, we know that's for Christmas."

CG: [Chuckles].

KB: [Chuckles].

RP: You know, but that was the excuse. But, okay, however you wanna do it, you know. As long as you're here with us, right. So a lot of times we do get together so we won't tell him. Or we'll just say, "Nah, nah, it's nothing, we're just getting together," for somebody's birthday or something, we're celebrating under the table so he can be there. That's kinda my experience with religion. I mean, I don't know, with my kids I don't wanna push them into anything either. Like, I would like them to find their way, but, again, I don't know much about it to teach them as well.

CG: Will you tell me about your work?

RP: My work? I'm a police officer for Washington City Police Department. I've been on patrol for five years and I did two years in jail with the county sheriff's office – [Loud Beep]

CG: Okay.

GS: [Library announcement over intercom] The library and Holland Centennial Commons –

CG: Sorry.

KB: Pause for a moment.

RP: Alright.

GS: – will be closing in thirty minutes. If you need to check out books, make copies, or print jobs, please do so by five-fifty.

CG: I forgot it was like right there [pointing to intercom speaker].

RP: Mm-hmm.

GS: The library building services will not be available after that time. The library will be open tomorrow morning at eight am.

RP: Okay. [Chuckles].

CG: Sorry.

RP: So, I work for three agencies, actually. I'm a reserve for the county sheriff's office, and then I reserve here for Utah Tech as a campus police. With the county, I'm a correctional officer, they asked if – they wanna get me to work the road, but it pays the same. So, I'm like, "Nah."

CG: [Laughter].

RP: 'Cause county, if you think about it, it can be way more dangerous. 'Cause depending on where you're at, your back-up might be thirty minutes to an hour away and you're alone. In the jail, you know, there's twelve other guys there. It's a very controlled environment, you know. A lot of the inmates know me already.

CG: [Laughter].

RP: So, I feel more comfortable there. But working corrections really is like, you're there twelve-hour shifts, so it really is like you're in jail, too, sometimes, 'cause it's very routine, there's a schedule. Especially, here with our jail, there's a schedule, there's a headcount every six hours. Excuse me. Sorry, I needed this [indicating drink] like –

CG: It's okay.

RP: I worked a grave, and then I – so I got off at six. I had to wake up at eight-thirty 'cause they were doing an event for the Special Olympics [Law Enforcement] Torch Run. It was a mile and half run, so I had to get up and go do that. So that's where I barely saw the email about today. I'm like, "Oh, it's today?" [Chuckles].

CG: [Chuckle].

RP: And then I got back home like at eleven, so like I'm running on fumes here, but –

CG: Thank you for being here.

RP: [Laughter]. Corrections... there's a schedule every day, same thing happens every day. There's headcount happens at six in the morning, headcount at twelve. Which means you have to go in and count every person that's in every cell, in every block, make sure everybody's accounted for, and it's very repetitive. Sometimes there's crazy things that happen, but most of the time it's just a repetitive thing. But, I did that for two years. I tested for Washington City and got the job. It was a bigger raise, you know, it was like a four dollar raise. I was like, you know, I'll go on the road. I've definitely enjoyed it a lot

more. I think the jail's a good learning experience, especially learning how to talk to people. Learning how to talk to crazy people, you know? And in there you get to meet the people that you're gonna be dealing with on the outside –

CG: Right.

RP: – in a controlled environment. In the jail, they're very open to talking to you about what happened during when they got arrested. What kinda drug use they're into. What kinda crimes they committed. They're very open to talking to you about it 'cause they've already been convicted, they're already serving their time. So, that's what I would spend my time doing, is just learning. Learning what the drugs did to them, why they did 'em, how much they paid for 'em. You know? And a lot of people would like to talk about it. So, in the jail, I'm actually wearing it right now. I got this pin. It's a training called CIT, Crisis Intervention Team. It's all throughout the U.S., and basically, they teach you how to talk to people that are going through a crisis. Whether it's a mental health breakdown or a drug-induced something, you know, when they're going crazy. It really does help. Because as officers, a lot of people get in their head like the badge gives you the power to tell people what to do. You're the all – with the badge everybody has to listen to you. It's like, no, it's just a uniform. People respect, but that doesn't mean they have to respect it, right? So, I've seen it a lot where guys show up and demand somebody to do something without earning the respect first, and they never get anywhere. They're the ones that are always getting into fights, you know? Getting into incidents. And, for me, I feel the jail really helped me develop that skill to talk to people, to really humanize somebody, especially a prisoner, you know, they're people, too, and just talk to them. I mean, I believe all the – I would say ninety-nine percent of the fights I've been with – I've been in, I wasn't initiated. I did not initiate them. [Laughter].

CG: [Laughter].

RP: You know, I know how to deescalate people and talk to people. And, literally, I've been in incidents multiple times where they're cussing all my partners out, they look at me and say, "Not you."

CG: [Laughter].

KB: [Laughter].

RP: "But, them." I'm like, "Alright." I kinda feel pretty good about that [laughter] You know?

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: But yeah, now I'm on patrol, it really helps because people recognize me from the jail. And here, our jail, it's like a revolving door. It's a lot of the same people over and over again. But I've had a lot of encounters where they tell me, "Hey, you're one of the good ones. You really talk to us like a person, you know, you didn't talk down to us. You helped us out when we needed help." And my first experience was, I was in training, they

pulled over this guy. He had a bunch of drugs in his car. They got the drugs piled up on his car. He was in cuffs. I show up, he looked at me, he's like – we go by last names in law enforcement, usually – so, he looked at me and he goes, "Piedra!" And he's all smiling.

CG: [Laughter].

RP: "How are you, man?" He's in cuffs, you know, he's going to jail.

KB: [Laughter].

RP: I'm like, "Good." And it all – everybody there, including the sergeant, looks at me like, "What the – How do you know this guy? Was this guy your friend?" So then they pulled me aside, and they're like, "What's up with that?" And I tell them, "Well, we did time together." You know?

CG: [Laughter].

RP: [Laughing] He's like, "What?" "Yeah, in the jail, you know?" I took care of him for a while; he was probably there for six months or somethin'. But it's just a little advantage that I feel that I have over other people that are trained on patrol and they never had that experience of just talkin' to people and calming them down. And here on patrol I try to promote our department more. I'm trying to get involved in more community events and I do that radio show JUAN FM; I try to go over there once a month and talk about traffic stuff or tips on dealing with law enforcement and stuff like that. So that's pretty what my focus is on right now.

CG: That's cool.

RP: Yeah.

CG: You talked about this kinda –

RP: Mm-hmm.

CG: But, what's been your experience with the broader St. George community? So, you talked like the criminal element, but –

KB: [Laughter].

RP: [Laughter].

CG: – the rest of the St. George area.

RP: The rest. Okay. The rest of St. George, I mean, when we first moved here coming from California, California has so many people, so populated. People in public like people

don't say hi to you, people don't even look at you walking down the same side of the street. Here, like our first day walking to the park, people waving at you, and I'm like, "I don't know that guy," you know. 'Cause everybody knows each other, you know, tight-knit community and they would wave at us and we'd be like, "What the...?" But I grew up, growing up here, I've figured out a lot of people have good intentions, they try generally to be nice here, you know? They're nicer than most people I grew up with. I feel like they're very inviting into their community, into the Mormon community, specifically. So, like I get invitations to barbecues and stuff like that on my door like every other month. I never go 'cause I work, –

CG: [Chuckles].

KB: [Laughter].

RP: – but, it's nice to get the invitations, you know [laughter]. But, I feel, in general, they're mostly good people. People I deal with even on a simple traffic stop, you know, it's nothin'. People are just focused on family and I feel like they – how would I say it like – I see, specifically in our area where we have all this nature and the outdoors and stuff, so that's what I've adopted. So our family is just going out and getting away from the town, and, you know, unplugging from everything, and enjoying what we have here locally that we don't – we just drive by it every day and we don't realize how beautiful the area is. But yeah, yeah [chuckles].

CG: What are your thoughts on the Latino-Hispanic community in the area?

RP: Oh, it's exploded.

CG: Yeah?

RP: Yeah. Like I said, when I first moved here, everybody knew each other, wasn't very many places like just the Three Amigos, always there. I remember they used to do church dances every other month, so that's where most of us would get together. Now, I feel, we're kind of – I feel like we're not as united as it used to be since there's way more, more Hispanics. And I feel like a lot of the people that are – that have been coming, specifically now that I'm in law enforcement, I feel that they're not learning to change their ways. They come – I mean a lot of people come from California and they think they want to live the same as over there, where I don't feel that they're realizing this a whole different place and you gotta make your situation better, you know? I keep seeing – that's why I think rents are going up, you know, because people are used to paying that in California so they think they can come here and just keep living the same and piling up two, three families in a place to pay for rent. And but I've, I mean I've talked to people, I've pulled people over driving crazy with California plates before.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: And it's like, "What are you doing, man? This is not the place to be like that." I've straight up told people like, "Hey, man, you're not in California anymore." 'Cause, one example was, I pulled over this guy, he just started being erratic with me for pulling him over. And I'm like, "First off, you don't know me, let's just stop right there." Stop it where it's at, okay. I'm like, "We're not in California anymore, you can't talk to me like that." [Laughter] You know, 'cause you guys have seen the news and social media how people in the bigger cities treat police officers, and it's very disrespectful; there's no consequences, you know. But again, the guy, specifically, I pulled over, he was Hispanic, too. And I told him, "Look, we're in a different place. You can't talk to police like that." He ended up calming down and apologizing and everything.

But I feel we used to be – the Hispanic community, used to be more tight-knit. It's kinda spreading out. I do like that there are more events, like JUAN FM promotes a lot of events. Specifically, they have a festival every year, they do downtown. So, I feel like that's a good thing to have for us and it's a good thing to do in the middle of the town where we can invite everybody to it as well, not just keep us as a closed group. You know?

CG: How would you describe your relationship with white Americans?

RP: Well, I mean, like, I grew up with white people, you know? I was, my school was – there was probably like ten Hispanic kids. Maybe, like ten Hispanic kids, one Black kid, and the rest were white people.

CG: Like, in California or –?

RP: Here. Here. Yeah.

CG: Right.

RP: No, in California. It was like one white kid, one Black kid, and then all Hispanics. [Laughter].

KB: [Laughter].

CG: [Chuckles]. Gotcha.

RP: You know? Way different. But, I feel, at the beginning when there wasn't a lot of us, I feel that we would get the side-eye. We would – people would look at us differently. People would treat us differently. But, I would feel like, specifically, the Mormons were always accepting, you know? But now, with all the wokeness and everything, everybody's – I feel that it's good because everybody's more – I don't feel that I'm targeted like that, you know, or looked down at. But, I do feel the difference if I'm wearing a uniform or not.

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: People treat you different. A lot different. You know? Especially, being Hispanic, you know. I'm trying to think of a specific time or anything like that, but I can tell, you know, people – they just treat you way different, you know, when they see you in uniform, you know? Specifically, me as a Hispanic.

KB: Is that a matter of respect kinda thing?

RP: Yeah. I would say more respect or like they're surprised, you know?

KB: They're surprised you're an officer?

RP: Yeah, if I see the same person – if I deal with the same person twice, you know, without uniform then with uniform. They're like, "Woah, you kinda have my respect now." You know? More than before.

KB: Okay.

CG: Gotcha.

RP: Even though I didn't do anything different, just changed my clothes.

CG: Right. Have you experienced racist or prejudiced behavior here, then? What was that like?

RP: I feel very minimal if I did. It was probably, usually in school, you know. I feel like it was just dumb kids, you know, were ignorant, we don't know. We just hear whatever our parents are doing around them. Probably, one of the worst ones I had was with my dad, where – [Ding].

CG: Sorry.

GS: [Library announcement over public address system.] The library and all services are all closed. Doors will be locked in ten minutes. Please remember to log out of your computers and take your personal belongings. The library building will be open tomorrow morning at eight am.

CG: Okay.

RP: So, one of the specific times that I remember with my dad was, he was working, doing a concrete job, so I would help him on the weekends. I think I was like fourteen or fifteen. He had a – he was doing like a concrete sidewalk in this backyard, he had everything ready to go to pour the next day. Usually, my dad would do the job, but he would have the people buy the supplies. He'd set it up, then charge the money for the work after it's done. This guy, I don't where, he just started insulting my dad, he was calling him

“wetback” and just talking down on him pretty bad. And I kinda got excited because my dad grew up fighting.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: Like every job he had, he would end up leaving because he fought somebody there in California. So I was like, wow, I’m gonna see my dad fight for the first time. I’d never seen it. He always talks about it, you know? But, now he’s Jehovah right? And I got excited. The guy was just bad with us and my dad, super calm, just looked at me. He’s like, “Let’s get our tools, let’s go.” Then the guy just kept screaming at us and calling us racial slurs and I was surprised. I learned a big lesson that day. You know, how to not let people get the best of you. ‘Cause I imagine now, looking back today, my dad would have fought this guy in his backyard, he would have probably ended up in jail.

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: Even though this guy called him a wetback, whatever other things he called. But that’s really the worst experience I’ve had. But, it was a good experience at the end where I learned people can say anything to you, it doesn’t have to affect you, and it’s really helped me in this job where there are a lot of people that talk to you how they want. I’m not a person that loses my cool real easily, or lose my cool at all, I feel. A lot better than most.

CG: Thank you. How has the area changed since you’ve been here? You touched on that a bit with, like, rent prices and the Latino-Hispanic community exploding, but talk some more about that.

RP: Yeah, I mean, there’s – just everything has changed, really. Like, Hurricane used to be a little farm town, you know, you could smell the cows from miles away [laughter], you know, there’s only a couple real hang out spots. You know, now there’s a lot more things to do, I feel. I still love Hurricane, so that’s where me and my wife chose to stay. Luckily, we’ve found a house there and we thought it was a good place to raise our kids. I have three kids. My oldest daughter is ten, my middle boy is five, and my youngest is three. He’s a boy as well. Ricky, Robby, and Mia, so –. I feel Hurricane is still small enough to stay. And I know that the traffic has been getting a lot worse.

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: I mean, working as a police officer – [Ding][Laughter].

GS: [Library announcement.] The library and all services are now closed. Please begin making your way to an exit. The library building will be open tomorrow morning at eight a.m.

CG: Sorry.

RP: And working as a police officer, you get to see a part of the community that nobody else gets to see or hear about. So like when I first started, you know, people heard I was from Hurricane, and they're like, "You live there?" Like, "Yeah." But, I guess Hurricane is notorious for having a big drug problem and a lot of – What do you call 'em? – Trailer trash, they would call it. Well, I grew up there, I didn't really notice that. You know? So, you get into law enforcement and then you think, "Oh, I see where the issues are." There's hotspots in every city.

But I feel that this place is growing rapidly, we're – It's gonna be a very convenient place to stay at, especially for my kids where I believe there's gonna be more opportunities here, you know. And the prices, you know, I don't know if they're gonna continue to keep going up, but I hope the wages keep up with it so that my kids can stay in the area and enjoy everything we have here, you know? Specifically, like the outdoors and just being close to family, you know. 'Cause, compared to what I've seen with white people, you know, no offense, but – [laughter] you know, they're very – they are family-oriented, but then I see them sending like their old people to retirement homes. Like, that's not a thing for Hispanics. Like you grow old, you take care of that old person till they die, you know? But working the job that I work, I can see why some of these people are a handful, you know?

CG: [Chuckles].

RP: Especially, with the dementia or other illnesses where it's a full time job to care for them. But I feel that we kinda just deal with it, you know, as Hispanics. Like, I feel in debt to my parents. That's always in the back of my head, like I have to keep growing. I have to keep finding something better to be able to take care of my parents in the long run. My family and my parents, you know? I only have one brother and he doesn't seem to have his priority straight, so I'm like, well, I'm going to be the one taking care of them. You know? But, I always have that pressure in the back of my mind, like, man, I gotta – Every job that I've had, I've always upgraded, you know? Upgraded wage and better job, you know? And this one has been the longest one I've been at so far, but also, I don't like being stuck in one place, you know?

CG: Mm-hmm.

RP: Ultimately, I love law enforcement. I love what I do, but it's like I know there's something better. [Laughter]. There's always something better, you know. And I'm still, I feel like you gotta keep that flame going. You know? But, yeah, I feel that this community is where it's at, where a lot of people are coming, and it's just gonna keep growing and growing. We – me and my wife kinda joke around the idea of just going to find somewhere where it's not as populated. But then there's other issues with that, getting groceries, the convenience of things. But, yeah, I feel that this place is gonna keep growing how it has been and the industries are following it here, you know. Like specifically, Washington City, just the five years that I've been there, I think we started off with, I think I was the twenty-fourth officer, full time officer, right now we have almost forty –

CG: Wow.

RP: – on patrol. So, all my other coworkers have either promoted or moved on to like a specialty spot, like the school resource officer or investigation or drug task force, stuff like that. So now I've been there for five years, I'm the first on the list on patrol. I'm like their most senior guy on patrol right now. Which is crazy to me.

CG: [Chuckles].

KB: Kinda.

RP: Yeah, yeah. So I have like, I forget, I counted like fourteen guys under me. So, I feel like there's a lot of opportunity there, too, to grow, you know. We're gonna keep getting more people, more schools, more SRO spots, more investigation spots, crime doesn't seem to slow down. [Chuckles]. You know, we can only do so much to prevent it, but ultimately people figure out ways around to avoid us and keep doing what they're doing, especially with our community here being so close to the I-15. I-15's, you know, is connected to tons of places, so it's easy to hop on the freeway, you know, and you're out. We never see 'em again. [Laughter]. But, a lot of the, I would say, a lot of the issues comes from people doing the same thing in other states, bringing it here. I feel like the regular – I mean there are the regulars that go to the jail, you know, they're usually the addicts, right? But then a lot of the bigger crimes, the thefts, the bigger assaults, I've seen a trend; it's people from out of state that are moving here. And I feel because of the other states, specifically California, where they're, they're not so aggressive on punishment and taking people to jail, they think they can come here to do the same thing. You know, then they find out they can't. [Laughter]. Yeah.

CG: Do you have any questions?

KB: No, actually. I just want to thank you for your time.

RP: Thank you.

KB: It's been wonderful to hear your story.

RP: Thank you, thank you for having me.

CG: So we just have the one final question; is what would you like people to know about yourself or your community?

RP: Myself or my community. I mean, myself, I feel like I talk too much about myself [laughter].

CG: [Laughter].

RP: Specifically, right now. But I mean, I would invite people to assess their situation, you know, to look at the bigger picture. There are better places to live, you know? If you live in poverty, the only way out is you have to do something about it. You know, I see it a lot where people are waiting for the government to pay them or some kind of hand out, and it's like I can't wrap my head around that, where people can live in a place like that and not do anything about it. It's like, no, just get up, move. My parents came to the U.S. with no money, you know, they figured it out, and I feel there's enough places with enough nice people that if you did show up to somewhere without money, I'm sure if you asked somebody there's always somebody there that will offer the help. At least, to get your feet to stand up and start working. You know, you can always change your situation.

CG: Thank you. If you don't have anything else to add, we'll stop the recording now.

RP: Alright.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]