

**Interview with**  
**JUAN FULGENCIO-MILAN**

---

**April 21, 2023**

**ESTAMOS AQUÍ / WE ARE HERE:  
LATINO VOICES IN ST. GEORGE, UTAH  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

**#2023-005**

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2023.  
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives  
Utah Tech University Library  
Holland Centennial Commons 330  
Utah Tech University  
St. George, UT 84770  
(435) 634-2087  
specialcollections@utahtech.edu

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

Any views, findings, conclusions, or  
recommendations expressed in this interview do not necessarily represent those  
of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Utah Humanities, or  
Utah Division of State History.



## INDEX

|                           |                                             |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| agricultural work         | 9, 25                                       |
| area changed              | 24                                          |
| bull rider                | 6                                           |
| Catholic                  | 14, 18                                      |
| Cesar Chavez              | 25                                          |
| change                    | 22, 24, 25, 30                              |
| cherries                  | 9, 12, 26                                   |
| Christmas                 | 14, 18, 19, 27, 29                          |
| community                 | 21, 22, 23, 24, 30                          |
| cop                       | 24                                          |
| criminal justice          | 17                                          |
| dad                       | 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 25, 26, 27        |
| dating                    | 16, 23, 25                                  |
| Dr. Miguel Silva [Mexico] | 5                                           |
| elementary                | 10, 11, 15                                  |
| first job                 | 12                                          |
| food                      | 24, 29                                      |
| Jamous [friend]           | 8, 15                                       |
| jaripeo                   | 7, 20                                       |
| las fiestas               | 20, 28                                      |
| Latino-Hispanic community | 22                                          |
| little brother            | 19, 26, 29                                  |
| married                   | 10, 13, 20, 28                              |
| Mexico                    | 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 26          |
| Michoacán                 | 5, 20, 28, 29                               |
| mojigangas                | 28                                          |
| mom                       | 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 29 |
| Mrs. O'Donnel [teacher]   | 8                                           |
| officer                   | 17, 21, 22, 23                              |
| older brother             | 6, 8, 13, 18                                |
| pick cherries             | 26                                          |
| prejudiced behavior       | 23                                          |

|                    |                                                              |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| proud              | 30                                                           |
| quinceañera        | 29                                                           |
| religion           | 14, 15, 18, 27                                               |
| Santaquin, Utah    | 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19                                  |
| school             | 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27 |
| Spanish Fork, Utah | 11, 14                                                       |
| sports             | 11, 12                                                       |
| teacher            | 8, 13                                                        |
| Texas              | 6, 7, 9, 25                                                  |
| toritos            | 28                                                           |
| traditions         | 14, 17, 27                                                   |
| uncles             | 6, 9, 25                                                     |
| uniform            | 23, 24                                                       |
| white Americans    | 23                                                           |
| wife               | 18, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30                                   |

## JUAN FULGENCIO-MILAN

---

Juan Fulgencio-Milan was interviewed by Eva Sanchez on April 21, 2023 at Utah Tech University in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his experiences growing up in Utah and moving to St. George. Caitlinn Grimm also participated.

CG: Okay, today is [April] 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. We're at Utah Tech University Library. I'm Caitlinn Grimm, and today we have Eva Sanchez interviewing Juan Fulgencio-Milan.

JF: Mm-hmm.

ES: Do I just start or introduce myself?

CG: Introduce yourself.

ES: Okay. I'm Eva Sanchez. I'm at Utah Tech University Library.

Can you dictate your name to us, spell it out?

JF: Yeah, Juan Fulgencio-Milan. It's J - U - A - N. Fulgencio is F - U - L - G - E - N - C - I - O and it's like customary in Hispanic culture to use your ma's maiden name and that's Milan so that's M - I - L - A - N.

ES: Okay, what languages do you speak, Juan?

JF: English, Spanish, and I can count to ten in German.

ES: And where were you born?

JF: I was born in the state of Michoacán en Mexico, and then the town is called Dr. Miguel Silva.

ES: Interesting. My mom is from Michoacán.

JF: Oh, really?

ES: It's a good state.

JF: Yeah.

ES: Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood and family?

JF: Yeah, so I was born in Mexico. I lived there until I was five, then as we were moving to the United States, I turned six. So I turned six in Texas at like my uncle's house. About my childhood you said?

ES: Mm-hmm.

JF: And then I grew up in Santaquin, Utah, it's kinda like a smaller agricultural town, I guess. Then we just kinda moved around Utah county, from there. I would say, I kinda was the middle child. My two eldest siblings are a lot older than I am. So, at home, I only lived with my older brother and then my younger brother, couple years after, he was born. So, I'd say, I have a unique relationship with my siblings, just 'cause of the age differences. But yeah, that's kinda my childhood.

ES: Is it just four siblings then?

JF: Yeah, four siblings.

ES: What do you remember from growing up in Mexico as opposed to in the United States, like your first memories?

JF: So, I – the area that we're from is like pretty impoverished and there – it was like more of like a – I don't know how to say it, like a rancho type of place. So I just remember when I was young, I was really kinda influenced by the area. So I knew when I wanted to grow up, I wanted to be a bull rider really bad. My uncles all did that recreationally so, that's what I aspired to be. And I just remember being outside a lot and doing a lot of those things. We didn't really have like a TV or anything like that.

ES: Did you ever try bull riding?

JF: Yeah, so when I was little, we would tie like a rope around, we had like a little calf and then we did it on a donkey one time too, and I tried to bull ride those things.

ES: [Chuckles].

JF: It didn't end super well. I was like five, so. I remember one time I hurt myself pretty good doing that.

ES: So, coming into, did you say Santaquin?

JF: Mm-hmm.

ES: In Utah.

JF: Mm-hmm.

ES: Did you live in like a farm area, too, when you came here?

JF: Kinda. So, Santaquin is, I mean it used to be all farm land, now it's being developed a lot. But when we first moved to Utah we lived in a mobile home or like a trailer, and it was not near where my dad works, he used to work at an orchard, but it's kinda off to the side. It's kinda next to the freeway. So, if you ever drive north on the fifteen, you would see, like where parents still live. But, no it wasn't necessarily like an agricultural area, it's just near agriculture.

ES: Mm-hmm.

JF: Agriculture.

ES: Did you ever go to jaripeo or rodeos in Utah?

JF: Yeah, so I've done it in Utah, did it in Mexico a lot; that was like one of my favorite past times, I guess. There's a big jaripeo area in Cuitzeo, it's the town right over from where we live. Or sorry, Huandacareo. And yeah, I would go to that, and I would always like going to the county fair and going to the rodeos. But rodeos here and rodeos there are completely different, so I didn't really understand the rodeos here.

ES: Mm. Do you dress up for them too or –?

JF: No.

ES: No?

JF: No, I don't have any cowboy boots or anything, so –

ES: [Laughter]

JF: I don't know, after I moved away from that, I was out of that environment, I kinda phased out of it.

ES: Do you remember what it was like starting school in the U.S., like what was that experience like or –?

JF: Yeah. So it was – I finished kindergarten in Mexico and then I started first grade in the U.S. and we moved to Utah over the summer. I think it was like – yeah, I turned six in Texas, so it was like July, and then August school starts. And I remember I was really scared when I first moved over here. I didn't know any English at all. So the first couple months, I want to say the first six or seven months of school, my mom would go to school and spend the day at school every day with me. Just 'cause I didn't know what the kids were saying or anything, so. I remember I would like cry and stuff just 'cause I didn't know what they were saying.

ES: [Laughter] Were the students accepting? Or, eventually, when you started to understand each other, do you feel like they really accepted you?

JF: Yeah, so, I feel like everybody was like super nice and they would like play with me or like talk to me, you know? But I had no idea what they were saying so I think I cried like outta frustration that I couldn't communicate with them. But, I think everyone was accepting. I knew I had like a rivalry, I guess you could say, with this one kid named Jamous and then we actually went to junior high together later on and we were friends and stuff.

ES: It's weird how that starts sometimes.

JF: Yeah, it wasn't personal or anything.

ES: [Laughter] Yeah. Did you remember distinctly when you really started to understand everyone was it like a –?

JF: Yeah, so I had a really, really, good English as a second language teacher, or I guess the school that I went to had a really good program. And I just knew her as, well, in Spanish you always refer to the person as profesora or profesor, so it was Profesora Isabel. But now, I know her last name is O'Donnel, so it would be Mrs. O'Donnel, and she was great. I think, honestly, I picked up on English pretty fast; I was still pretty young. I would say six months in, I could understand and communicate, around the time my mom stopped coming with me.

ES: Did you tell your mom like, "You don't have to come anymore?"

JF: I don't think I was rude about it.

ES: [Laughter]

JF: But, I think I felt more comfortable, just like, "Well, if you have things to do, I can manage it," you know?

ES: Did you ever have a feeling like this might not be super certain that we'll stay here in Utah, or –?

JF: No, I had no idea. I feel – when I moved over here I didn't know that we were in a different country, I didn't know that. I was just so young that nothing like clicked. It just, it wasn't home. I don't ever remember hating it or being like I don't wanna be here or anything. It's just we were somewhere else.

ES: For your siblings, did any of your siblings go to school with you?

JF: No, so my older brother is eleven years older than I am, so he was – he never graduated high school, but he should have been done that last year. So, when we moved here he

should have done his senior year, had been done, and he chose not to do it. And then my youngest brother, or my littlest brother I guess, he's my youngest brother. He was born a year after we moved to the U.S.

ES: Oh, okay.

JF: So, no. Yeah.

ES: Um, also, what else was I wondering about? I was going to ask; do you know how to zapatear?

JF: No, I can't dance.

ES: [Laughter]

JF: I can't dance, no. I've done – I've been like a chambelan and I've done a couple of like dances and stuff like that, but I'm terrible. I have no rhythm.

ES: I remember the other question, when you were in ESL, were there other students or were you like on your own in there?

JF: So, in Santaquin like that specific area, I got to say quite a bit of agricultural on the outskirts of that general area, so I wouldn't say there's like a huge Hispanic population, but there was a growing Hispanic population so there was other students there. But I can't like remember anybody. I'm not trying to be rude, I just can't remember all the other –

ES: [Laughter]

JF: – students.

ES: Yeah.

JF: Yeah.

ES: And in Mexico you probably had a big extended family. Did you have a lot of family in Utah?

JF: No, and that's been the case like my whole life. I have uncles and aunts in Texas and I have aunts in California. I have another aunt in Chicago. But we're alone here. It's just like my little family and even that's kinda smaller.

ES: What kind of work were your parents doing in Utah, that like attracted them here?

JF: Yeah, so my dad came here illegally in the '80s when he started coming here, not to Utah, just to the U.S. and I guess, he was always just doing agricultural work. So I know he's like shared stories, I think he picked cherries like in Oregon, did oranges in Florida,

and then, here, in the summer time there's a lot of like sweet cherries, like tarts and all that stuff. So my dad moved to the orchard is in – Oh, what's it called? I can think of the little like beach, I think it's Lincoln Beach, but it's like near Spanish Fork, can't remember the town. Benjamin, maybe? So, that was like orchard where he works at, currently still, and he came here for agricultural work, so he just went there, and then he would go back home during the off season.

ES: Do remember what it was like seeing your dad go back and forth, like –?

JF: So my first memory I have of my dad was when he went to pick us up in Mexico to move us over here. And I remember I was out playin' and my mom wasn't home for whatever reason, and so I came home and there was a guy sitting outside our house, and I was also locked out. So, I just, I don't know why, but I just remember starting a conversation with him and then he offered me, you know those little like fruit cups that they sell at the grocery store that are like pineapple, or mandarin, or whatever, so it was one of those and at the time they were little tin can ones –

ES: Yeah.

JF: – not the plastic ones they have now.

ES: Yeah.

JF: And he asked if I wanted one and I remember just sitting down and eating it with him. And then my mom came home, and then he came in with us. My mom's only been married to him my whole life, but that's my first memory of my dad.

ES: Oh, okay.

JF: And I was, yeah five, or six.

ES: Interesting.

JF: Yeah.

ES: What else could you tell me about school?

JF: Like elementary school?

ES: Yeah.

JF: Yeah. I don't know, I did kindergarten in Mexico and we lived so close to the school that my mom could just walk me there. I remember like elementary school's a little different because we still lived pretty close to the school, but we had to walk quite a few blocks to get there and my mom didn't drive at the time, and my dad, I mean he had to go to work so he took the car. But I remember I hated that walk. And then just like the neighborhood

we lived at the mobile home park, my mom started to befriend some of the ladies that lived there, so I remember we started carpooling with this lady that lived like a house right below us and that was just kinda like my experience. I don't really remember anything, I guess, specifically to school. Those are the memories I have of elementary school is like havin' to walk then getting rides when it cold and stuff.

ES: What about middle school?

JF: Middle school, so we moved away from Santaquin and then we actually moved to it's a house that's at the orchard where my dad works, and so then I had to ride the bus. And I befriended one of dad's coworker's kids, so our families kinda got pretty close together and they also lived at the orchard just at a different house. So, I just remembered we used to ride the bus there with them a lot and the commute was pretty long 'cause the school was over Utah Lake and Spanish Fork. So, I just remember the bus rides and getting to know a lot more of that, and then I feel like that kinda, I don't know, it just kinda opened my eyes up to a different culture, I feel like. Just 'cause a lot of the kids that also rode that same bus also lived like, I don't know, I would say out in the boonies, out in the countryside you know. So they – at the time, I was like, “Oh they have their parents also work on farms,” but looking at it now it was like, “Oh, they're maybe a little bit better off 'cause their family owned farms and like had stuff.” So, that was kind of like my experience from that. But I was, I wouldn't say I was popular, but I got along with everybody in junior high and yeah. 'Cause my – when I went to elementary school we went from – I actually finished elementary school in Spanish Fork, but we went from – that's when they took away the middle school thing. So, I did one through six in elementary school, then junior high, then I went straight to high school. But, yeah, I had really good memories from there and I feel like I befriended a lot of people. I started getting into sports and things like that.

ES: What sports did you get into?

JF: So, I wrestled, I really liked basketball, but I was too short.

ES: [Chuckles].

JF: I never really like got into soccer, but I could play it. But yeah, basketball and wrestling were kinda like the things I did the most.

ES: Did you compete like pretty well in high school with that?

JF: Yeah, so in high school I wasn't the best student so I didn't necessarily like – I played basketball one year on the sophomore team. And then wrestling I was good at it, but my parents both had to work and stuff so it was just kinda hard to ask them to sign me up to things, 'cause they had to be at work and couldn't do the practice, so I only wrestled one year and never really followed up with any of that, but I enjoyed doing all those things I just didn't compete.

ES: I relate to that 'cause I would ask my parents like, "I wanna be basketball" and they were like, "In Mexico, you don't have to pay to do sports with your school."

JF: Yeah.

ES: They just want you to do it.

JF: Yeah.

ES: So, here, they really struggled with that concept, so I just never did any sports.

JF: Yeah, I feel like for me a lot of it was like I would ask them to sign me up for stuff, you know, and they would, I would always get like, "Well, we have to work and office is closed to go do it" or like "We can't give you a ride at that time for practice," or something to that effect. So eventually I just kinda stopped asking to do those things, and I was just kinda like – I don't know. I feel like I've always thought of my parents' situation, so like my parents always gave me everything I needed, you know, but I would feel bad asking 'cause maybe we didn't have money for that, but I just wouldn't ask.

ES: Well, did you get to like being sixteen and you start working, have your own car, have a little bit more freedom?

JF: Yeah.

ES: Yeah?

JF: Yeah. So my first job I would say was working at the orchard where my dad worked. I think I was like fourteen when I would go help him during the sweet cherry season and I would pick the cherries and he would pay me from him. So it wasn't like I was getting my own check cut out to me, he would just give me a cut, and I remember getting super mad because I felt like I did more than what he paid me, ya know?

ES: [Laughter].

JF: But whatever. And then the next year I asked his boss if I could drive one of the tractors 'cause there was some other high school, junior high kids that was driving the tractors and all they would do is move the bins of cherries, 'cause they're huge bins and they would just move them like up so that the cherry picker didn't have to keep walkin' back, so then you're just like movin' for 'em. And whenever they – 'cause how it works is let's say you're a cherry picker, [gesturing to indicate distance and movement] they give you ten trees to pick on this line and then they put another person ten trees ahead, so then when you finish your ten they have move on to a different line or different section if you're done with that section. So, I asked if I could do that, and he said yeah, and that was my first like job, was like doing that. From there I had like weird jobs, like throughout high school I worked at like restaurants, being a waiter and like a cook.

Worked at like Wendy's, K-mart, things like that. That was a big cultural thing too for my parents, not for me.

ES: Well, you said your older brother didn't finish that last year of high school. Did your parents put pressure on you like, "We really want you to finish, like we really want you to take advantage of school"?

JF: Yeah. I think they put pressure on him too, I just don't think that he listened. His big thing was that he just wanted to come to the States and start working. So, he also started working at the orchard with my dad. And he only worked there for a little bit, and then he quit and started doing other jobs as well. But yeah, I feel like my parents have – it's kinda hard, my parents have always like pushed us to do our education, to do well and stuff, but when it came to like following up or like checking up on us, there wasn't a lot of that you know. It was more like, do good in school or else we'll be mad at you, but there was never like repercussions or anything.

ES: Yeah [laughter].

JF: You know?

ES: Yeah. Yes. I know, exactly about that.

JF: Yeah.

ES: I was wondering, also, if you had any significant teachers that you remember that they helped you.

JF: Yeah, the Profesora Isabella, I feel like she taught me everything that I knew and I feel like she taught me pretty well, because I feel like my English is pretty decent, you know? And I just remember she was just super patient with me all the time and be super thoughtful. My mom still runs into her every now and then 'cause she still lives in Santaquin, herself, but she always asks how I'm doing. And I've run into her like throughout the years, we talked for a little bit, but I haven't seen her in a few years.

Let's see, in sixth grade I had this other teacher, her name was Mrs. Chestworth and I think she married, so I think it was Maxwell, that might be wrong. I just remember she was a really good teacher or the way that she taught was like not so much like whiteboard and chalkboard and stuff, it would be super interactive with the students. She would incorporate a lot of games that you thought you playing but you were actually learning, but at the time you didn't realize it, but things would stick with you.

ES: Mm-hmm.

JF: Yeah. Other than that, not really.

ES: What were your favorite subjects in school?

JF: I really liked history, I just liked learning about a bunch of different things that have happened in the past. I was good at math, but I didn't like doing math so I never really tried. And then like P.E., things like that. I like being active, playing games, competitiveness, all that stuff was really interesting to me, but those are – yeah, I would say history.

ES: So, I wanna ask you a little more about like religion. Do have any favorite religious or cultural traditions that you grew up with?

JF: Yeah, so, are you from Mexico too or did you grow up –?

ES: My parents are.

JF: Your parents are.

ES: I was born here.

JF: Okay. [Claps]. So, you know, like in Mexico the Catholic religion is super prominent, so everything that I grew up, I guess believing and everything was based on Catholicism. So that includes like, I don't know we kinda, like birthdays or around Easter time, all that stuff is always based around religion. So at the time I just thought it was something that everybody did, but then, obviously, I grew up in Utah County like the heart of it, and it was not like that 'cause everybody here is Mormon [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints].

ES: Mm-hmm.

JF: So, I just always had like guess like a different perspective than what all my classmates did. But yeah, I would say all of the usual like religious holidays and I remember like the – around Christmas time and Easter, like the big ones. I'm not super religious now so I, honestly, I've forgotten most of the practices.

ES: Yeah.

JF: But, yeah.

ES: Was there a Catholic church nearby that your parents would try to attend?

JF: Yeah, so we would go to church every Sunday. Where we first lived in Santaquin, there's a small church, I don't know like twenty minutes away in Alberta. So I remember we used to go to that one a lot. And then as we got older and moved to Spanish Fork, we started to go to a bigger church in Orem. And then, even like high school and stuff, we would go to Alberta or Orem, where there's another church in Payson. So we would go to church pretty much every Sunday.

ES: So did you do your primera communion and your confirmación?

JF: Yeah, so I guess, years ago you could do your confirmación, you could do it when you were little, so I did it before I even remember doing it, and then my primera communion I did in Alberta, and I don't remember much about it.

ES: Oh.

JF: I know I did it but [chuckles].

ES: Did the students that were predominantly LDS perceive you differently like if they asked you, "You're LDS?" or how would you interact with them? Like "no, I'm not."

JF: I think a lot of them would just assume I'm LDS, you know. I remember as I started to get older, like the religion topic never came up when I was in elementary school going through grade school and then as I got through junior high, I know like some of the students were like taking seminary classes and I wasn't taking seminary classes. So I would, I asked my mom and she would tell me they're from a different religion, you know. And I remember like some of them are like, eventually it would come out or whatever, you know, and I remember that some of classmates would be like, "Oh, no, you're in the wrong religion" or like, "No, you got be like Mormon. Like, this is the right religion, you know?" But it never got hostile or anything, I think they just didn't know any better, you know? But other than that not really. When I was in high school, I took seminary classes to get out of regular classes.

ES: I didn't know you could do that.

JF: Yeah.

ES: Did you ever do anything at an LDS ward that they did for events, they invited you?

JF: Yeah, yeah, growing up, like I said I had – growing up all my friends were Mormon, always, that's what I had to pick from you know, and it never really impacted my friendships or anything. But yeah, I would get invited to like the events that they had or anything like that. I know one time I went to a Christian church, too, with another friend that I befriended. And yeah, I did a lot of things with my Mormon friends, so Boy Scouts, I did some of that stuff. Yeah.

ES: This is just random thought, but did you ever get into any fights when you were little?

JF: Did I get in any – so that Jamous kid, I got into a fight with him. I don't know why he didn't like me at the time, we never really talked about it after we became friends, but I couldn't stand that kid. But that was like it. In junior high I remember there was like this older kid that my friends thought it would be funny if they told him that I was talkin' crap on him, so I remember – and he was like way older and he was one of those kids that like got facial hair super young so he looked way older than everybody else. And then he

came over and he wanted to fight me and I was genuinely confused, you know? But we didn't fight, I was just thrown off guard. But yeah, no.

ES: And this is another thing I was curious about 'cause you grew up in Utah and you're a male.

JF: Mm-hmm.

ES: But did you try dating in high school and did you think, "Oh, there's something different about this" or was it like just fine?

JF: Nah, I thought it was fine. Yeah, I had girlfriends and stuff and they were Mormon. I feel like that as I got towards the end of high school when girls are maybe thinking about relationships a little bit more seriously, it was maybe a little bit of an issue. Like, I had a girlfriend senior year or junior year, one of those two, and she was actually a year older than I was, and she had a previous ex-boyfriend that was on a mission, and she was kinda like dating around while he was gone 'cause they had kinda like agreed to that, you know? And I think that was maybe one of the first times that I noticed that it was maybe an issue, 'cause she wanted somebody like that, and I wasn't like that. But other than that, no.

ES: You didn't contemplate becoming LDS for that?

JF: No.

ES: Anyway, I was wondering what brought you to the St. George area?

JF: I came down here for school.

ES: What was your first impression of coming to St. George?

JF: Mm. So, I decided to come down for school kinda last minute, and the first time I came down here was take my placement test at the testing center. 'Cause I, again, I wasn't a very good student so I didn't take the ACTs. And I came down here with two friends, my mom didn't even come or anything. I think I kinda down-played the whole thing. My parents don't speak English so they just kinda went off whatever I said. So, I remember we came down here and I remember we had a hard time getting a hotel 'cause we weren't eighteen yet. So we had another friend that we had from high school that was a student here, we got him to come rent this room. And then, I don't know. We didn't really explore. We drove up and down the [St. George] Boulevard; we thought that it was cool and were like, "Yeah, we're gonna come here in a couple months." That was like my first impression. And then when I actually moved down here, I just remember it was like super hot and it just looked super weird 'cause I was just used to looking at the mountains and there's not huge mountains or anything. There's hills and stuff, but it's different.

ES: Were you scared at all due to the distance you would be away from your family?

- JF: No, so initially when I moved down here, I wanted distance from my family ‘cause my parents were kinda strict, you know? And so, by this point I had grown up, pretty much, all my like formative years in like the United States, ya know? So I had like, I would say, I grew up in American culture and I wanted to do things like all my friends and like how everyone else wanted to, and my parents didn’t necessarily understand that. They still don’t understand everything all the way. And so, I really wanted to move out not so much for school, but more because I wanted freedom and space. And then I got down here, I remember I hated it. I would call my mom everyday. I remember I called her after like two days and I was crying saying it sucks and I wanna move back like after this semester ‘cause I’d, I don’t know. It was like such a culture shock cause I didn’t know – I mean, I knew some people, but I didn’t like – I just didn’t expect it. It was a lot, too. And then that first semester, they just threw all the syllabus at you and told you, you have to do all this. Then you’re like, “How do I do all this?” I don’t know; it was very stressful.
- ES: Did you already have like an idea of what degree you wanted to do as soon as you came to school?
- JF: No, I started coming down here initially, and I thought I wanted to do something with criminal justice, so I think I took an intro to criminal justice my first semester, maybe my second semester. But I never really knew why, I was just like, “Oh, that sounds cool.” But no, I started doin’ my generals, and I ultimately did get my first degree in criminal justice.
- ES: What’s the second degree in?
- JF: I have one more class, and then I’ll get a degree in Recreation and Sports Management.
- ES: So you’re not wanting to be an officer anymore?
- JF: I don’t know. Yeah?
- ES: Leaving options?
- JF: Yeah. So, I got into it to get experience. What I wanted to do originally was do Homeland Security, for whatever reason. But, you needed experience, but I would have been done at twenty-one years old, you know, with my degree. Or before I turned twenty-one, actually. And I was like, I don’t have any experience, so I’ll like look into Law Enforcement. And I got into it just to, you know, get experience, but it’s not something that I’ve ever super loved, you know? I feel like I – I don’t know, it’s just not who I am. I feel like you need to be a certain personality. I’m a lot more laid back than most cops.
- ES: How have your religious and cultural traditions changed since childhood or being in St. George? I guess you were kinda telling us a little bit about that.

JF: Yeah. I don't know. I feel like, especially, as I got older, I feel like I just got a lot of questions about the religion and just some of the stuff like – I would go to mass and stuff, you know? Whenever I was paying attention, I was like, "Well, doesn't really make sense" or whatever, you know? So I feel like as I've got to like high school, I feel like I've got a lot of questions, but whenever I would ask, my parents would get frustrated or tell me that I needed to go to church more to learn more, you know? And then as I moved down here, I remember that I told my mom that there wasn't a Catholic church down here, so I was like "Oh, I can't go."

ES: [Laughter]

JF: But, I would still go with them if I ever went home and visited them for the weekend, you know? I would go to church with them on Sunday and then I would leave afterwards. And I kept that life for a long time then. Then, it was after I finished school and we were living at a different house, and then they came and visited and we were going out to dinner, and I took the wrong left – I lived right by the Catholic church – and my mom was like "Look, there it is." and I was like "Oh –"

ES: [Laughter.]

JF: – "They must have just built that." I don't know. So, yeah, I don't know. I feel like a lot of the religious practices and things that I grew up, I just have a lot of questions about, so I wouldn't say I'm not a believer, I just have a lot of questions.

ES: Do you still enjoy, though, like doing Christmas very big, or like doing big parties with your family?

JF: Yeah.

ES: Is that something you guys do?

JF: So, I feel like a lot of holiday stuff now, I've done more with my wife and her family, just 'cause she has more extended family here. And my family, my family can be really boring sometimes, so like if they're not invited or there's not something set planned, like they won't plan it themselves. So like, a lot of the holidays now that they celebrate and stuff, it's more like we go out to dinner or my mom will just make like a nicer dinner, but they don't do like any big party or anything like that, anymore. My older brother moved to Las Vegas now, so I feel like our family's just kinda expanded, you know? So, it's kinda hard to get together. And then ever since I've been working full-time, it's been harder to make it to every holiday, like be there, present, and all that stuff. So, whenever I do do big gathers like that, it's usually with my wife's family.

ES: Does your wife have a different culture than yours?

JF: Yeah, so my wife is American, she grew up in Genola, in Santaquin.

ES: Okay.

JF: Or not Santaquin. Genola, Goshen, which is right next to Santaquin. So, yeah, she's got a completely different culture, she's white, you know? So, she grew up completely different than I did. And she grew up Mormon, but she not Mormon, anymore. Or doesn't practice, I guess. So, yeah, we had completely different upbringings.

ES: So when you spend time with her family, you still go back to Santaquin?

JF: Yeah, so whenever we go now, we stay with her sister, she has an extra room. And her sister lives five minutes away from my family and then my family lives five minutes away from her mom, and then her dad. They're separated, so. It's just all like vicinity, so we just try to visit everybody when we go visit on holidays or even if we go up for a weekend.

ES: Were your parents – did you ever feel pressure from your parents that you would marry someone from your same culture, or not at all?

JF: Mm. I don't think I ever really got that feeling that they were worried I would marry outside of the culture. I think like pretty early on though, they kinda assumed I wouldn't marry someone from my culture. 'Cause I did – I would like go to like Sadie's, Sadie's was like a girl's choice, so they would like ask you. But, I would go to the school dances and stuff, and it was always with like not someone Hispanic. So, I feel like they kinda had a hunch that I probably wouldn't marry like a Latina or anything. Yeah.

ES: Did your parents also end up being like empty nested now, like all the kids are out of the house?

JF: No, my little brother still lives there.

ES: Okay, I was wondering like, how has that changed for them?

JF: Yeah, it'll be interesting. He actually wants to come to school down here next year. So, it'll be interesting, 'cause like I said they don't speak English, and they've actually recently, they're really close to retirement. So, they've actually been recently thinking of moving back to Mexico, they still have a house there. My sister and my oldest brother still live there. So, I just think – you know, I would hate for them to leave, you know? But it makes sense if they would go.

ES: Was that always the dream for them? Like, "We'll come back"?

JF: They've always like joked about going back, but I don't know. I feel like they're just so accustomed to the culture here now, that I don't know that they would love it there. But they go – they've made it a habit to go every Christmas or like every December for the past three years.

ES: For las fiestas?

JF: Yeah.

ES: Yeah.

JF: So, like that, and then my brother got married like last year finally, officially married. The year before that – oh, shoot. Last year was my niece's quinceañera and then my brother got married the year before that. And then the year before that, it was my other niece's quinceañera. So, they've kinda made it a habit to go every year and they say they like it and stuff. Like I said, they have a house there, so it's not like super random.

ES: Does someone live in their house while they're not there?

JF: My sister used to live there, then she just built her house, but she literally lives right next door. They share a wall.

ES: And did you ever go back to Michoacán and visit?

JF: Yeah. I think the last time I went was in – 2020. 2019.

ES: Was it fun?

JF: Yeah.

ES: Yeah?

JF: Yeah. I've gone a few times. I think I've gone like three or four times, but that was the last time that I did it.

ES: Did you ever have any memories get stirred up just because you were in Mexico, like childhood memories?

JF: No. I wish I would have, but no. I feel like the only thing that I said I remembered was like going to the jaripeo, so whenever we drove by the arena 'cause it's right along the main road, like, I feel like I would start to remember stuff, you know? But I just remember being in there. And then like where I rode the donkey. It's like not at my house, it's like down the road, kinda by a basketball court that's down there and there's like a little corral down there and that's where I rode it. So I just remember little things like that. My parents, my parents actually went to Mexico in December and February, a couple months ago and the road we take to get to where they live and they own the house, all that's paved now. Before it was dirt road and stuff. I remember when we went in 2012 we still didn't have internet and things like that. We had to go to a computer lab and pay them to use to the computer, so, it's changed a lot now. I don't know if I would remember a ton of stuff now.

ES: You were tellin' me a little bit about your work, you wanna tell me anything more about it? So, you're an officer and you work here on campus –

JF: Yeah, yeah.

ES: Do you like it?

JF: Yeah, I think a lot of people kind of think that we're like bona fide security guards, you know?

ES: [Chuckles].

JF: We had to go to the police academy, we had to do everything that every other police officer in Utah has to do. I think that the job can get discouraging at times, just because you're not like in the action all the time, you know? But, I've really grown to like my job. I like what we stand for and like what we do, you know? We're more about the community relation aspect of it, than the enforcement thing. Like we do do it and we take action when we need to, but we're more about like making sure, you guys as faculty and staff know that we're here and want to keep you guys at peace of mind, and same thing with the students. We're not necessarily focused on pulling cars over and that kind of enforcement. We will do it, but it's not what we're primarily about. So it just took a little bit of time until like – 'cause you go into the academy and they tell you all these things and it's pretty military based, you know. Then you get done, then you come here and then you're like it's not at all. So it takes a minute to learn your role and grow into the officer that the university wants you to be, but I've really enjoyed it. It's just, I don't know, there's been times where maybe career-wise it's not going the way I want it to go. So, I've been frustrated with that, and I feel like that happens anywhere. And when I decided to go back to school to get my other degree, it was around that time when I was really frustrated and I was like, "Well, I get free school, so I'm gonna get my degree then peace out." Since then, things have changed, and they're looking a lot better, so I don't know. I just kinda keep the door open. Maybe I'll move on one day, maybe I won't. My wife's going to school, too. She's doing her NP [nurse practitioner] program through Arizona State. So right now, it would be beneficial to keep working here, kinda be stable, and financially we're doing okay and everything's fine. We have a house, so I don't think it would be a good idea to, you know, switch jobs and potentially mess that up.

ES: And what has been your experience with the broader St. George community?

JF: I don't know, I really like St. George. The community itself, I feel like, has always been welcoming, I guess. I've never really felt like outed or different or anything being here. When my first couple years like I lived at the student housing just over the hill, over there. Red rock is what it's called. So, I would just go from Red Rock to here and kinda back, maybe like Walmart, I wouldn't really get out too much 'cause I was busy. Then as I became a resident here and started living here more, I kinda started to notice there was like a bigger Hispanic population here, than maybe I had originally thought. So that was kind of interesting. I thought ... primarily like white people lived down here, you know?

Which is so like naive, I get it, but – Yeah, I feel like it's been fine. I know... I guess it's just been different, not eye opening, but interesting to see, I guess, some of like the viewpoints that some of the community has. You know, especially with the name change and things like that. It's just been kinda interesting to see how everybody's viewpoints are different. But, I don't think it ever like personally affected me. 'Cause of like my job, I work here and a lot of like the protests or discussions or anything like that, we had to be there for safety and not to like push for the university or push for the protestors, just to make sure no one's getting in trouble or doing anything dumb. So, I just feel like I got to see all of those discussions and both viewpoints. But other than that, I didn't really think it was – I haven't been personally affected by it, if that makes sense.

ES: So, you found out the Latino-Hispanic community here is a lot bigger than you originally thought.

JF: Yeah.

ES: What did you think of it? Did you ever try to get closer to them, or go to places they might be?

JF: No, I wish. I don't know, I feel like a lot of that stuff maybe would have been helpful if I'd kept going to church 'n like interacted with them there at church, you know. But, I don't know. I just – I almost feel like I'm so wrapped in my little world that sometimes I don't even engage with other cultures that I do hang out with or whatever, you know. So, I just, I don't know. I just never really felt like there was an opportunity for me to reach out or do something with the Hispanic community. But I know it's there and it's big.

I guess recently I – I have a friend that's a reserve officer for us and he also works for Washington City and he actually does, I think it's a Spanish hour, something like that, for the radio station, for Juan FM. And he goes and talks I think on Tuesdays for like an hour and just kinda like informs the local community of traffic laws or things that they can do. And he's offered for me to go a couple times, but it's just, I haven't had the opportunity to go yet. So maybe that's something that I can do.

ES: I was gonna say that since you have such a public facing job –

JF: Yeah.

ES: – what have you thought students that are Hispanic/Latino perceive of you, when they see you?

JF: I don't know. I think, I feel like this year and maybe this past year some of the people that have been student government have been Hispanic you know? And I feel like we kinda chit chat a little bit in Spanish. And we've always, I mean, I've always, had a good relationship with pretty much all the students. So whether I'm just saying what's up or you know, or however I interact with them. But, I feel like, as far as connected to the university, like student government, there has been a lot of Hispanic people involved in

that recently, and I have good, I feel like, rapport with them, but I don't know what they actually think of me, you know. So hopefully good, yeah.

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

JF: I think good. I grew up in Utah county so like that's all I saw, you know? Obviously, there was like Hispanics, but it was far and few between. I feel like I've just always had a good relationship with them.

ES: What about with – did you ever experience racist or prejudiced behavior here?

JF: No, maybe from school, kids like teasing and making like Hispanic jokes and stuff like that, but I have really thick skin, so if they tried to do something like that I would probably jump in on it and make fun of myself. So, really, it didn't affect me, you know? No, I've never felt like – I mean, I'm sure it's happened, but I don't know, I just brush things off my shoulders. So if someone has been like blatantly racist or prejudiced toward me, I just kinda brush it off 'n don't pay attention to any of it. I remember, like down here, one of the first times that, my wife now, we went to go grocery shopping – We were both still students, so we were just dating. – We were at Harmons, , I remember there was a couple that were like older white people and they were super staring and glaring, very upset. But other than that, it rarely ever happens, you know, and it's – I don't know. I didn't feel like I was bein' threatened or anything. It just was like, it was just funny to see how, I guess, visibly upset they were. But yeah.

ES: Have you ever got – from your position as an officer as you're enforcing things – have you ever had anyone that didn't take it that well from you, but they might take it well from your partner who's white, like they wanna talk to them, maybe they don't wanna talk to you, or –?

JF: No, I feel like for the most part, I'm pretty calm and well-spoken, you know? Maybe not like super well-spoken, but in terms of interacting with the public I can hold my own, you know? So with that, that's always been not an issue. I think the thing that probably affects me the most is like my age. So, if I'm interacting with like the students around campus and student age, it usually goes pretty well for me, and then whenever we have to interact with like older people, or maybe people slightly off campus, not traditional student age or student types, then I feel like that affects me. ... I think it's my age, it's not really been my ethnicity. I actually feel like, and this might sound crazy or just might be making it up in my head, but I almost feel like when I'm in uniform, I get treated like, almost like royalty, I feel like. So, I don't – I feel like if I was like, a different ethnicity, like white, Black, you know, Asian, whatever it is that I was, I think people would treat me the same, here, just because locally everyone, for the most part, respects law enforcement. So... I feel like I've been blessed that way here, but I don't ever feel like anybody's thought of me differently.

ES: Do you ever feel different putting on your uniform, and then just walking out and doing stuff in the community with your wife, without it, like?

JF: No, so I like it when I'm not working, I don't wanna be like a cop. I'm not a cop, I'm just myself. So I don't– this might sound crazy – but I don't like carrying my weapon off duty, my badge, any of that. I don't wanna be – Not that I don't wanna be associated with like the university, I just don't wanna be like a cop, you know? Like I'm off work, don't bother me with that, you know? So, I like that side of it, where I can just take it off. And my wife says that I dress like a thug.

ES: [Laughter].

JF: I don't, I just dress how I like, you know? So most of the time, when I'm out of uniform, people don't recognize me, which is nice. I feel like some people would get offended, I like it.

ES: I was actually gonna asked that. o people not recognize you, when you're not wearing uniform?

JF: No, for the most part they don't, so it's nice.

ES: Since you've been here as a student, have you noticed that this area changed a lot?

JF: Yeah, a ton. Like I said, when I first moved down, I lived over at Red Rock, and even that area now, when I first moved down, I think the Maverick was recently built that was over there by Riverside and Mall Drive. And then obviously now, the Lin's and the Smiths, all that stuff is new, a ton of the housing developments and even the university. When I first started going here, the HPC [Human Performance Center] wasn't there. The stadium [pointing out window to East stands of Greater Zion Stadium], that side of the stadium wasn't there. There was still a softball field right there. So, just a ton of it has changed. I remember one of my friends lived at whatever it's called, where Campus View Suites Two is now.

CG: Nissan?

JF: Shiloh dorms. Yeah. So, he lived there and I remember playing video games, playing Fifa with him in there, and then next summer –

ES: It was just gone.

JF: It was just gone, yeah. And now it's huge, you know? Yeah, I feel like it's grown a ton and it's continuing to grow.

ES: Have you noticed any change in the Latino-Hispanic communities?

JF: I think with that growth we've gotten a lot more Hispanic students and maybe even the community has grown you know? Or maybe it's just 'cause like, when I was student and so much younger, I would just go to get fast food; I wouldn't cook, you know? So, now I

cook and I go into the Mexican store, Three Amigos on Bluff Street to buy ingredients that I need that I can only get there. So, I see a lot more Hispanic community. But I feel like it has grown, 'cause I see more Hispanic families out and about, just doing things. And like going off what I said earlier with the students and student government, I just feel like there's a lot more Hispanic students also, 'n they're getting more involved. Like, they're starting more clubs with the inclusion center. So, on and so forth. So I do think it's growing.

ES: Did you participate in clubs when you were a student?

JF: No. I should have. I regret it now, but no I didn't. My wife was in student government and so I did, the one year that she did it, I remember I did a lot of service projects with them and stuff, just as like a volunteer. But that was more to be supportive of her, not necessarily 'cause I was like super all about service, you know? But, no.

ES: So, she came to school here, but she was from your hometown, and you saw her so you were like, "I have to go talk to you." Like –?

JF: Oh, no, so we were friends. We met 'cause her friend asked me to one of the school dances and we just kinda like became friends because of that. And then we both knew we were coming down here, we were just kinda like friends, we would hang out every now. And then, I don't know, we just kinda like grew closer and started dating after some time.

ES: That's cool.

JF: So, we met in high school, but we were just friends.

ES: I was also wondering just, circling back a little bit to your dad's job, since he had been here since the '80s, did he see that the agricultural work change in a positive way, from all that time? Like is he like, "Now, it's so much better," or does he think it's still pretty bad?

JF: Yeah, yeah, I mean [pen tapping]. I don't know, my dad's like, he doesn't really open up a whole lot, so you know whenever we've gotten stories or things from him, it's like we're really asking him about it, but he doesn't ever just sit there and like reminisce on his past, you know? But he – I remember that he told us that like the Cesar Chavez protest and all that stuff, they also protested at the farm that he was working at, at the time. I remember he told me that it was around that same time that my uncles – 'cause when he could come to the U.S. he would come with my uncles, so my mom's brothers, and that was around the time they were like, "Yeah, we're done with agriculture." And so they all kinda moved to Houston [Texas] and started doing construction, and all of them kinda joked that they built all the highways in Houston. I don't know if you guys have ever been there, but it's like concrete jungle, yeah. So, they kinda joke about it, and they say that they tried to convince my dad to go, but for whatever reason he did not want to go to Houston, he wanted to be here. And so, yeah, so he's seen that stuff change. I remember like when we first moved over here, he said that he was like making five

dollars an hour. I think that was the minimum wage at the time, so it wasn't that crazy. But no, when he first came, he said he was making – I don't wanna like say an incorrect figure – but it was like two or three dollars an hour, and he made that for a long time and he built a house in Mexico with that salary, and he would send that money back my mom. But he makes more than that now. But, not a lot. Like my little brother, like he worked at a factory just recently and I think he's making like sixteen dollars an hour and that's still more than my dad makes, and my dad's been at the same place for over twenty-five years now, and they don't have like health benefits or anything like that. Things have gotten better, you know? But they're still not great, and they could still use a lot of improvement.

ES: Yeah.

JF: But, I don't know. My dad doesn't, he doesn't complain. That's what he knows, you know, and I feel like he's in such a mentality of, "I'm doing this for work and I have to work," like that's his purpose, you know, almost, so he kinda just goes with that.

ES: Also, did you like cherries or did you end up not liking them because you worked with them?

JF: No, I like cherries.

ES: Yeah?

JF: Yeah. They're delicious. They're like the best when you pick them right off. Which I've learned is not the best thing 'cause they have pesticides and stuff.

ES: Oh.

JF: But, I don't know, they taste really good.

ES: [Laughter].

JF: So.

ES: Do you ever do that here? As like a recreational thing to go to –

JF: Pick cherries?

ES: – Hurricane.

JF: Oh, no. So like, I feel like all that stuff's for show, if you actually go pick cherries it's like a tough job. I remember like when the first couple times that I did it, 'cause you wear like this harness and it's like an X across your back with straps then you just have a big like canteen, but it's like a bucket, and you just kinda pick 'em and there's like a method to it. You do that for eight hours a day or whatever in the middle of the summer, and I

remember like my shoulders would like get visible bruises from the straps and it like really tough. I don't know, it's not fun at all. It's just a really tough job. I feel like it sounds not tough, but it's pretty tough, and that's a lot of the agricultural stuff that I saw my dad do, is really tough and it's really humbling. Like, I did the cherries pretty much every summer, I'd get out of school and I would, you know get my job back at the orchard, and so when it wasn't cherries – I really enjoyed cherries 'cause that was the easiest time for me 'cause I would just drive the tractor.

And then, as I got older I started driving the forklift at night for like the night shift, so I would just load and unload the semi's that would come in and out. But, when it wasn't like that time of year, we had to do like little lose end jobs, you know? And since I spoke English, his boss would take me and my friend Bilmer, my lifelong friend that I was telling you guys about, and we would kinda be like – I mean, he would tell us to go do stuff and we would go do it. But some of the stuff's like really tough, like I remember there was a couple weeks where I had to go pick up rocks 'cause they... had to clear the where you plant the trees, you know? Of rocks. So then when the trees finally get older and then you need the tractor come in through so it's not all bumpy. So, it sounds really dumb, but you're clearing pretty decent rock sizes and you do that bending over all day, your back is killing you. And so, that was like, I don't know, I hated that. And there's just a few of those examples. My dad's been doin' that forever. I do feel bad. I've tried to get him to quit and go do other stuff, but that's what he knows and that's what he's comfortable with.

ES: Mexican parents can be so stubborn.

JF: Oh, yeah.

ES: We have the last question, but did you have any other questions to add before that one?

CG: You talked a lot about like religious traditions earlier, did you have any Mexican cultural, kinda specific traditions, that your parents kept when you were a kid, or –?

JF: Yeah, so like, I feel really bad 'cause I don't remember them and I know I grew up doing them.

CG: Oh.

JF: Easter for example is a big one, I remember we would go do stuff with like the church a lot, and they would incorporate a lot of American culture into it, so they would do searching for the eggs and all that stuff, you know? But I remember like the focal point was like going to mass and like listening to whatever the message was that day or whatever. But at church – not at church – like at Christmas time, I remember that we would go to church late at night, like sometimes on Saturday night or Friday nights, or whatever, you know? And I never really understood the purpose, I just kinda go where my parents told me to go, you know? So, I just remember doing a lot of that kinda stuff. Then obviously, like tied to culture and religion, it would be like weddings and the

quinceañeras and all that stuff. Like all that stuff is circled around religion, like you get married in the church and I don't know. Like my parents for example, their like anniversary date to them is when they got married through the church, not when they were civilly married. I think they had been married civilly, like legally, for like three weeks, then they got married through the church and that's their anniversary date. And I know that's how it is for a lot of Hispanic people, too. Like my cousin got married a year previous to her church wedding, but she celebrated her church wedding, she wasn't in front of the eyes of God, I guess. I just remember going to church a lot of weddings and things we'd get invited to, and things like that. Like I didn't get married through the church or like with anything religiously, and I remember that was – wasn't an issue, but my parents weren't super sure about it, you know? It was kinda different. What else did you ask, sorry?

CG: Was there any Michoacán specific things that you still –?

JF: Oh, yeah. So she was saying when you asked about like December, las fiestas, so every town, I guess, has a little like cultural, like maybe when they were founded or I'm not entirely sure what it is, but I remember like the one for my town and the town right over that we were kinda like close to, I guess, so there's like Fiestas in – and it just translates into festivities, but there's fiestas in February and there's fiestas in October, and then obviously the cultural ones in December. So I remember, I think we went back one February, and then one October. And they do, I don't know, it's gonna sound kinda weird I guess, but they do like, they have a statue of like, I guess, the Jesus that they think is the Jesus, you know so. I know like now there's like conversations about that he wasn't white or whatever, so they like have a statue of Jesus that they say is Jesus, and they have guys that like carry it, 'cause it's on a platform, you know? And so they do like this giant parade thought like the town. And they have these other things called, I don't know what it translates to, so sorry, but they're called mojigangas and it's almost like a – I mean they're made out of cardboard, but you can literally make 'em into any character you want. So, like more modern day ones they have a like a minion [movie characters] or like whatever, you know? You can really make them whatever and it's just guys like kinda get into it, they're like super tall and they like parade them through the town, and they're like dancing? You know what I'm talkin' about?

ES: No, I've never heard of that, but it sounds cool.

JF: Yeah, it's kinda crazy, I guess. And then for like the fiestas, one of the things that I always remember is that they, they would like mojigangas and they would do like big cultural dances, or like festivities and people just like you know just dance. And then, on the crazier side, they had these things called toritos, so it'd be an outline of like a bull and you would light it up, and it like sparked everywhere, and it would randomly let off like fireworks.

ES: Don't they chase people with them?

- JF: Yeah, you're supposed to chase people with them, which is kinda crazy 'cause they do explode. So, I know whenever those came, my mom would always kinda put us behind her and kinda go to the corner and they would try to stick to areas where people were wanting to get involved. Yeah, I always wanted to be the one that did it. I never did; we moved away. My little brother's done it since then, so I thought it was kinda cool. But, yeah, those were like things that I remember that my town did, I guess. Yeah.
- ES: Did you ever take your wife to Michoacán?
- JF: Yeah, she's been with me. In 2019, that time we went, so she met my siblings and my grandparents? Yeah, they were still alive.
- ES: Did she learn, ever, a little bit of Spanish to try to communicate with your parents?
- JF: So, yeah. She can communicate the basics with my parents, but even now, like if they have conversations, me or my little brother will translate for her. They'll try and communicate that way. I've bought like, I think it's Rosetta Stone. I bought Rosetta Stone for my wife for Christmas like three years ago, she hasn't learned English [Spanish] yet. I think that's a lost cause, I guess, maybe one day. And then, like for my parents, I bought them like English things, too. And my parents don't know English, they've – I've even showed them like Duolingo and things like that, but I think it's harder for them to learn it now. They try, she kinda tries a little bit. For the most part it works out, I just translate most of the time when we're together.
- ES: Do you feel a point of pride showing anything of your culture to your wife? Like food or places?
- JF: Yeah, I don't know if it's pride, but I like introducing things to her, you know? It's been nice to know that she's super welcoming of it all, and she – sometimes the food, like to me, you know, is just what I grew up eating, but sometimes the food maybe looks weird to her or it's like a little suspect, and she doesn't care, like she'll try it. And if she doesn't like it, then she doesn't like it, and that's been fine. But from my experience, it's been really cool to see that she, for the most part, really enjoys everything, and has really taken to liking the culture, you know for the most part. So, she's like learned to cook a bunch of like Mexican dishes, like my mom has taught her to cook certain things, and then she always like comes – and, she, even now, if we're up in like home, where my parents live, if they're invited to a quinceañera or like wedding or whatever, they'll invite us, sometimes we'll still go and like be there for some of the party or the food or whatever, and she's always been super open to that.
- ES: Do you think, if you were to ever have children, would you ever want to do a quinceañera for your daughter? 'Cause I know you can do that without the religious aspect.
- JF: Yeah.
- ES: Would you ever consider that?

JF: So, I don't know if I want to have kids, and my wife is pretty much on the same page with me on that, you know? I wouldn't really care, I feel like I would leave it more up to my daughter, you know? But, just from knowin' my wife, I feel like she would at least want them to try it, and so I feel like maybe she would push that more than I would push that, you know? But, I'm indifferent to it. If she wanted to do that, I would be supportive of it; if she didn't, I wouldn't be upset.

ES: Okay. Any other questions, Caitlinn?

CG: Not that I can think of. So –

ES: I guess the last question is, what would you like people to know about yourself or your community?

JF: Ooh, that's a tough one.

ES: [Chuckles].

JF: About myself, I would say that I'm proud of who I am and my upbringing and I guess, what've accomplished so far, in my life. And I'm – I understand that like a maybe a very traditional Hispanic or Mexican would probably say that I'm white-washed or you know, like a true Hispanic anymore, but I'm super proud of, you know, my background and my origin, like everything that my parents have instilled in me. And even if I'm not necessarily super involved in the community, like I'm still proud of everything that has made me to me, you know.

As far as the community, I feel like as the world continues to grow and like progress, I feel like more and more people will get to know and understand the Mexican and Hispanic community, and I think they will be pleasantly surprised to see how beautiful the culture is and how much, I guess, we have to offer. And I guess, I just feel like sometimes, not just Mexicans, but maybe all immigrants or anybody that's not American or from the United States, – That's just where I live, so that's what I'm relating it to. – you feel like you're almost tryin' to change the culture or trying to change the narrative, and I think it would be nice if everybody was just more open-minded, and if you could learn a different culture 'cause I think it's really important to learn about others and get along with everybody.

ES: I agree. Well, thank you, so much.

JF: Yeah.

ES: We'll let her end the recording.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]