

Interview with
ROSALIA MARTINEZ

August 11, 2023

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

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

#2023-013

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 program 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

appearance	8
beliefs	9, 11, 13
bilingual	3, 16
building	15, 16
California	2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 15, 16
Catholic	4
Chico, California	6
childhood	2, 5, 7
church	4, 8
community	10, 16
culture	2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16
dad	4, 6
ESL [English as a Second Language]	3
family	2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 15
food	5
graduation coordinator	9
Head Start	8
internet	4, 15
Latino-Hispanic community	11, 16
LDS [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]	8
Mexico	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 16
outsider	8
personality	8, 12
politics	13, 15
Poway, California	2, 3, 11
prejudiced	12
presidential election	13
proud	16
quinceañera	5

racist	12, 13, 14
radio	15
school	3, 4, 10
Spanish speakers	3, 4, 11
students	3, 9, 10
teacher	3, 8, 9, 10, 16
traditions	4, 5, 7
translator	2
Washington [City, Utah]	2, 15, 16
white Americans	12
work	7, 9

ROSALIA MARTINEZ

Rosalia Martinez was interviewed by Cameron Nielsen on August 11, 2023 in St. George, Washington, Utah. She related her experiences as a Latina living in California and St. George. Caitlinn Grimm also participated.

CG: Hello. Today is August 11, 2023. We're at Utah Tech University Library. This is Caitlinn Grimm speaking; I'm acting as the recorder. And then we have Cameron Nielsen will be interviewing Rosalia Martinez today.

CN: Alright, in that case, I guess we can get started. It's very good being with you here today, Rosalia. Could you please, for the recording, state and spell your full name?

RM: Yes. My name is Rosalia Martinez, and it's R - O - S - A - L - I - A M - A - R - T - I - N - E - Z.

CN: And what languages do you speak?

RM: I speak Spanish and English.

CN: Alright, thank you. And where were you born?

RM: I was born in Mexico.

CN: Do you want to be more specific about that, or not?

RM: Yeah, so I was born in a small town, in Oaxaca, Mexico. And I was there – so I was born there, then I lived there up until around the age of eight, and that's when I moved to the United States.

CN: Mm-hmm. Alright, and we can get into some more narrative material here. So tell me about your childhood and your family.

RM: So I am the oldest. I have three other siblings. I have two brothers and one sister; they were my full siblings. And I moved from Mexico to San Diego, there's a little town, it's like in San Diego County, it's called Poway, California. And when I first moved there, there wasn't a lot of Spanish speaking children there, I was one of the few that was there. And it was difficult, because I had to learn English really fast, because I couldn't really talk to anybody in Spanish. So by the time I was in fourth grade, then I learned. I learned how to speak English pretty well, to the point where I became the office's translator [chuckles]. They would call me in to translate for new students and stuff like that, because that's how non-Spanish speaking that town was when I first moved there. Now there's a lot of Spanish speakers there, but at the time, there wasn't.

Both of my parents were born in Mexico. They are now divorced, and my younger sister, she actually grew up in Mexico. So it's a little different, because she doesn't speak English, and like the rest of her siblings do. But I speak Spanish, so I can communicate with her really well. Yeah.

CN: Fantastic. So yeah, tell me about school.

RM: So school, like I said, at first it was really hard, coming in as an immigrant to second grade. I was in third grade in Mexico, and then when I moved here, I was in – they moved me to second grade because of my age. So it was really – it was really – I didn't understand how to do anything, except for math. And I was, like, oh, this math is real easy. I remember that math was really easy, but other than that, everything else seemed really hard. But then I learned English pretty quick. Then by the time – so I was in ESL [English as a Second Language], I think, up until eighth grade, and then in eighth grade, they just put me in regular classes, up until high school. And then, yeah, and then I moved – I moved here when I was, like, sixteen, so I actually attended Dixie High for a semester, so, yeah. But then I finished school in Poway, so –.

CN: You mentioned that your school had ESL, but there weren't very many Spanish-speaking kids there. About how many were you with in grade school? After, you mentioned it grew later –

RM: Yeah.

CN: – but when you started off, there were very few.

RM: I went to a school; it's Valley Elementary School. And at the time when I started, I remember they used to put us all – they could fit us all at one table. There was probably eight Spanish speakers, but this was like I didn't start getting English – then they would pull us – but this didn't really start until I was in fourth grade. There was a Spanish-speaking teacher that they hired. So she would pull us into this room, and she would teach us Spanish. It was really neat, because that's kind of – I already knew how to read and write in Spanish because I had learned it, but that just made my Spanish a lot – it made me learn a lot more Spanish, and stuff like that. It was really nice having that. But there was probably – when I first moved there, there was probably four or five Spanish speakers that I can remember, but most of them spoke both languages. So they didn't really – there was one girl that, she was bilingual, but I remember when she would talk to me, she would speak to me in my ear, and she would speak Spanish to me in my ear. And then her friends would ask her, “What did you say? Did you speak Spanish? She'd be, like, “No. I just talked to her in English.” But ... there was not any Spanish speakers to the point where she was embarrassed to speak Spanish. But then I just became friends with a lot of children who didn't speak Spanish, because I didn't have many that were in my class who spoke Spanish, so yeah. And now that school is fully bilingual, and they have the dual immersion program, and there's a lot of Spanish speakers there now, so it was kind of fun to see how much it's grown. And my teacher that was teaching me is still there. So, yeah.

CN: Okay. You only had one semester at Dixie High, but did you notice any differences during that short period, I guess?

RM: Oh, yeah. I moved here in 1998, and this is before the internet. And it was like culture shock for me, because I dressed different than everybody else did. There was other Spanish speakers here, but most of them kind of knew each other, and it was just a culture shock for me because everybody was so different, and I was, like, "Why does everybody look the same, but not the same of what I'm used to?" So it was really interesting, but then I was only here for a few months, and then I was, like, "I want to go back home." Because my dad moved here, I think, in '96 or '97. So I moved in with him because my parents got divorced. So I moved in with him for a little bit, and then I did not like it. I missed my friends, I missed everything in San Diego, so it's, like, I never want to go back to that place again! And here I am again. [Laughter.]

CN: It's funny how life is like that sometimes.

RM: Yeah. Yeah, it was just like at first, it was just so different from what I was used to, and so to me, I think it was mainly my friends that I missed, mostly. And I was, like, "I can't ever leave you guys again," you know? So then after high school, I was, like, "Okay, I can leave you guys."

CN: Alright, so describe some of your favorite religious or cultural traditions that you grew up with.

RM: I grew up – so my whole family is Catholic. Everybody in my family is Catholic. But then, when my parents were divorced, my mom stopped going to the Catholic Church, and she became a Christian. Then I started going to church with my friends, and they took me to different churches. So I went to two or three different Christian churches, and a Jehovah's Witness church [chuckles]. I was just curious about how all these other religions were. But right now, I'm just – I don't really go to church. But I am very – I still enjoy the traditions that we have in Mexico. Because my family is in California, I don't really go to a lot of family functions. But I try to teach my kids about 'em, like quinceañeras, and just baptisms, and first Holy Communions, and stuff like that. So we try to go to those. But we're not in the church anymore. It's kind of like they know about it, but they don't really know what it means, my children.

CN: Mm-hmm.

RM: Yeah.

CG: Did you have a quinceañera?

RM: I did not.

CG: Oh.

RM: Yeah, I did not have one. It was during the time that my parents were divorcing. But my sister did, so that was really fun.

CN: Mm-hmm. Any other kind of non-religious cultural traditions from your childhood that you would like to try to carry on, or –?

RM: No, not really. No, we really don't, no. Not – other than the quinceañera. My girls are probably not going to have a quinceañera, because they really don't know. But my sister's trying to convince them to have one, so we'll see. [Laughter]

CN: Alright, thank you. Did you want to ask anything?

CG: I was going to say, how about food? Do you have any food traditions?

RM: We eat a lot of – so, let's see. In the area where I'm from in Mexico, there is this food that's called mole, and it's super delicious. It's like a red sauce, and that's very traditional. When we go to parties, that's what we eat. There are a lot of traditional foods that I didn't know how to cook, but I had to ask my sister how – to teach me how to cook them. So now I know how to cook some, some Mexican food. A lot of times I just go to YouTube and just YouTube these meals, and they have recipes on there, and they show you how to do it. So that's kind of what I've been doing lately. So, yeah. But I do really enjoy the traditional Mexican foods, like, tacos, you know, definitely tacos. Mole is one of them, the Spanish rice, refried beans, and stuff like that.

CN: Out of personal curiosity, does the mole from that region, do you put cocoa in it, or is it one of the other kinds?

RM: Yeah, it's the one with the cocoa on it.

CN: Okay.

RM: It's so good. My mom has been going to Mexico lately, and her comadre, which is, like, so when the baby's getting baptized, they will find godparents for them. So my mom and my dad were the godparents of this lady's children. And she knows how to cook that. Because it takes a special recipe, and she knows it. I guess she makes it for everybody over there, and so she makes my mom the paste. So my mom brings us the paste, and then we just add chicken broth, and it's really good because it's really authentic. Yeah. I've been really enjoying that lately.

CN: Sounds delicious.

RM: Yeah.

CN: All right, so what brought you to the St. George area, the second time?

RM: Yeah, the second time. So San Diego was a little bit too fun for me, there was too much going on. And I was ready for a change after I had my son at nineteen. So after he was born, I was kind of, like, not doing so well, like, I was hanging out with the wrong crowds and stuff. So after he was born, he was less than a year old, I realized that it was time for me to move into a better area, because it was just really hard for me to not hang out with the same people over there. So I just moved here with my dad again, and then my dad helped me and my son's dad get a place. And then I started college, and then I was like, "Oh, this is not too bad. I kind of like this place." So then I got my associate's degree here, and then I moved to Chico, California for three years, that's Northern California. But I didn't like it there because it was really different. I was kind of isolated from my family and everybody, and I didn't really enjoy it there. The people there were not what I'm used to. So then I just came back, we came back. So we've been here ever since. So we moved there from 2007 to 2010. So we're back now.

CN: Why Chico? What was it, if you didn't have anyone there?

RM: We had a friend, a family friend who moved there, and then I wanted to attend Chico State [University]. I was, like, maybe I'll go to Chico State. Then I got there, and I ended up doing the University of Phoenix instead. But, initially, that was my plan, was to go to Chico State, and then I just didn't, so, yeah. But it's nice and pretty and green, yeah. [Laughter] I just wasn't – The culture there was different than what I'm used to. I think living in St. George kind of changed me [laughter] in my perspective of people and stuff, so, yeah.

CN: Would you want to add anything else about – any other questions about that?

CG: Not at the moment.

CN: Okay. How have your – we kind of already covered this, but I guess if there's anything else to add on to this, how have your religious and cultural traditions changed since childhood, or since being in St. George?

RM: I think the biggest change for me is not being around family. In our culture, family's extremely important, and so for me, not to have family here, I feel kind of lonely, even though I have my kids. I feel like I need family, just 'cause I grew up with all of that. That's been the hardest, I think, for me, is not having my family close. Yeah.

CN: Trying to keep track of everybody – so at some point, your dad moved out, then, because he was here when you first got here, right? Then at some point, he – or –?

RM: Well, no, he didn't necessarily move out. He had an accident at work [emotional], and he kind of let – it damaged his bottom of his legs, and so this happened in 2004, when I just – I was only here for two years. Then he was fine – well, he wasn't really fine. He was in a lot of pain. I did need these [tissues]. He was in a lot of pain, and so they kind of talked him into going into surgery, for knee replacement surgery. Then there was complications, so he ended up in a coma. He's been in a vegetative state for, like, eleven years now.

CN: Wow.

RM: So that's been really hard, because he's the reason why I'm here. But, yeah.

CN: That does sound extremely hard.

CG: Thank you for sharing.

CN: Yeah.

CG: And we can take a break.

RM: I'm fine.

CG: Okay.

CN: M'kay. I guess, since you moved to St. George, have you changed anything to fit into the local culture, or –?

RM: Yes. I had to change my whole personality, I felt like [chuckles].

CN: Oh.

RM: Because I was – so in 2010, I started working at Head Start, as a teacher there. Before that, I was working there as a receptionist back in 2005, I think. And so my whole – I had to be Teacher Rosa [chuckles], so I had to change pretty much into this – I just had to change a lot, I feel like. I had to change a lot of the way I talk, the way I behave around people, the way I dress because living in California, I mean, people from California dress differently. I felt like that aged me [laughter] a lot. But now, I'm okay with that. But when I go to California, I feel like an outsider, because then I feel like, "I don't belong here." Yeah, I feel like I have adapted to this culture quite a bit. I mean, I don't go to church or anything like that, but I have a lot of friends who are LDS [members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. I mean, I understand a lot of the religion here, and how influential it is in this area, and I've learned to adapt. Yeah, I feel like my whole personality did kind of – my personality is there, it's just certain things, I feel like I had to change from the California mindset to here.

CN: Mm-hmm. That the two changes, one to become kind of that teaching authority figure.

RM: Right.

CN: Then also, what's from the teaching, and what's from the culture itself – or, what's from living in St. George. What are the differences between those two things?

RM: Right. I feel like I can't really tell, because I feel like being a teacher did make me look at things differently. Every time I went out, I saw somebody who was my student, or a parent who I knew. I had to always kind of be presentable every time I went out, because then I always found somebody, because this is such a small town, that I always found somebody who knew me. I always had to watch everything. I feel like I had to watch everything that I was doing all the time, because of that. [Laughter] But, I mean, I don't do anything bad anyway, but I did have to watch a lot of my appearance, especially, when I was out there, because I can't just be out there looking like I just woke up, [laughter] because then I would see somebody that I knew, and I'd be, like, "Oh no, they just saw me!"

But then again, a lot of my students were also – a lot of them were – I had a lot of Spanish-speaking students, but I also had a lot of students from the area. Yeah. But it's hard to say which change was from the culture, and which one was from the person that – my job that I had. Yeah.

CG: Can you give a specific example of something that you changed? I mean, you mentioned how you dressed, or how you spoke, but –.

RM: Yes. I feel like I'm starting to be a little bit more conservative ever since I moved here, because when I lived in California I had very different beliefs. I feel like the way that I dress is definitely more conservative now. It's just I feel like because it's such a conservative state, I had to kind of adapt to a lot of those – and not everything, of course, because there are some things that I'm still kind of in the middle. But for the most part, I feel like I am a little bit more conservative than I was before. Yeah.

CN: Alright, tell me about work.

RM: I just started here last year. Before that, I was a teacher for twelve years, so I was a teacher for a while. It was kind of hard to change my mindset from being around children all day every day, to being around adults. I'm still kind of working on that. But I really like it here, so far. I love what I do; I like the people. I like that there's so much diversity in this campus. I feel like compared to the rest of the town, there's a lot of diversity, and I really, really like that.

CN: For the recording, what do you do here at Utah Tech again?

RM: I am the graduation coordinator, so I work in the Registration Department.

CG: What does that entail?

RM: Basically, everything that has to do with graduation, except for commencement, because that's a separate – I am in the commencement committee, but mainly – so I audit students. We have graduation applications, and I work really closely with advisors. I feel like I'm not part of the advisement team, but I have to work as a team with them, so I feel like I'm part of the team [chuckles]. I award their degrees when they have met all of the

requirements, the students. And I also print out their diplomas, and I send those diplomas to them. Pretty much everything that has to do with graduation, I do. Yeah. It's a lot, but now that I know what I'm doing, it's really nice.

CG: Did you want to talk any more about your teaching experience, since it was for so long?

RM: I don't know. I really enjoyed teaching. Like one time, I was at the UPS Store, and this little girl came up to me, and she told me that she liked my phone case. I was like, "Well, thank you, it's like a mirror." She looked at it, and then she looked at me, and she said, "Can I give you a hug?" I was, like, "um," because I didn't want – I'm a stranger to her. I just looked at her mom, and her mom was very uncomfortable because here's her little daughter asking a stranger if she could have a hug. But I really do miss that, is sometimes those hard days, we all have those. Those hard days sometimes, they would just – my students would be so happy to see me. To me, that was – it would just brighten my day to know that they were just so loving, and so happy to see me, and so happy to give me hugs, and so happy to be there with me. I do miss that. But I still have my niece, you know. I do really enjoy that. I kind of miss being silly, because as a preschool teacher, I was really silly; I had to be this actress almost, I felt like, in order to keep them engaged. But I do miss that a lot. I do act really silly sometimes around adults [laughter]. You know, it's like, mmm, you're grown up. I really did enjoy all of that. It was nice, because I had summers off and stuff like that, so I could be with my children more during the summers, and then I could have all of the days off as they did from school. It was really nice when my kids were growing up, because I was able to stay at home with them a lot more. Now that they're older, I mean, I can have more of a full-time job, and they're okay, I think. They still miss me, but they're okay.

CN: What has been your experience with the broader St. George community?

RM: With the –?

CN: The broader St. George community?

RM: Oh, so everybody here in St. George?

CN: Mm-hmm.

RM: I have had really good experiences here in St. George. I really don't feel like – I don't know. Everybody's just really nice. I really like that. Everybody's always nice every time I'm out there. You know, sometimes people are rude, but that's because they have their own issues, we can't control – I mean, we can't really control that. But as far as, like, being a minority here, I don't feel like there's a negative climate towards minorities as much. It might be because I grew up in an area where there was a lot of that. And so now, if I see anything different, I really don't notice it, just because I'm kind of used to that. I really, I like that this place is growing. I like that a lot, because back then, it was like same thing, you know, all those people who spoke Spanish all knew each other, and now there are so many new faces of people that I've never even seen. But then again, I don't

really go to the parties or anything like that with other Spanish speakers here. I don't know. When I mean "parties," I don't mean, like, we're going to go to a party. I mean like, I feel like in our culture, we have parties for everything. That's kind of where everybody just gets together. I really don't go to a lot of those, but I know that they exist, because I've met a couple of people, and they always say, "Oh, do you want to go to a birthday party with me," and stuff like that. I've been to a couple of them, and that's where I see the new faces. But, yeah. Overall, I feel like I really like this place; I really feel comfortable here. I like being able to raise my family here. It's safe, and it's a place where it's very family-oriented, and I really like that.

CN: For – it leads into our more specific next question, which is, what are your thoughts on the Latino-Hispanic community in the area?

RM: I feel like it is growing. I've noticed that sometimes, like in Poway, where I used to live, a lot of people from where I am from in that same town, they kind of all just moved there. I feel like that's how it is here, too, is that there's a lot of people here from the same places in Mexico, there's groups of people from the same town. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of people from where I'm from, so that makes it a little bit harder. There is a few that I see sometimes, but not very many. But it's kind of nice to meet people from other places, too, because they have different beliefs than I do, and different – they have different just backgrounds, even though they're still all Spanish-speakers. Sometimes they're from other countries, there are other states, and each state has its own different way of doing things. It's kind of fun to meet new people who have different beliefs than I do, and are still kind of like people that I identify with.

CN: What are the – I guess, of the people you met, what seemed to be the most common areas in Mexico that people are coming from to St. George?

RM: I know that there is – last time that I went to this event, there was a lot of people from Nayarit, there's a lot of people from Guerrero, and those are mainly, like, there's a lot of people from Veracruz, so those are the three main places in Mexico that I've noticed that there's a lot of here. It's kind of fun, because they have a different way of being, it's interesting. There are some people from Chihuahua that I've met here, too, so yeah.

CN: Hmm. That's very interesting, that's the first I've heard specifics about that, so that's very interesting.

RM: Yeah, Mexicans are always asking each other, "Where are you from?" You know, so we all kind of know where everybody's from, because always as– that's one of the first questions we ask each other [laughter]. Yeah.

CN: Alright, how would you describe your relationship with white Americans?

RM: Like I said, when I was growing up, that's all that I was kind of surrounded by, so I became really comfortable around white Americans. I feel like it's two different worlds. I have to shift my – like, I have to shift my personality to meet – to be able to – because in

Spanish, I feel like I have a different personality than I do in English, it's weird. I don't know if "personality" is the right word that I'm looking for, but I almost feel like when I speak Spanish, like my Spanish-speaking self comes out. It's, like, then I have to – because I think in a different culture. It's not just speaking in a different language, it's almost like you have to enter the whole different culture to be able to understand, because anybody can speak another language, but if you don't understand the culture, then you're kind of still out of place a little bit. I feel like I have to – I have two main cultures that I have to adapt to. It's my English-speaking mindset and then my Spanish-speaking mindset. But I feel really comfortable around both, I feel like.

CN: Makes me wish we could interview you in Spanish too, have the two of them.

RM: [Laughter] Well, you can, if you speak Spanish.

CN: Unfortunately, our Spanish-speaking interviewer–.

RM: Yeah, I got this email, and it says, "Estamos aquí." I'm, like, wait, why is it in Spanish? I remember I used to go to one of the stores here, and it's when they first had the automated systems, the self-checkouts. I went there and every time it would start speaking to me in Spanish. I would be, "Why is –?" I was getting annoyed. It was getting to a point where I was getting really annoyed. I was, like, "Is somebody watching me and putting it in Spanish? Like, why is this thing always speaking to me in Spanish?" Then one day, I caught myself, and then it said, "Press to start." And it said, "Presione aquí." Then I pushed the Spanish button. And I was like – I did that subconsciously without even thinking! I was like, "Oh, that's why it does that." But sometimes that's just automatic, you know? I see something in Spanish and I automatically just want to click on it or do what it says to do [chuckles]. It's kind of fun to know. I wish I knew more languages, but yeah, it's really fun.

CN: Me too. Have you experienced any racist or prejudiced behavior here?

RM: No, but during – not this last presidential election, but the one before that, I felt a little attacked just because I felt like – I don't know, I just felt almost afraid, a little bit. I never really felt like that before, here especially. I felt scared, because I felt like all of this stuff that people are saying about Mexicans, you know, are they thinking that I'm that way? It was really – I remember when that election happened, and I don't think a lot of people realized how scary it was. And I don't feel like I get scared really easily, but that was definitely really a scary time for me, waking up the next morning and just seeing American flags everywhere – which is fine, you know, but I just felt like the whole – everything kind of just changed, like, the whole feeling of this town changed. It was hard. But other than that, I've never really felt like that here, especially. But during that time, I did, I did feel. Still sometimes a little bit, but it's because of the politics after everything, the politics are making it really hard for everybody, especially for minorities.

But against me? I don't feel like I've ever experienced anything personally. I don't think I've ever experienced anything racist here. But I did experience a lot of fear and a lot of

uncertainty, and a lot of just like, “Do they not want me here?” ... I felt like I wasn’t wanted here. And that was hard. That was hard, because I’ve never really felt like that in my life. During that time, I did. I did. I did feel a little excluded, I feel like – I mean, things are still – there’s a lot of tension still when it comes to politics. I’m not pro-one; I’m kinda neutral. I try not to – because I do have a lot of conservative beliefs. I feel like my beliefs don’t fit, like blue or red, they really don’t, not entirely. But I feel like we’re really protective about our own, the people that look like us, in Mexico, other Mexicans are really protective of our own kind. I felt like it was my duty, kind of, to protect other people who look like me, because we’re not all – we’re not all bad people. We’re not all here to just sabotage everything for everybody, you know? We’re not here to steal anybody’s job [chuckles], you know? That was hard. That was really hard, and it’s still a little bit, and there’s still a lot of tension. It’s still a little bit hard, and kind of getting – it’s not as bad as it was before.

CN: You mentioned the flags everywhere, and how that made you feel. What were some other signs that you would see in your daily life of the political culture? How did that show itself?

RM: You know, the red hats were definitely a big indicator for me to be – it was almost, like, be aware. If I saw that, my mind would almost be, like, “Okay, you need to be aware how you act around these certain people,” because you never know what their beliefs are, and what they could do, or what they were capable of doing. I’m not saying everybody, but you don’t know which ones are and which ones aren’t racist, you know? I hate throwing that word out there. I hate using that word. But we didn’t know, we didn’t know who to trust almost, it felt like. But that was another big indicator. Bumper stickers, that was a big indicator that we might be in trouble if we say the wrong thing, or something like that.

I never really speak Spanish unless I’m with somebody who speaks Spanish. My kids don’t know Spanish, so I don’t speak to them in Spanish. Even speaking Spanish, sometimes that was like, is somebody going to tell me something because I’m speaking Spanish? There was a lot of things that people don’t realize that is affecting minorities. And I get it, some people have a strong political belief, and they just kind of – that’s their main thing, it’s, like, okay, this is what I believe. Whatever else is extra, I don’t believe that. But we didn’t really have a way to know. Still, sometimes, I feel like if somebody’s like that, I’m, like, “Are you racist?” That’s always in the back of my mind, even though they’re not showing any signs. But it’s still always kind of in the back of my mind. And it doesn’t help – the media definitely helped to push that narrative also, so it doesn’t really help that the media was kind of pushing that, too. “Oh,” you know, “this person said this, and they said that –” You know, both sides of the media were kind of dividing the country, I felt like. It was hard. It was hard being a minority, and it still kind of is, because it’s still going on. It’s not as bad as it was, but it’s still going on, I feel like, a little bit, in certain states especially. That’s been a little tough.

But like I said earlier, nobody’s called me any names, nobody’s really treated me differently because of my background, not that I think of. Or if they have, maybe I just

haven't even noticed, because a lot of the times I feel like if you're looking for it, then you're going to see it. But I really don't look for that. Sometimes I just feel like if somebody doesn't like me, it's because they don't like who I am. Sometimes I feel the tension, but I don't know if it's racism, or if they just don't like me because of who I am, because not everybody's gonna like you. Yeah.

CN: Yeah, it can definitely be hard to tell. Yeah, no, thank you for sharing so much about that. I was very curious of – I was not living here during the last two presidential elections, but the last one I was living in Pennsylvania, and there were big trucks with flags and signs doing parades, honking up and down the –.

RM: Yeah, they had that here, too.

CN: Oh, okay, so they had that here, too. Yeah.

RM: They had it here, too. Yeah.

CN: It was scary.

RM: Yeah, it is. It is, because you're, like, it was just, is this a message, you know? You don't really know what to – and I get it, there was a lot of conspiracy theories that kind of got out of hand. And a lot of people lost trust for the government. But it was still scary. We don't know what they're gonna do. We don't know if – like that guy up in Salt Lake that just – yeah. I don't know. It's a hard time to live, as far as politics go, I think. I'd rather just stay out of it. It's safer that way, you know, because there's too much tension, you know? It's – yeah.

CN: Thank you for sharing, yeah. Not talking about that specific – politics specifically, but in general, how has the area changed since you've been here?

RM: Because of the internet, I feel like the internet made this area a lot more aware than they were back in the '90s, even in the early 2000s. The internet has changed, I think, the area a lot, because before, it was like one radio station, and it was the biggest radio station, that if you wanted to listen to different music, that's the one you would listen to. Or they had the college radio station here, that they would play certain music at certain times. We didn't have access to all of the music that we have now. We didn't have access to all of the information that we have now. I feel like we used to be in a bubble, and now that bubble is getting bigger and bigger. I feel like the internet really changed this town a lot. I mean, it's good, because we can see what's going on outside the bubble [laughter]. It's good; I like it. I like it here a lot, actually. That's why I stay here.

Yeah, and my family is trying to convince me to go back home and move back to California. And I'm, like, I don't know if I can. I don't know if I'll get used to it, it's so different. I'm used to living here, and I'm used to the small town feeling. I don't know; San Diego was really big.

CG: Have you noticed any changes development-wise, like building, construction, the highway?

RM: Yeah, it's gotten – there's a lot more houses than there used to be when I first moved here. They're building everywhere, I feel like. There's completely new communities than there were when I first moved here. That's been interesting to just watch everything just expand. I really like that scene, all of the different changes happening around us. Yeah, it's grown a lot. A lot. It's just kind of fun to watch that.

I remember the first time when I first moved here in '98, one of my friends, her friend used to live in Washington, and we drove over there. I was like, "Where are these people taking me? This is dark, and we're in the middle of nowhere." I was scared, because I didn't know where I was going, and everything was dark. We were past where Walmart is now; we were past that on Telegraph. I was like, "Should I feel scared? Am I safe?" Then we got to this friend's house, and now I live in that same neighborhood [chuckles]. When you drive down Telegraph, that's soon going to be downtown Washington, because everything around there is – everything – that's like an older part of Washington, where the Rec Center is, and stuff like that. It's just interesting to see how much even that area has grown. Whereas it used to be this little dark area, to downtown Washington. So it was kind of fun to see that.

CN: What changes have you noticed within the Latino-Hispanic community since?

RM: I feel like there is more – I don't know if – I want to say, when I first moved here, I feel like there was more people who only spoke Spanish, and now there's a lot more bilingual people. I don't know if they just grew up here or if they just moved here from other places, but I've noticed there's a big bilingual population now, whereas before, I didn't really see it a lot. And I didn't really know a lot of people, so maybe that's why. But I feel like that's kind of grown a lot, the bilingual population here. It's nice.

CN: Anything else?

RM: No. No. I wish I knew more, like, more people who were Spanish-speaking that I was friends with.

CN: Me too. Alright, last question. What would you like people to know about yourself or your community?

RM: I don't know. I just feel like, I don't know, I feel like I'm really proud of my accomplishments. Moving here from a little town in Mexico to California, then moving here and kind of building a life here, I'm just really proud of the person I've become. I really don't think that I would have become that person who I'm proud of now if I wouldn't have moved here, which is really weird to say, but I feel like this place really changed me to be a better person. I really like that. I really like who I've become here. It's because of my experiences of being a teacher, and now working here, I feel like it's really helped me grow in a really positive way. I'm just really proud, even though I don't

really do a lot of things that my culture does, I'm really proud to be of Mexican nationality, and I'm really proud to be who I am, to be able to speak Spanish, to be able to speak English, and do both. I really like that. Yeah.

CN: Alright, thank you so much.

CG: Any other final thoughts?

CN: Yeah, any other final thoughts?

RM: No. Thank you guys for listening to all my craziness [laughter].

CN: No, it was lovely.

CG: We'll stop the recording now.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]