

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH ISAAC ELOY BARRÓN**

An Oral History Conducted by Maribel Estrada Calderón

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Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada  
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

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The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the *Latinx Voices of Southern Nevada*.

Claytee D. White  
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## PREFACE



Isaac Eloy Barrón identifies as a Mexican American. However, as he explains, it took a move five hundred miles away, from North Las Vegas to Winnemucca, to learn what it meant to be Mexican—and that he spoke with a Chihuahuan accent. It was also in Winnemucca that Barrón launched his stellar career as an educator.

Barrón is a native of North Las Vegas, specifically of the small Federal Park neighborhood near Donna and Carey Streets. His father was a kitchen worker and his mother a maid. From these humble roots, the child of Mexican ancestry seized the opportunities to become an award-winning Clark County school teacher and political leader.

In this oral history, Barrón recalls his youth in North Las Vegas, navigating the presence of gangs, and his path to being a community activist and advocate for North Las Vegas youth. He has led volunteer efforts for community improvement projects, including the plans for a new public library. He holds the distinction of being the first Latinx member of the North Las Vegas City Council and Southern Nevada's first Hispanic Mayor Pro Tempore. In 2013, he was elected to represent Ward 1 and was reelected for a second term in April 2017

Barrón received a bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a master's degree in educational leadership from Nova University.

He is married to Lucy and has four children and five grandchildren.

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March 7, 2019

in Las Vegas, Nevada

Conducted by Maribel Estrada Calderón

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Isaac E. Barrón 3-7-19  
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**Today is March seventh, 2019. My name is Maribel Estrada Calderón. I am in the North Las Vegas City Hall. With me are...**

*Elsa Lopez.*

*And Claytee White.*

**And...**

Isaac Barrón.

**Isaac, can you please spell out your name for us?**

Yes. Isaac is I-S-A-A-C. My middle name is Eloy, E-L-O-Y. My last name is B, as in bravo, A-R-R, with the little accent over the O, and the N.

**How do you identify?**

Definitely, I'm a Mexican American. One of the natives here of North Las Vegas. It's really funny. Anyone who knows me and has known me, they'll call me Eloy Barrón—or, actually, they'll call me Eloy Barron. But it seems like ever since I came back to teach at Rancho High School, the secretaries there were just using my legal first name, which is Isaac, and instead of correcting them, well, I just took on the persona of Isaac. I notice that people also kind of treat me differently from Eloy to Isaac. What was the switch? Well, I don't know. You guys tell me.

It was kind of funny. I'm really happy that you guys came to interview me. You're going to ask me where I'm from, and I could literally point out to you where I'm from. Just right over there [pointing].

**Which street is that?**

It's Glendale Avenue. For anybody who lived in North Las Vegas or anywhere here in the valley, I am from a little neighborhood, the name is very obscure, officially it's called Federal Park, but no one knows the name of the little housing project. But if I mention another couple of



words, all the sudden people know where I'm from. I am from Donna Street and Carey. Of course, anybody who lived here in the area and is over thirty years old, you know exactly what that means. For some people, they'll consider that to be the hood. Let's face it, in the middle of the eighties even up to the early nineties, it was everything that the bad reputation made it out to be. It was a tough place, so much so that there is a channel Spike TV and I don't know if they still have this show, but they had a pretty popular show called "Gangland." My neighborhood was actually the setting for not one, but two of their episodes.

For me growing up there, instead of it being something that I am ashamed of, if anything, I wear that as a badge of pride. I didn't survive Donna Street; I was Donna Street. I was never a part of any of the gangs; my brother was. But I'm happy to say I came up with people. Again, we can just look right outside my neighborhood and see it. It is lower, middle class homes, but a lot of homeowners. I had the very best environment to grow up that anyone could possibly ask for. We were probably one of the only Mexican American families there.

This area that is now my ward overall is about 70 percent Latino. The City of North Las Vegas is about 36, maybe even touching 37 or 38 percent Latino. Between us and the black population, which is about 22 percent, we're definitely the minority-majority city for the entire state of Nevada. But when we talk about my ward, we're talking about 70 percent Latino. My neighborhood growing up was probably maybe just a little bit over half black, maybe just under half Caucasian, and you had a few Latino families, Mexican American basically, to make up the rest.

Even more diverse than the so-called cultural mix was the mix of my neighbors. Next door to me lived my very best friend in the world, Dineta Shakespeare, a little blond, blue-eyed girl, Mormon, and there were like nine kids, my neighbors. He was a teacher. Across the street

from him was a fellow named Fred Hymes who I considered him to be probably one of my greatest mentors, African American. He was an electrical engineering teacher out at CSN. Next door to me had a veteran from Vietnam, Bucky. But we had other people who lived there, too, because it seemed like the Houchin's Hands. Just looking up and down the street, there was a guy who was a highway patrolman, several nurses, people who worked for the Review-Journal. We were very mixed when it comes to ages and all that. A retired woman that everyone would go by and volunteer to cut her front lawn, because that seemed to be the thing to do, and she would reward you with an ice cream. She didn't pay—she just gave you some ice cream. But everyone seemed to almost get into a fight to go and cut her front yard.

It was the very best kind of place to grow up because there you really were treated for being the person you were, not by the color of your skin. Now, don't get me wrong. There were some issues there. Playing basketball with the neighborhood guys—I didn't play any soccer. We played basketball. We played football. We didn't have money basically for baseballs. Are you kidding? Gloves? Sometimes our parents would have a second handset that we might have, but we didn't play no baseball. We played football. We played basketball. If you were at the basketball court and someone elbowed you, well, no problem, you elbowed them back. Then maybe if you were beating another team really well, they elbow you and they might give you an extra shot. What do you do? You shove them back and eventually there might be a little bit of a fistfight, a swollen lip, a little bit of a bloody nose, a couple of cuts and bruises, no big deal. A few days later you're playing with them again. Why? Because that's who you hung out with. It was literally a great place to grow up especially in the middle seventies to the early eighties. It was honestly a wonderful place.

There was an open field where we had the ribbon cutting for the Maya Cinemas and that was one of our playgrounds. It was a wonderful place whereas kids we went and built, quote, forts or reinforced hangouts. We would jump bicycles. I got into a few fistfights there, too. But you also learned how to hunt lizards, release them. You chased rabbits. Everything you could possibly do as a young man. Not too many girls were dumb enough to go out there, of course, because you came home all dirty.

Again, it was very diverse and, again, people didn't treat you—I didn't ever know what racism was until after I moved out of the neighborhood. Again, I would go to my friend's house. My parents called him "The Viking" because he was tall and blond. I would go to his house. They were bikers. You go to his house and there were like a line of motorcycles all lined up. His parents thought that I was a good influence on him. No, we got into a lot of trouble; we just didn't get caught. They fully expected me to join the group when I got old enough to be a biker like the rest of them. These were gangster bikers. But I didn't. But neither did I grow up to join any of the other gangs in the area although I was very social in the fact that I played with other kids I grew up with.

For the most part, for me, I grew up not so much a loner, but I liked to do things myself because then you don't have to argue with anybody as to what you want to do. If I wanted to go out on my bicycle, I'd take off and I don't have to argue with anybody as to where to go. If I went exploring, when my parents didn't catch me, again I'd take off on my bicycle and go my way. Eventually I'd get home. No one ever knew that I rode my bicycle all the way to the airport, McCarran, not the North Las Vegas Airport. They had no idea. I would always get back right around dusk when I was supposed to, so no one ever knew. It gave me a reference point, I think, a limited reference point as to what life looked like outside of North Las Vegas, but it was still

very limited because although I was visiting Las Vegas, I really wasn't living in Las Vegas. I didn't really get more of a taste of it until actually I moved out of North Las Vegas into Las Vegas and then had experiences there.

I'm totally locally produced here you could say. My kindergarten, again, was a little school called Quannah McCall. It was kind of catty-corner over here where you see that bridge. I went there for kindergarten. Then in the wonderful days of bussing I was bussed because, of course, we were considered to be a minority area. They bussed us to what was then a white neighborhood, C.C. Ronnow, Pecos and Washington area. Laughably now that's about 60 percent Hispanic now, too. It was interesting. I always knew there was a reason why we got bussed. I always figured that, well, maybe the schools over here were just too crowded. But, yes, they bussed us into these white areas. It was interesting. Again, we were always pretty mixed there. First year through fifth grade, we were bussed.

That's where I actually met many of my lifelong friends. Felicia Gonzalez, I think she's an associate superintendent for the school district. She was one of my friends there since first grade. Her husband, who is now one of our cops, he is my friend that I met at Jim Bridger, which was one of the next schools that I went to, as are many of the other people. Our former chief of police, I met him at Jim Bridger as well, Mr. Alex Perez, the first Latino police chief for Southern Nevada. That one wasn't so easy to get accomplished, mind you. There was a lot of resistance. But I guess I'll be careful the way I talk to that one.

But anyhow, first through fifth grade, bussed to C.C. Ronnow and had wonderful experiences there. Then for sixth grade, probably the very best breeding ground for a little kid who was in between being a kid and an adolescent, Quannah McCall Sixth Grade Center. I don't know if the young ladies know this, but, of course, here in Southern Nevada what we did for

integration is, of course, they bussed the children from the so-called minority section of town to the so-called white section of town. Again, we were bussed to C.C. Ronnow. To even things out, for sixth grade they bussed the children from the so-called white areas into the hood—I'm sorry—into North Las Vegas and other parts. Schools like Quannah McCall, Matt Kelly and other schools that were in minority areas, we got to receive all our friends that we met at C.C. Ronnow and then at other places, some of them across town, and they all went to school. It was all one grade except for the children who were in kindergarten. That was really amazing. I think it was a fantastic idea. We had everybody in the same grade at one school. You don't have the younger kids bothering you and you don't have the older kids bullying you. You just get bullied by kids at your own age. We were basically all the same.

Then after that you go to your neighborhood junior highs; in that case, I went to Jim Bridger, which is, again, within viewing distance here from my office. Then after eighth grade I went to Rancho High School for ninth through twelfth. It's really funny how except for two years that I lived outside in my very first teaching job—I lived in Northern Nevada in Winnemucca—most of my life—if a meteor came down and hit right here in downtown Las Vegas, it basically would cover the immediate area I grew up in no more than maybe, say, a radius of two and a half miles. Yes, a radius of about two and a half miles is where I grew up.

My parents are buried right down the street over here at the local cemetery, Bunker Brothers, which is maybe a mile and a half away. My recently passed away auntie, she's across the street with my uncle and my nephew and other family members except for one brother who is a little bit further away. I will probably be buried in the same cemetery although I'm hoping it won't be anytime soon. I'm hoping it won't be anytime soon. I'm literally a homeboy. I literally am.

When I did move out of North Las Vegas for a couple of years, between the ages of nineteen to twenty-one or so, I got my first apartment outside of North Las Vegas and Las Vegas. But, again, it's really weird. I really didn't understand—I knew what racism was, but you didn't get a chance to really feel it until you moved out of North Las Vegas. I guess the two best examples that I can think of...I got married real young. Five days after my nineteenth birthday, I welcomed my son. It was one of these things where stuff happens. You don't plan it. I had a crappy job. I had to leave UNLV to work a full-time job. My parents didn't want me to work, but I didn't have the heart to make them pay for something that I was responsible for. I graduated from Rancho High School when I was seventeen years old, and so I should have been able to graduate from UNLV, say four years, by the time I was twenty, twenty-one, but, of course, I took that year off to earn money.

When I got the first apartment that I took, my new wife and our son, too, it was funny trying to find a place to stay. The very first place we tried to get an apartment was over here at these apartments that have now been divided into duplexes that are independently owned. It was an apartment complex just right over here off Owens in North Las Vegas. I remember when we were in there applying, the lady was really rude to us. She was really rude. I told my wife, who is Caucasian, when we left there, I said, "Man, she really was rough on us." She was threatening that, hey, if you're one day late, you're out of here. We had to give this deposit. She was being just really unreasonable. It wasn't like it was a really expensive apartment complex. I said, "You know what? I'm pretty sure that she was being a racist to us because of me." She said, "No, that can't be it." Because she had never experienced it either; she's Caucasian. We did manage to get a different apartment over on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.

But one day when I was at work, my ex—she is now my ex-wife—she saw that there was a vacancy sign at those apartments and about a year had gone by. I guess they had forgotten about her. Right away, “Oh, hey, honey, yes, you can move in this week. We have an apartment right for you.” They were just rolling out the red carpet for her. They had already showed her the apartment. “Yes, you can move in next week. Look, we have a little patch of gardening space here for you.” She went back to start filling out the paperwork because she knew that I wanted to live there, too. She said, quote, “A Mexican guy came in to pay the rent.” The guy went in there and as soon as he left, she said some comment about *beaners*; they’re just coming in and messing up everything, to which case she didn’t say anything. She came home and talked to me about it and I just asked her, “Do you really want to live there with that kind of manager? Wait until she sees me.” Needless to say, that talk of moving into those apartments didn’t happen.

At UNLV, again, you see the attitudes of some of the students there. I thought that everyone lived the way that I did, but apparently that wasn’t the case. At that time I think we had a large influx of students coming in from California because, of course, they just couldn’t afford to go to school in California. But, apparently, I learned what being from Orange County means, the OC, because there were some students who came in and, man, they were really in classroom discussions. I couldn’t believe the things that they were saying. I heard these terms like, “you people this” and “you people that” from people who were my age. I was shocked.

Now, granted, I had met some people who were elitists, if you can believe this, elitists blacks at Rancho High School during summer school. They were kids who were coming in from Gorman High School, which is maybe a little different population. I thought the girl was actually being truthful when she said, “Hey, I heard my mom’s going to come over here and she’s going to treat us all to McDonalds.” I said, “Hey, that sounds really good.” That’s when my friends,

especially my black friend Anita, “Don’t be stupid. She’s making fun of us.” “What? No, but she said...Oh.” Yes, that was just a rich person’s joke making fun of us. That one, I think money sometimes has the effect of equalizing people. People, once they have money, they get equally snobby, but that’s just my opinion. Yes, she was quite snobby. I didn’t understand that one either. I took all those things in stride.

I also really rose to the fact that I was very lucky to get some student financial aid, some PELL grants. But, for the most part, I worked my way through college. I worked at a fantastical job. I worked one horrible job when I was a hood and duct cleaner. Have you ever gone to a commercial kitchen? The thing over the stove is called a hood and they have these exhaust fans that clean them. After the MGM fire that was, in part, caused because of dirty hoods and all that, there was a big push for fire safety and that, of course, leads to job opportunities. I had a job opportunity in cleaning those fans up on the roof and getting up there and scraping the hoods clean, horrible job. It sucked. Five bucks an hour. Now, granted, the minimum wage was three thirty-five, but five bucks was not very much more. It sucked. I spent the whole year working that job until I realized, you know you’re not getting anywhere.

I hooked up with a much better job, pest control, where I merely got to play with dangerous chemicals where I think some of them were accumulating in my body, but, hey, it was a job. I had a very diverse set of clients there. Most people who live in regular neighborhoods, let’s say your average middle-class neighborhoods, they just handle their own pest control needs, or some people will call in for the experts, like myself. But I had a lot of people who were upper-middle class and even more upscale. I remember when I was being trained, I would go to these homes and some of these homes were very nice. I don’t know if you know what Rancho Circle is. It’s a very exclusive neighborhood. Back in the day, only the most powerful and wealthy



landlords lived in that area. It's basically off of Alta and Rancho. Like the owners then of Southwest Gas, our friends here from Anderson Dairy, the original owner. I would go to these homes and I didn't really think anything of it. I wasn't like, wow, looking around. But I just figured, hey, well, that's the way they live; they have money. I really didn't think about it. But I got to meet really lots of interesting people. I got to meet Carolyn Goodman. They live in a neighborhood called the Scotch 80s. Very sweet, very nice. But sometimes I got to see her twice a year because she had just launched her new school, Meadows School. I got to meet a lot of other people who are movers and shakers, one time movers and shakers here in Las Vegas. A guy named Wilbur Clark who used to be the owner of the Desert Inn, a nice guy, I didn't know who he was. One of my customers was a guy named Shecky Greene, a big-time entertainer. He just seemed like a regular guy. I didn't know who he was. A couple called the Converses, they were the owners of Bonanza Airlines. The Greenspuns, Brian Greenspun for a short time was part of my route, he and his dad, and other people who are big-time developers, some of whom I never even got to see while I was actually their pest control guy.

It's kind of funny because years later I wound up working with these people because of my station here as a councilman. But when I met up again with Carolyn Goodman, she didn't recognize me. "Hey, Mayor, it's good to see you again." "Oh, you seem familiar." She didn't remember who I was until after a few times I met her, "Well, I don't know if you remember..."

I have to preface this. I worked for one of the guys who was actually on the list of 100 Most Prominent Las Vegans, a guy named Alfred G. Williams. He was the owner of A.G. Williams Pest Control, the first pest control company, licensed one, in the state of Nevada. I met all these people because I worked for him.

“I don’t know if you remember me, Mayor. I used to service your home. Do you remember we saved your bushes? They were dying and they were getting all yellow.” “That was you?” “Yes.” She didn’t recognize me. I understand now why, of course. Number one, it was a long time ago, thirty years ago. But also, number two, I was the help.

I had Brian Greenspun right here in the chair that you’re sitting in. He came here on a business item that he was hoping to launch in North Las Vegas. I said, “Hey, Mr. Greenspun, it’s so nice to actually meet you in person.” “Yes, it’s nice to meet you.” I said, “Hey, do you still have that fifty style diner for your kitchen?” He looked at me kind of funny. “I don’t remember inviting you to my house.” “I’ve been to your house lots of times.” “Really? How?” “I was your pest control guy. Hey, is Petra still your housekeeper?” “She died ten years ago.” Or something like that.

A lot of these men and women that I went to their house, I never even met them, but I got to meet them here as a councilman and now they know who I am. I’m sure that prior to this they didn’t know who I was. For some of these people, when I’m done here, I’ll probably recede back to the background.

I keep that picture of my dad. This is a really cool picture of him. The funny thing is it’s really cool in the fact that if you look at it, my dad looks like he is the leader of the pack. Doesn’t he?

**CLAYTEE:** *Yes.*

That was really not him. He was not the leader of the pack. My dad was the kind of guy who just like to fit in. I’m pretty sure this was taken in 1948, maybe 1949, because the Bracero program still continued after. He came here during World War II. He came here as a Bracero to the United States. Where he grew up there were a lot of mines, but there was no way you could get him

down into a mine. My dad was a pretty simple guy. I think nowadays, if my dad would have grown up here, they would say he was probably a special needs kid. My dad told me that he didn't go to school until he was like thirteen years old and he only spent a couple of years there, but he learned enough to where he could actually teach himself how to read and write. It's because they just could not get him to stay in school. He was probably ADHD. They called him Augustine "*Carreteras*" [highway] because he would always take off. He would roam. He knew all about Durango because he would take off even as a little kid into the neighboring state of Durango, which was not too far away. He would hitch a ride and come back. Eventually, when he was old enough, as a young man he took off to the United States during World War II because, of course, he was being recruited. Yes, that's when our country imported Mexicans, of course, which was done several times, whenever it was convenient. Of course, for him, he loved it because, of course, they paid him, they fed him, and on top of that they always gave him a place to stay in and he couldn't believe it. For him it was a great deal. He's been all over the United States as a Bracero.

I guess sometime in the early sixties he met my mom. My dad was the second husband. The family at first lived in El Paso for a short time where one of my brothers was born. Then the family moved to St. Louis, Missouri. I guess my mom loved it there and so did my dad. But my dad heard of another opportunity. I guess in St. Louis he was doing window washing, which, of course, had its own hazards. But he found out that they were hiring at a place that was rapidly upscaling, which was Las Vegas, Nevada, Nellis Air Force Base. He came out here and he thought it was great, and so he moved the family out here to Las Vegas.

Back then a lot of the newcomers, especially the Mexican immigrants, they all lived in the one, two, three streets: First Street, Second Street, Third Street. You will find that a lot of the

Latinos who have been here for a really long time, they all grew up in the same area. There was a guy named Jose Tregoso. For a while there he was like the assistant chief for Las Vegas, one of the City of Las Vegas' first Latino police officers. For a while there he was the marshal for the state of Nevada. His family was in that area, as were others, and then eventually they moved out.

When my mom first got here, she hated it. She cried. She wouldn't even unpack the boxes. It took a few weeks. Then she told me that finally my dad just told her, "Hey, Chavela, you might as well unpack everything. We're going to stay." She cried. She loved St. Louis because they had a downtown walkable community where there were still open-air markets where you could go and buy groceries and it was just a different type of living. Here it was hot. There was no such thing as open markets and all that. She didn't like the fact that sometimes people didn't treat you all that great.

But at the age of one, after I was born at the old Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital, which is now UMC, my dad had saved up and bought a house. Again, Federal Park. It was literally just right beyond Maya Cinemas, right to the right of A; that's Glendale Avenue. I think we were very fortunate because next door to us was, again, the Shakespeare family, an LDS family, Mormon. What was really fortunate for my parents is that the patriarch of the family, Mr. Shakespeare, David Shakespeare, of course, he spoke Spanish. He was very fluent in Spanish. He had done a mission, I guess, somewhere in Latin America, I think actually Mexico, and so he was a fluent Spanish speaker. They were very kind to us. Of course, their children were our best friends, basically. I'm actually surprised I never married a Mormon girl because every once in a while we would attend their church. Of course, when I told Mayor [John J.] Lee that—he's LDS—he just looks at me and says, "Isaac, you would have ruined her." I just say, "Oh, you're probably right, Mayor. I think you're probably right."

Again, growing up I always remember from an early age I wasn't like everybody else. I realized that I definitely wasn't Caucasian. I'm not even sure when it was, but it was easily by kindergarten or first grade that I realized I didn't quite fit in. I think that was exacerbated once they bussed me to C.C. Ronnow. Then I realized I definitely did not fit in with all the Caucasian kids although I was friends with them. I remember that more than anything else I identified more with my black friends. Now, I never saw myself as black. I knew I wasn't black. I knew my friends were a little bit different, too, but I looked to them a little bit more.

I wound up having heroes growing up. As a matter of fact, there are some of my heroes, right there. I don't know if you'll recognize this. That's them. Check this out. Here are my...And I got to meet a few of them, the Tuskegee Airmen. My favorite one is Captain Eugene Richardson, actually. Now, growing up, especially once I learned how to read—I read voraciously—I looked around for people that I could identify with and there weren't that many. There weren't that many Latino figures, role models. I basically imprinted off others. I read voraciously the tales of Native American leaders: Cochise; Monga Corrales; Geronimo, which, of course, was not actually not his name, La Jolla was his name; Red Cloud. I identified with them because I realized they were definitely judged by the color of their skin. Of course, I identified quite a bit with the Tuskegee Airmen because I realized, of course, people treated them differently, too, but it didn't matter. At that point I wanted to be a pilot, and so these guys were definitely my heroes. I read about them. To actually meet them in person a few years ago, for me it's a really big deal. I really do need to put their picture up here; that portrait, the print.

Again, I was conscious of the fact of these racial differences. I didn't think they were a bad thing, but I did realize, yes, you are looked at different; you are different. Again, I kind of looked at it as something that was a point of pride. I reveled in being different. I liked it. But I

realized that I didn't have that many people to emulate. Again, I imprinted off black historical figures.

I mentioned a guy Fred Hymes. I think I inherited a lot of his ways of looking, quite frankly, at the world. Now, he was a really interesting guy. I guess way back when he was going to college, he had been an activist and he was pretty sure that the FBI had a file on him. He was considered a radical. He was from Louisiana. Of course, he knew all about Jim Crow. I think he still retained a certain amount of resentment. Of course, he was a Vietnam veteran who trained as an engineer, but he had been viciously wounded there in Vietnam. Of course, a lot of people were.

As a matter of fact, there were a lot of Vietnam veterans on my street. I was very, very conscious of that. It seemed like a lot of my friends, their parents, their dads mostly, a lot of them had served, most of them in Vietnam, but some of them in Korea. They also weighed very heavily on my mind on that, but not in a bad way. It was just that's something that we do; we fight; we form the backbone of our Army.

Fred, of course, he was a little bit upset because he lost a kidney and part of his liver. Then when he came back to the United States, he would have people still call him the N-word. He was still treated like that. I think that really definitely weighed on him. I heard these stories. When I think of the names that he picked for his children, which, of course, would be my friends...Jamah, the Great; his other son, Oganna. That one kind of makes me sad because of the times. Now I realize, looking back, there was a certain sense of nationalistic pride in some of these countries that were breaking away from their colonial path, including recently at that time Uganda. It's a good thing he didn't name him Idi Amin, though. That would have been maybe a

little bit more problematic. Most definitely I inherited a lot of his skepticism and mistrust because he definitely opened my eyes.

In respect for elders and respect for the military types... We had a neighbor for a while next door. He had a cousin who lived with him. He basically looked after his cousin. He stepped on a landmine in Vietnam and he was held together basically with pins and rods and needles to keep him to be able to walk. I remember his cousin would drive home and say, "Okay, I'll meet you inside." He would take his cousin Roger about ten minutes to get into the house. I guess it was just a miracle that he was even alive. That also gave me an idea of what it meant after you serve your country and give sacrifice... He did sacrifice. He most definitely did sacrifice because he knew that it was the thing to do. These were Tennessee homeboys. I don't want to call them hillbillies because that would be kind of disrespectful, but they literally were from the hills of Tennessee and they had moved out here. But it wasn't just them. It seemed like a lot of people on my street did serve. It was kind of expected for several of us that we would grow up and serve in the military.

I never did get in; I have arthritis. I don't know if you saw me limp around. I guess the state of Nevada considers me to be severely handicapped because, of course, I have arthritis, which really slowed me down. When I was in fifth grade, I sprained my ankle and it never got better and then, before I knew it, it was spreading on to other parts. My parents didn't understand and I didn't understand, but I had arthritis and my joints swelled up. I spent one semester out of school; this is for fifth grade. What finally happened is the next-door neighbor, Mr. Shakespeare, and my mom drove me all the way to Mexicali and I guess they did medicine Mexican style. They do their own direct healing. It did put the arthritis into remission for several years and I was back to being a regular kid.

Maybe it was a good thing. Sometimes I reflect. I told you guys where I grew up was kind of an interesting place to grow up. I still have scars on the fists from people's teeth busting off in your hand. That happened a couple of times. But right on the cusp of being more, I guess, aggressive or athletic, between seventh and eighth grade, the arthritis came back and it really laid me low. Maybe it's a good thing because all the guys I grew up with formed the nucleus of the Donna Street Crips. Before that we did have these little gang warfare things. There was one summer where we were basically warring. My neighborhood was warring with these guys who we now call Arrowhead Acres, which is, again, just right over here.

Back then there was a clubhouse called the Gym Club House. As a kid, I couldn't go over there. Even though I wasn't a gang member, people knew I was from Donna Street, and when I went over there, you were challenge. "Hey, Donna, do you know where you're at?" You had to make a decision: Is it worth it to stay and fistfight or leave? I am not a fighter. I do have anger management issues and I'll step up when need be, but I didn't always want to need be, especially because, again, I didn't travel in packs; I traveled in ones and sometimes it wasn't worth it, and so I'd back off.

Maybe actually having the arthritis was not such a bad thing because right when these gangs were reforming, I missed out on some of that. That gang lifestyle cost my brother a bullet to the back of his leg. He was in high school and some of his friends, including one who just passed away last week, Noel Bright, may he rest in peace, they were the real thing. They were the real thing. I remember my brother was in that gang warfare thing. He clobbered some kid, busting his jaw—some Bloods—he busted the jaw of one kid and another kid was getting away. My brother at that time was an athlete. He was running track. They said, "Hey, go get him." My brother went to go get the kid who was running away, the one Blood who was getting away.



Before you know it, he started hearing shots that were ringing out. Well, the other Bloods were coming in to reinforce and they were taking shots at them. Sure enough, my brother got hit, including his car getting hit. His genius friends drove him back—this happened after school—to Rancho High School because, of course, they had a nurse there, and so they summoned the ambulance from there.

By that time, I had already graduated. I was watching TV... Someone said, “Hey, isn’t that your brother on TV?” I was at my job. There was my brother being wheeled into an ambulance. They looked at me and said, “Aren’t you shocked?” I said, “No. That’s the life that my brother likes to lead. He hangs out with these guys, so I’m not surprised he’s getting shot.” It’s not that I didn’t care. It’s just I was not shocked.

But had I not been laid low there for a year, I might...Or maybe not. Again, I was a little bit of a loner. Again, sometimes the neighborhoods that I went into by myself weren’t the greatest, but I was always aware. I always tried to stay aware. But I always figured I had God on my side and what God couldn’t handle I always had something else to help me. They say that Mexicans always carry knives, but, of course, I don’t believe that. I actually followed that. There were a couple times where I always noticed when people wanted to pick on me—I’m a little skinny guy. But I noticed that even little skinny guys, when they get picked on, it’s never by someone their own size or someone smaller. It’s usually by one or two guys usually bigger than you because, hey, you’re an easier target. I actually had a couple of things taken away from me and I had resolved that that’s not going to happen anymore. After I resolved that no one’s ever taken from me anything forcibly again, which is a different sight. I think the last time that anyone took anything from me I was in seventh grade, but after that it hasn’t happened.

**CLAYTEE: *When the gangs were warring, what kind of weapons, and why were they fighting?***

It's really funny. In the early gang life in the neighborhood, there was a group called the GQ. I'm sure there was some commerce in drugs and there was probably some commerce in prostitution, but it wasn't really big. But where everything changed was in the 1980s. I remember it was about 1985, 1986, it was crack cocaine. It exploded. It hit my neighborhood like a hammer. It exploded. Now there is a real reason to go ahead and rumble with the guys, with the West Coast Bloods, with the Rollin '60's with other sets that were identified as Crips, too, but they weren't Donnas. Some of them were my friends, but these guys that I grew up with, we grew up fist fighting and now all the sudden, by the time I was in high school, they had access to more powerful weapons. They carried handguns. They carried submachine guns. I don't know if they were automatic or not, but people said they were. They just called them Uzis; that's just what they called even if it wasn't an Uzi. They drove nice cars, 280Zs. Hey, my first car was a 1978 Impala that cost me an entire summer to save up for, maybe more than a summer. It also cost me the arches on my feet; it was kind of a hard job. But these guys had cell phones when no one else had cell phones. They were gigantic bricks. They were this tall with an even bigger antennae. You know those, right? They would charge for maybe eight hours.

There is a story where I can identify actual people—actually one was the fellow who just passed away. He was involved in it, but I can't say how because the statute of limitations doesn't run out on murder. It's well known. One of the boys from the neighborhood was being followed by some Bloods. What the Bloods did not know was that this fellow had a cell phone, so he called ahead. Instead of being stupid, these guys I grew up with were crafty, too. They weren't dumb. They said, "Just give us fifteen minutes." A trap was laid. When the Bloods stupidly

followed this kid back into our neighborhood, these three or four guys thought they were going to beat up on my associate here. But when they got there a car came out in front to block them from the front and another car came out from the back and at gunpoint, like cops would do, they were taken out of their cars. There is some corroborating evidence from people who were working with my mom in a laundry. They didn't know what to do. They told my mom, "What should we do?" My mom told them, "Don't say a damn thing." They told me, "Don't say anything else to anybody." Sure enough, from hidden locations these other guys pulled their guns from the hidden locations, pulled them out of their vehicles, and beat two of them to death. The cops, some of them are retiring, they know the case. I won't say the names of the people who were involved because maybe it wasn't even them. But they got beat to death. That was an example.

What it was, this substance, crack cocaine, like I said, it exploded into my neighborhood. It hit us like a hammer. Now the guys had a reason, a real reason, not just because you didn't like them. Now you had a reason to wipe each other out. It got really tough. The income that was coming in was fueling all sorts of things. There was an incredible recruit; this guy was supposed to be like the next coming of Oscar Robertson who Jerry Tarkanian had recruited to come out here, Floyd Daniels. He got busted in my neighborhood trying to buy crack cocaine. Yes, it was my neighborhood that he got busted in. I feel bad for the guy. He has drug addiction problems. What are we going to do? I feel bad for him because he couldn't hardly read.

What finally changed that though was mercifully the Rodney King riots. Again, the young ladies are way too young to remember this one. Back in the late eighties when the video camera was making a revolution, of course, a lot of things that black folk and other people in urban areas were saying about cops, "Hey, man, they're beating the crap out of us for nothing,"

or, “Hey, man, they’re going over to…” That was *yeah, yeah, yeah; right, right, right*. But now for the first time an independent person could actually document the—I don’t know if it was unwarranted or not. I hate to say he deserved it. The guy should have been put under control. But these cops in L.A. put a beating on this guy of epic proportions. They had gone too far. They weren’t trying to arrest him. Hey, I watched my cops take down...I’ve actually seen them in person take people down. When our cops grab someone, they put them down and they put them under control. They’re not punishing them. They are restraining them though and sometimes they’re kind of tough doing that. But these guys were punishing.

As a matter of fact, I saw my own brother get punished by cops. That’s a little story I’ll tell you in a minute. But this was before Rodney King. I managed to see one of our cops whipping on my brother. We had had a fight and I stupidly called the cops that was passing by. I thought they were going to calm him down. No, things just got worse. This gigantic cop tackled my brother and he put my brother under control because he was a little skinny guy. This big hulking cop didn’t have much problem putting my brother under control. But his partner whom my brother had shoved, I guess he got kind of pissed off about it and took his then PR-24 and was working my brother from head to toe.

I wanted to say something to them, and my mom said, “Hey, no, listen, you called them in. Shut up. You’re the one who called them over here. You didn’t need to, so you just shut up and stay out of it.”

This was the old North Las Vegas police circa 1988, I think it was, 1986 or 1987; right along there. Anyhow, while they were taking him out of the house, the one cop who was all, as the kids would say nowadays, butt hurt because my brother dared to push him down, this guy was having a fun time ramming his head into the door jams on the way out of the house. There

was only one more door jam and he had already threatened to shoot my dog because he was barking at him, real nice guy. But there was only one more door jam leading out to the front door, so the guy hits my brother's head against the door jam and does it again and again. Actually when he hit his head the third time, I stood up and said, "You son of a bitch, you can't do that." He turned around and he grabbed me. "You're going, too."

I was lucky. I was charged with battering a cop. It could have been a felony. But I was lucky and smart. I was working and I had enough money to buy my own lawyer, a nice guy named Shock Clement. I retained him for at that time the princely sum of five hundred bucks. I went to court and an understanding judge named Gary Davis—he wasn't a lawyer; he was just an elected judge. I had representation. For a generous donation of two hundred bucks, they reduced it down to...I forget what it was. I think it was disorderly conduct or something. It was dismissed like that. I was very lucky.

Of course, I've had the judge here before, too. I said, "Hey, Judge, do you remember when you let me go?" Yes, he came to visit me here. It was kind of funny. "Hey, Judge, I don't know if you remember that. I've got to thank you." "Why?" "Don't you remember you let me go?" "Really? How did I do that?" I told him. "Oh, okay. Well, I guess I must have been really generous." "Yes. As a matter of fact, you made a joke about it." "Really?" I said, "Yes. My attorney mentioned that I was going to give a donation to the Blind Center for two hundred bucks and you made a joke about it." "What did I say?" I said, "This was a classic. You said, 'Hey, folks, for all of you in the audience, you guys hear how justice is blind? Well, young Mr. Barrón is now trying to remedy that.'" I said, "That was a great one." We laughed about it. It was funny, but seeing the way that cop treated my brother wasn't so funny.

Then we go forward just a couple of years and now you have a case where a black man—yes, I realize he was a suspect and he wasn't pulling over. But, man, those cops, they worked him over. Of course, the prosecutors, in their wisdom, they allowed the case to go to Simi Valley, an all-white, Veteran community where most of these cops live. Of course, what do the folks say? Not guilty, of course.

The Westside erupted and North Las Vegas erupted. But something really powerful happened, too. After those first few nights, there was a big meeting, a big powwow. Many of the gangsters—they all knew each other—they had a high-level get-together right here in my neighborhood, in the city park. They agreed to stop killing each other over turf. They said, “Yes, our enemy is not each other. We're killing each other. Who is our real enemy? The police.” The violence went down after that. Yes, you still had a few killings here and there. Hey, it's the drug trade, of course. I guess if you're in that line of work you've got to be violent. But the really bad gang warfare diminished. I don't think it stopped, of course, and never has stopped, but it definitely did go down. It was noticeable. It was something else.

I'm so happy, of course. One of the reasons I got into this...People ask me, how did you get to being a councilman? Well, I've been dragged into this in one way or another. I worked my job full-time during the day. I'm really fortunate and really thankful that I had some help from the federal government through PELL grants, but it was tough being a young father and working full-time and going to school.

**What did you study in college?**

I was an education major. That's kind of funny. I didn't want to be an education major. I wanted to be a pilot. But I knew that the Air Force would never take me. One look at my joints and there was no way. Same thing with the Navy. I took one of those tests before I took the PSAT or the

ACT, one of those. It's like one of those things that predicts what kind of line of work you should go into. I remember when I got it back. I was thinking if I was going to be a teacher, maybe a science teacher or something cool. I wanted to be maybe an investigator. Back before there was CSI, I was thinking maybe of being a criminologist or something like that. I figured it was something in law enforcement, maybe the FBI. It came back and it said social worker. I said, "What?" If not that, an English teacher. *An English teacher?* I was so upset my mom said, "What's the matter with you? What's going on?" I said, "Mom, this thing...I paid for this test. I paid twenty dollars for this test and look what it says." Then I explained to her what it was about. She said, "Well, hey, I would be really proud of you if you were a teacher." (pause)

I said, "So, what's so special about being a teacher, Mom?" She said, "Well, hey, in Mexico teachers are pretty well revered. You actually have a status. You don't get paid very much money, but you have a status of respect. I would be really proud of you." I even told her, "Mom, that's not going to happen."

Of course, my first teaching job was as an English teacher, teaching ESL. Unfortunately, she never lived to see it. I really don't have that many regrets in life. There are minor regrets. I really regret spanking my children when they were little. I stopped doing that after I met my wife [Lucy Barron]. I have to say she's been a good wife. If ever things don't work out, I could never accuse her of being a bad wife. She's been a good wife to me. I noticed that she disciplined her children just by a look. She would give them a mean look. If they were really bad, she might actually go and talk to them. I couldn't believe it.

Growing up in our house, it was corporal punishment, not from my dad. My dad was very peaceful. He was very gentle. I can actually literally on my hand count the times that I ever got whacked by him. But my mom had been brought up in a very violent situation, and so for her

getting a belt out, one of the retired belts... You couldn't do one of those things where you could time the whack on the leg there. If you would jump, she would go ahead and change the trajectory and catch you at mid jump. I guess that's the way she was brought up, definitely not spare the rod. My dad mostly might look at us wrong and every once in a while a spanking. But usually they were pretty good.

Unfortunately for my mom, she never lived to see me graduate. As a matter of fact, I think she was actually pretty upset because I graduated from high school when I was seventeen. I only had one brother who actually graduated on time from school. My sister didn't graduate. My oldest brother he wound up graduating from an Adult-Ed program, but that was afterwards. She had a lot of hopes for me because she, herself, had wanted to study and become an attorney. She got pregnant and had kids and began working and that just wasn't possible. She said that I was a little bit like my grandfather who I barely remember.

My grandfather came from mixed stock. My grandfather was half Italian and half Lebanese. The family name on that side of the family is Ysassi, spelled Y-S-A-S-S-I. His mom and dad immigrated to Mexico from Europe, but they passed away, as I understand. My grandfather and his brother were brought up by Catholic priests. His brother became a priest, and he [my grandfather] did get lots of education and wanted to become, like in Mexico, one of these guys who did a lot of different things. They grew up in Jalisco. I didn't know that until recently. But he moved a little bit further north into Chihuahua where at one time in his town he was the town pharmacist. He was a *partero*, delivered babies. He was the postmaster. A little of everything. Anybody who had his realm of education, he did lots of different things. It was probably the same in Mexico as the United States.



She had hopes, of course, that I would be like my grandfather. She smoked a lot even though you couldn't tell because she was a very great housekeeper. She was overweight and had high blood pressure. You couldn't tell her about stuff. My dad was very open-minded about things. My mom was very closed-minded about things. I knew she had to take medication. I asked her, "Hey, Mom, aren't you supposed to take that every day?" She said, "No. My doctor said only when I don't feel well." I never heard of any medication like that. She died of complications from a stroke at the age of fifty-two. I was nineteen at the time. I was pretty much devastated.

The one thing I do regret is that I think she died thinking that I was going to finish school. Again, I had left college even though my mom said, "Okay, so you got this girl pregnant. Move her in. Don't stop going to school." Unbeknownst to them, we got married. My mom flipped out for that. "Well, Mom, we got married." "What? You didn't have to marry her. Un-marry her." I was flabbergasted. "Wait a second. What do you mean?" Because I was a little bit conservative when I was a kid. I didn't want my son to be born a bastard. She said, "Do you think I was married to your dad when you were born?" I looked at my dad and he didn't say anything. I said, "What?" "Yes, the only reason why I married your dad was a few years ago, when you were in the hospital..." I had been in the hospital for almost a month because of my arthritis and they were afraid that the hospital, because they didn't have a whole lot of money, was going to come after their house, so they got married to protect the house. "The only reason why we got married was to protect the house. Your older brother was the witness."

I had no idea because they were always together. I was really fortunate because growing up I didn't understand what it meant to have a stepmom or a stepdad. I'd be with my friends. "Hey, man, are we going to play basketball this weekend?" "I'm not sure I can. I have to go see

my mom.” “What? Your mom lives at home.” “Oh, that’s my stepmom.” “What does that mean?” “Well, she’s not my real mom. Well, she’s my mom, but she’s not my real mom. My real mom lives in so-and-so place.” It wasn’t just him. It was several of my friends. But my mom and dad were always together. I had no idea.

As a matter of fact, in my family it was very unusual because they were very guarded about their information. My older brother and sister were not allowed to tell us that they didn’t all come from the same dad. I didn’t know until after my mom died that my oldest brother and my older sister weren’t from my dad. My dad just called them his kids and they called him Dad, but they weren’t from him. I didn’t know because he never treated us any differently. But they weren’t allowed to tell us that.

They had a very unusual egalitarian type of relationship. My dad was not a *machista*. I’m really happy for that. It wasn’t this thing where my dad would come home and you better have my clothes washed and pressed and food, no. They had an excellent division of labor. My dad knew what was expected of him. Everything about the yard and the vehicles was expected of him and he worked on other things, and my mom did most of the cooking and cleaning and got help from us. I remember when they made decisions they always sat down and discussed it. When it came to paying bills, on payday they would literally have all the cash out in front of them and my mom would do most of the budgeting and they would actually put the money...*Okay, Tine—Augustine—Tine, you take care of this, and when I have time tomorrow I’ll go do this.* It was a perfect division of labor. I never knew what it was to have a machismo in the family. That just wasn’t us. Now, with my uncles and their families, there was some machismo there, but not with us. They had an unusual way of supporting each other. When everyone decided, no matter what it was, the other one never went against them.

I do remember one time asking my dad on a Saturday. My friends came over and asked if I could go play basketball. “Hey, Dad, I want to go play basketball.” My dad said, “Did you already clean up the shed like I wanted you to do this and this?” “Well, maybe I could do it afterwards.” “No, I would rather you do it now. Then you can go afterwards. It won’t take you that long.” “Well, okay, Dad.” He went out of earshot and I went inside. Mom was doing the dishes. “Hey, Mom, can I go play with my friends?” My dumb ass didn’t realize that maybe the first conversation was a little bit too close to the kitchen. “What’s that? The water. I can’t hear you.” “Can I go play basketball with my friends?” “What’s that?” “Can I go play—” “Come over here. What do you want?” “I was wondering if—” I didn’t even finish the sentence. *Kapow*, I was looking at the wall. “That’s for trying to make a liar out of your dad.” She was about to backhand. That was it. That’s the way it was.

I bought my first car when I was sixteen or seventeen. I worked to get it and I was very proud of that. But I also bought another couple of cars.

### ***What kind of work?***

I was a chicken cook at a place called P.T. Cluckers. That was my first pay. Oh, yes. They had pizza and farm basket chicken. That was an old local chain. They did research and they figured out that after hamburgers the two most popular foods were pizza and chicken, so that’s what they sold and did delivery. I got a job with some of my friends who were also at Rancho High School. Of course, they gave me one of the rougher jobs. I didn’t care, though. I was still getting paid. I was a chicken cook, a little bit tougher than other people had. Making a pizza is nothing. I said, “Oh, I see how it is. You give the Mexican the hard job, right? But, yes, it’s okay. I got this.” Although because I was supposed to wear industrial-type shoes and they didn’t support my feet

and I wound up losing my arches because it blew my arches and I suffered because of that, actually a lot.

I wish I still had my arches, but I don't regret having suffered a bit to work because I bought my own cars, including buying a '78 Impala. I loved that car. I drove it everywhere. I had a '65 Impala SS, ah, primo.

***Super sport.***

Yes, a super sport. It was stuff of legend. The car now today, if it was running and in halfway decent shape, it would be worth sixty or seventy thousand dollars. And I had a '54 Ford pickup truck. But the truck I gave to my cousin because the engine blew and at that time I didn't know how to rebuild an engine. Then I still had my car.

But after I got my girlfriend, now my ex-wife, pregnant, I was putting all the money towards the cost of the delivery. My mom told me, "Hey, Son, what's going to happen to your car?" This is late summer. "The baby is going to be born in October and after the baby is born, I'm going to go ahead and get the car running." And my mom said, "Nah, I'm tired of seeing that car—that *cucarachero*; that cockroach trap—in my driveway. Have the car running and licensed in one week or I'll just call the tow truck." And that was it. I couldn't even go to my dad because I knew what he would say. *What did your mom say? There you go. It seemed like a pretty good direction to me.*

They never fought. They didn't fight in front of us. I know they had disagreements. They weren't lovey-dovey. I can't remember any time that my mom and dad held hands or showed affection in front of us. But every once in a while they would play around and it felt really weird seeing that because you never want to think about your parents ever getting down to have you, right? But I knew that they would never fight in front of us. If they were pissed you could tell

because they weren't talking to one another at the dinner table and we almost always had dinner together, especially when we were younger. They might be, "Hey, ask your father if he would like some more." "Please pass this to your mother." Then that night they would wait until everybody went to sleep and you could hear them going at it in the kitchen, but they would be whispering at each other. They would be yelling at each other, but in whispers. Sometimes if they were really pissed you could hear them tapping the table. They would be going at it, knockdown, drag-out argument, but never in... My dad would never say, *jpinche vieja!* My mom would never tear down my dad in front of us, either. That was that level of respect that they had for each other. If it wasn't bordering love, they definitely had a deep respect.

***That's wonderful.***

Actually, about the only time I saw my dad was cry was before he said goodbye to her when she went in for her final operation. She had had some aneurysms because the stroke had busted some aneurysms, I guess, in her head. My mom was strong. They told her, "If we don't operate on you, you might walk in a few weeks or in a few months, or you might wind up partially disabled." They let her know that there was quite a bit of risk. But my mom, there was no way that she was going to live disabled. She wouldn't, hell no. She would rather be dead, literally. She told me, "I'd rather be dead than live disabled." My dad knew her mind. He said, "Well, yes, I don't want that for you, either. You won't be happy." My mom even signed her own release for that operation. Of course, medical science in the late eighties is different than today and there were some complications and she died.

**You mentioned that your mom worked at a laundry. Can you tell me more about that and where it is?**

Yes. She worked for many years as a maid at the Golden Nugget downtown. But she also worked in a laundry. Back then it was called Bally Laundry and now it's Mission. She worked there. She didn't have to work all the time because my dad made enough for us to get by. But if my mom wanted some new drapes or a new kitchen set or a new something, she would work then because she didn't like it all the time and my dad didn't ask her to work all the time.

They were really unusual although it was kind of funny—I am thinking back. I guess I will take a little bit of a detour. Again, it was great to grow up in the 1970s, but there really were some racial tensions. If you have a chance to reference another one of UNLV's professors who made the Rancho High School riots boy—

***Stan Armstrong.***

Stan Armstrong, yes. I just met him for the first time last week. Not everything was perfect-perfect. For the most part, we got along pretty well, but not everything was perfect. I noticed that I got along with the black kids just fine and then I got along with the white kids just fine. I remember in kindergarten—things were different back then—the way it normally worked is some of the kids who lived further out, they might live next door and so they would meet up and then they would go down the street to get another kid and then they would go down to the next block and they would pick up other kids. By the time they got to my house, because I lived at the second block over from our school, kindergarten, there might be like a dozen kids, maybe more. We all flocked together for protection. It was definitely a multiracial group. I was the only Mexican kid. They would come over for me and sometimes we would get Doneta, that little white chick next door, and we would all walk to school. After school we took the same way home. As we went the blocks down the street, we peeled off down to where there was two kids and finally the last kid went home.

I guess as diverse as places like Rancho were, there really were some race-based fights even though the kids really didn't hate each other, but it was the thing to do; you fight when you were black and white. I remember one time I actually caused—this is a good one. I actually mentioned to Stan that I actually caused a fight there in my neighborhood. I was the cause of it. I was in kindergarten. It was after school. It was a nice fall day and nice and warm outside and there were lots of people out in the street. That's the way it is in our neighborhoods. I wanted my younger brother to follow me to the backyard.

We did have these next-door neighbors that were a black family. The father and my dad got along pretty well. He was a tall, thin guy. My dad could barely speak English and this guy could speak no Spanish, but somehow they understood each other. They would crack open a beer and hang out; that's what they would do every once in a while.

But the mother, she and her daughters were kind of aggressive. The daughters not so much, but the mother was kind of aggressive. Their son was one of the bullies. He was a big, chunky kid. He had beaten up one of my brothers and beaten up the next-door neighbor kid. Some kids are; whether you're black or you're white, it doesn't make a difference; some of the kids just are bullies.

I wanted my brother to follow me into the backyard. I saw the kid coming up the street, and I told my brother in Spanish, "Hey, follow me in the backyard." "No, I don't want to." "Follow me in the backyard. Look, here comes the black guy. He wants to hit us." That's what I told him in Spanish. "*Aquí viene el negro y nos quiere pegar*" I figured with that my brother would follow me in the backyard. No. What did he do? He ran inside the house. "*Mamá, mamá, el negro nos quiere pegar*" "Momma, momma, the black boy wants to beat us." It was a lie, but I knew, *uh-oh*, I didn't dare go tell my mom the truth. My mom comes out yelling at the kid. Of

course, she does. She's protecting. The guy, "Hey, what are you doing?" Then my brother comes out, "Hey, what are you doing trying to hit my brothers?" "I'm not trying to hit your brothers." "Yes, he ran in to tell me." "Well, they're liars." "They're not liars."

Well, the kid, I guess he must have had some anger management issues. My mom is still yelling at him from near the front door. The kid had a broomstick and he was so angry he chucked it at my mom because he lost his patience. He lost his cool and chucked it. It didn't hit my mom, but it hit our screen door that had a beautiful aluminum design on it with peacocks and dented the bottom. With that, that's all my mom was looking for. "Robert, call the police."

Now, this was a time when the North Las Vegas Police Department, before they became the nasty boys and they beat up people, they were still a small town kind of police force. The cop came out and he took the report, very patient. "Where is the boy now?" "He lives next door." He is documenting everything. He said, "Even if he did do this, the most I can do is just take him to Juvenile Hall." And his parents were like, "Hey, this isn't an assault with a deadly weapon. He threw a broomstick." Nowadays it would be different.

Then the mother next door comes home and finds out that someone, of course, is accusing her baby, momma bear kind of thing. Now she's upset and now my mom is upset. The cop tried to mediate something because he realizes he has a problem here. But two strong women... Oh my gosh. My dad and the other dad are saying, "We need to go inside." But the mothers are having none of this. There was going to be a showdown because they had had friction before. Before you knew it, people start showing up. Of course, the black people in the neighborhood, they are backing up the black lady, of course. The white people are backing up my mom.



The cops eventually realize, uh-oh, we have a big problem here. There are thirty or forty people, maybe more. This is about the same time frame; this must have been 1974-1975 because I was in kindergarten. I wouldn't be in first grade until '76. They call Officer Troncoso. He was a community affairs officer. Of course, they make the only Latino a community affairs guy. He's over there and he's trying to mediate something. My mom is having none of it. The lady is having none of it. They want to rumble. He is saying, "Ma'am, I think you should go inside. She wants to have a fight with you." She said, "Well, I'm not afraid." Now, this lady is a lot larger than my mom. My mom is not a big woman. She was heavysset because my mom was drinking a lot of the time. She gave up beer probably a year or two later. But my mom is ready and she is not afraid. This lady is way bigger. "It's better that you run away and live to fight another day." She said, "Hell, I'm not afraid of her. I'll take her on."

Nowadays this would be unthinkable. There is no way the cops nowadays would haul... They would tell everybody, "You better go inside or everyone is going to go to jail." They block off the street by this time. They block off the street and no one else can come in unless you live on the street because people were coming in to watch all the fun. The women are building up and they start trading insults. They were bad, going back and forth. The lady tells my mom to go back to Mexico to eat her beans. The black crowd starts laughing, *hahahaha*. My mom, I couldn't believe it, she told this lady, "Well, go back to Africa and play your drums." So then all the white crowd...

They went back and forth until finally the lady said, "Well, tell your mother," because my older brother was translating, "that I'm going to put her in intensive care." My brother lost his cool and started crying. "What did she say, Robert?" "No, I can't tell you." "What did she say?" "She said she's going to put you in intensive care." "What?"

Well, my mom must have moved faster than anyone could think. She caught everybody by surprise, probably even herself. That was the days of the magnificent afro. My mom caught this poor lady by the afro and laid her out. My mom was very aggressive. She really was. It wasn't just with us. Now I know why my dad was cool about her. My mom just caught her by surprise, brought her to her knee, and was beating her—it was bad—right in front of the fricking cops. The cops didn't move a muscle to stop. I think it was the attitude because for them back then, they were probably just like, *eh, just some woman fight*. I'm sure that was the attitude. They let them have it. *Bap, bap, bap, bap*.

Finally, the neighbor guy had gone inside. He had gone inside out of embarrassment because he didn't want to be out there. He jumps over the fence. “Lady, lady, she's had enough.” My mom had been dragging her around, even had a bit of the lady's afro in her hand. My dad and him separate them, and he takes her inside. He's got her. “I got you, baby. I got you.” I still remember. And she's crying. “She hit me. Why did you let this?” “No, no, no. We need to go inside. We need to go inside.”

The cops said, “Okay, fight's over. Everyone go on their way.” The cop let out like a Mexican yell, “Yay, *waihaihai*.” My mom starts yelling at him. “If you were half the man you think you are, this never would have happened.” My dad finally picked up my mom and carried her inside. “That's enough. That's enough.”

A few days later my mom was walking. Back then we didn't have the magnificent bus system. Of course, I will say that because I'm a member of the RTC. I remember the RTC. The bus wouldn't go all the way to our neighborhood. It stopped pretty much where Jerry's Nugget is and my mom would have to walk the rest of the way home. She was walking home when she notices the neighbor people, the lady and her teenage daughters, pull up beside her and they

started getting out of the car. My mom is like, *oh no, that's it; payback; I'm going to get beat up by her two teenage daughters and the lady*. "Hey, what are you doing walking? You don't have to be walking." They gave my mom a ride home.

The families reached a level of respect. My dad and the neighbor guy, they just went on the way things were. But now the families could actually live together, too. Actually, my dad was kind of sad to see them move away because he lost one of his drinking buddies. My dad didn't drink too much because it gave him *calabras*; alcohol would give him cramps. But he could have one. If he had more than two, he would get cramps, so he wouldn't drink.

Like I said, the talk last week, it wasn't racial hatred that started the fight. It was a misunderstanding, me. But it did take a racial tone once the rest of the neighborhood...I don't know what everyone was expecting. I guess I knew what they were expecting. Again, that never would have happened today because the cops would never allow that and probably for a good reason although I've got to admit it was one way for these people to blow off steam.

Again, I really miss my parents quite a bit. My dad died here back in 2011. He didn't live to see me get elected here, either, which gets me back to, why am I doing this? Why am I here?

I became a teacher and my very first teaching job was in this little town called Winnemucca, Nevada. I couldn't get a job here in Las Vegas. There was one time in the nineties where they weren't doing too much hiring. I was working as a security guard during the school year, subbing in the daytime and working as a security guard at night. But as soon as the school year ended, after I had graduated, I needed a full-time job because I was now a divorced father. I took a job as a taxicab driver, which is really interesting.

Man, I have a whole bunch of stories on that one, great ones and some of them kind of frightening. I don't know what they do nowadays and I'm sure that the whole industry has kind

of halfway collapsed. But back in the heyday there were lots of jobs available as a taxicab driver, but the Taxicab Authority would train you by showing you pictures of what happened when you didn't follow the rules of safety. You had this guy with his eyeballs hanging out because someone shot him in the back of the head. Another guy that they had to break his legs to get him out of the vehicle because he didn't... You pick up people only at stands. You let people know where you're going. You have a radio. All the safety tips. You only pick up at stands because that's where there is cameras and the bad guys know this and they don't want to be identified.

Anyhow, I needed a full-time job and nothing was coming up. I had to take my first job five hundred miles away from here in Winnemucca, Nevada. I actually drove up there with my brother. My brother has always been a part of my life. My son came with us. I went up there and checked it out. It was a little town, small town.

I was told, "You'll be responsible for about twelve kids." Now, my actual license area is actually in social studies, but it's hard to get hired in social studies because there are a whole bunch of teachers doing that and no one is hiring. I got an endorsement to teach ESL. I figured that would be my way to get in. I figured, *well, I can do this. It's only like ten, twelve kids.*

Well, I move up there. Once I actually started doing the job, you start tracking to see who all the kids are and there are over seventy of them spread all over the school. Because of the way the school was set up, it was really hard to provide services. I have to admit, moving up there was great. The teaching environment wasn't that great because the system they had was not friendly, I think, to special needs kids and ESL kids. But the community was very nice and people could be very sweet, sometimes kind of closed-minded, but very sweet as well.

It was cold and I was away from my family. I learned a lot about myself. I was healing from my divorce still. The good thing was I was now out of the reach of my ex-wife because she

wasn't the very best, either, back then. Right now we collaborate a lot because we're trying to help our daughter out who has some needs herself, so we collaborate a lot. But back then it was not very friendly. Moving away actually did a lot of good to help me.

Curiously enough, in that small town the issue of race did come up. Their problem, there were hardly any black kids. There was like one black family. I still remember the boy being called the N-word right in front of me because I met the boy. I taught middle school, which was fifth and sixth grade. But one day I was visiting the senior high school and there was one black kid in the whole school. His dad was an engineer in one of the local mines. I'm talking to him, a large, chunky built kid with glasses, very bookish, but he looked so impressive. While I'm talking to him, I hear the N word behind him. When I heard that I was like, *someone is going to get beat down right now*. I looked at the kid, and he just said, "Don't even listen to it. I hear that all the time." People would call him openly the N word. He just said that once he graduated in the next year, he was going to leave Winnemucca and never come back. Even with his dad who was still living there as an engineer, he was never coming back.

I always looked at the Hispanic—Hispanic—they were Mexican kids. I was only the third person in the whole damn town who was Latino, Spanish speaking, and the other two were older teachers; one was a Peruvian and one was Costa Rican. I was the first Mexican. At that time in the late nineties, the whole area was seeing an influx—and there's no other way to see it—of Mexicans. They were working in all the small restaurants downtown for minimum wage and probably even less. They worked on the ranches. I got the feeling that many of them were not documented. I never did ask. I noticed that some of them must have been documented because they also had taken some jobs in the mines and had some of the better jobs. But, by and large, they lived only in a few places, in the trailer park and some of them lived on the farms. When I

visited some of the kids who were living in the outlying areas, they lived way out in the boonies. Overall I think they were treated okay, but sometimes here and there you would see things.

They didn't know what to do with these kids. They thought that ESL is one thing, and I was trying to tell my supervisor there that it was actually a different thing. What brought it to a head, though, was there was a horrible case where a young man at the high school got his Caucasian girlfriend pregnant. In that kind of place, the kid can be pregnant—well, she was a little bit heavysset, anyhow, but you won't notice it most of the year because it was cold; you where sweaters. If you were that kind of clothing, you can hide it. The girl worked in a lawyer's office and she was a little bit heavy and no one suspected she was pregnant. Well, she carried to full term.

Some early March morning, the little girl—the girl; now I call her little girl—and her boyfriend and the boyfriend's best friend who was there with them, they had the baby in a park. Now, had they just bundled up the baby really well and put it on anyone's doorstep or head to the hospital or anything, no one would have said anything to them. There is an Indian reservation and it was not necessarily unknown for children to be left on people's doorsteps. But I guess these kids panicked and the girl, as I was told, gave the baby to the boy and said, "Get rid of it." The boy, either he misunderstood, he tried to kill the baby by running it over with his truck. It took a couple of times to actually do the deed. Then he and the best friend took the baby out to the desert and buried it. Just a tragic situation.

A couple of days later, the boy's best friend just couldn't live with himself and told his dad. They went to report it and the police did the right thing, I think. They never did recover the baby's body. They had buried it, but, of course, out there...coyotes. I understood when they arrested the kid and charged him with first-degree murder. My understanding, the way the law

works, I can understand where they didn't arrest the best friend because, of course, he reported it. But there was no action taken against the girl. She was an accessory to a murder. Here, I think she would have been arrested, too, here in Las Vegas.

But when the story broke there, I said, "Well, why didn't they arrest the girl?" "Well, why would they arrest the girl?" It became a bone of contention. I realized, as much as I like it here, I really don't belong here. I had had, for a while there, some hopes of actually staying there. I'm hunter; I'm a fisherman even though I didn't grow up with it. I had to learn that as an adult. I could hunt and fish there pretty close by. But I realized I was too far from home; my kids were here, so I moved back to Las Vegas and moved back to Rancho High School. I couldn't believe it.

I had bought my first house when I was only twenty-two years old. I bought it over here, again, just on Stanley Street, just a few blocks away, and I wanted to be far away from here. Again, I was so enraged was one thing. If you would have asked me what I wanted to do, well, I want to become a fighter pilot of some kind or any sort of pilot. I'm going to be way far away from here and never come back. I didn't want to have anything to do with Las Vegas because here, to do any decent fishing, you have to drive far away.

I'll go to the local ponds because sometimes that's where you go. I hate going to Lake Mead because it's not nice to fish there. There is no shade, either. I like going to the little ponds that are in Central Nevada, a place called Sunnyside, a place called Eagle Valley. I hunt, well, not around here. If you do any hunting around here, you're going to go to prison.

I started teaching at Rancho High School. I got hired as an ESL teacher. Now I'm teaching real Mexican children. I had taught Mexican children in Northern Nevada, but the funny thing was I didn't consider myself at that time Mexican American. I just was who I was. I guess

my mom was kind of standoffish with a lot of people. I guess nowadays you could even say that she was a little bit antisocial because I had never been to a quinceañera. I was a little, tiny kid and I remember going to some fiestas, but not that many. I spoke Spanish with my parents, but I really didn't speak it outside the house.

But in Winnemucca, the one thing I'll say about Winnemucca is it took me moving five hundred miles away from my home to learn what it meant to be a Mexican because there were these families from Nayarit and Morelos and they brought their families with them. Because I was a teacher, I was someone of respect, they invited me to their homes. I had tamales and they were nothing like my mom's tamales.

They knew that I was from Chihuahua. Certainly, people from Mexico know people from Chihuahua because we have a certain accent that I didn't know I spoke with. For instance, the word *muchacha*; girl. Someone from Chihuahua says it *mushasha*, so that's the way I would speak it. I was using the diction, the grammar patterns of a Chihuahuan Mexican of the 1940s and '50s; that was my Spanish, and so sometimes the kids didn't understand me.

When I was teaching the kids the concept of an imperative, something that makes you say something. I said, "Well, these are imperatives." *Well, what does that mean?* "It means you have to do it; that you must do it." *What does that mean?* "Well, you know, it's like you have to do it; *lo tiene que hacer a huevo*" They laughed, right? Literally, kids look at me... *Uh, he used a bad word.* "What bad word?" *You're not supposed to say that.* "What, a *huevo*?" *Uh, you did it again.*

*A huevo* literally means "by my balls." But, hey, that's the way my parents would speak, forcibly. You have to do it; *a huevo*. "Ma, do I have to do it now?" *¿Cómo que no? ¡A huevo!* "Okay, sorry."



I was using an antiquated form of Spanish to try to talk to these kids. Well, guess what? I learned to speak Spanish for real. I spoke Spanish, but I didn't speak Spanish. They taught me. I learned. I could read English and I have a pretty good reading level, so I taught myself how to read Spanish and then write it. The beautiful thing is Spanish is a lot more phonetic than English. Now, more recently, I can use a few more of the accents because I was never really schooled in Spanish; I had to teach myself. I tried doing French, but that didn't work although I made a lot of headway after I got divorced. For while there, when I was getting my divorce, I did meet this beautiful French Italian lady and then I made a little bit of headway there.

Yes, it's very curious that I had to move five hundred miles away to learn what it meant to be a Mexican.

***Other than the language what else did you learn when you say "learn to be a Mexican?"***

The extended family. Of course, here in Las Vegas, I have aunties who live here, one who just passed away who lived also on the other half of Stanley Street. I got my Tía Maria who lives in a trailer down the street here a little bit there. But we were pretty much cut off. But them, they were very united. They did everything together as families because they were extended family groups who moved over. One guy might move over, but he'll bring his brother and his wife and maybe they'll bring a cousin and their children. Before you know it, they have half the village over here.

There are other things, ways of speaking. Their Mexican food is much different than my mom. Attitudes about family, attitudes about living.

**Can you tell me more about the food before you go on?**

Oh, yes. For instance, in Nayarit. I was shocked; they gave me a tamale. For Christmas I go over to the house and they gave me tamales. I'm biting into it and, *ck*, I hit something hard. They

made their tamales with olives inside with the pit. They were delicious. I never had it before. I couldn't swallow the damn things. *What the hell is this?* "Do you like it?" "Oh, yes, it's tasty. But I've never had a tamale like this." There is that; different food types, very similar to what I had had, but at the same time very different.

Also, you have to remember that in the seventies and even the early eighties we didn't have Mariana's Market. There was no such thing as El Super. There was no Cardenas. There was something called *El Relámpago Cubano*, but that was Cubano. Eventually there was a place called Los Arcos, which was probably one of the first ones. But they were, by and large, very few. You couldn't get Mexican cheese. My mom was forced to cook sometimes with yellow cheese. "Mexicans do not cook with yellow cheese."

***Oh, really?***

Oh, yes, they don't do it. Their cheese is *queso fresco*, *queso panela*, *queso cotija*. If a place has yellow cheese, it's not Mexican. Macayo's, I know it's going out of business and a lot of people are going to miss it, they made their food with yellow cheese. Little subtle things like that.

I also began to empathize a lot with the immigrant kids who came over. The immigrant kids who were most recently here didn't know how to speak any English, they missed their homes, and now they're being taught and they have to learn English. One little kid I met, I tell you what, everything that I learned about English language acquisition, in those classes—I actually had to take a couple of classes before I could teach it or get my license, and later on I got a full teaching endorsement—it's kind of funny because I could actually all the progression in these kids. That one kid acquired English faster than anyone could possibly teach him. That's the way it is: You acquire language; you don't actually learn a language; you acquire it. This kid Adrian came early the second semester and by the end of the school year, man, he was speaking

almost without an accent. His favorite show was “Sheena, the Warrior Princess,” and he could actually quote from that. Incredibly bright kid. He is probably a fricking engineer or something really super nowadays. Other kids were having a much tougher time and everything in between.

Again, I did have to move back because my family is here. I think being around those families kind of really highlighted just what it meant for me to come back here, but I had to learn it five hundred miles away.

***How did you instill those new things in your family when you got back?***

A lot of it had to do with my brother Carlos. As much as he’s meant to me—I don’t have a picture of him up here, but I should—he died a little bit over a year ago. I still struggle with that quite a bit. One day my brother and I were out fishing and we realized, hey, how come—a lot of it has to do with the lady that he married, my sister-in-law, Yolanda, who is a teacher also at Rancho High School. I teach with her today. We were fishing out one day and we noticed something. *How come our family is so damn dysfunctional?*

Again, my mom and dad, I don’t think they were that much dysfunctional, but we really weren’t together. We noticed that his family was very together. They would have a party and everyone was all together. I remember one time they had a party one time when I was a kid and that’s about it. They might get together with my auntie or have my auntie over and my uncle, but it was not that often. We noticed that they were very united for things.

Then I told him what I had seen over there in Winnemucca. We had decided for this: That we’re going to be more united, and so we did start having more big family functions. Mostly, it was my sister-in-law’s, Yolanda’s family; they led it. They would invite us over, too, because we were a part of the family.

My brother, it's kind of funny because he remembers that day that he actually told his father-in-law, "I got your daughter pregnant." He said her dad just gripped his hands together, closed his eyes, and said, "You know what? You better leave right now. I don't think I can talk to you." Everything from a Catholic priest who actually called my brother in and said, "Hey, do you know you ruined that girl's life?" Yes, he told him.

My brother was a troublemaker; he really was. That's the brother who got shot. But with fatherhood and after my mom's death, I'm not going to say that my mother's death changed him because it took a while, but he became moderated. For a while there, he was working at the test site back when they were still in operation. He earned pretty good money doing that. But then he got a job working in casinos and the Culinary Union, also, working as I forget what level cook.

I became a teacher and he confessed to me, "Hey, I'm thinking about doing something, but I don't know what you'd think about it." "Well, what's that?" "I'm thinking about becoming a hairdresser." And I looked at him and said, "You mean a barber?" "No, a hairdresser." "What do you mean, like cutting women's hair?" And he said, "Yes. I was watching other people do it and I think I can do it." I looked at him kind of funny. There is a homophobe in me back then, back in the early nineties. "Okay." He went through the whole school and he did that.

My brother was a special ed kid. He told me how he got through the proficiency exam; he cheated because my brother was basically functionally illiterate when he graduated from high school. He was functionally illiterate.

What it provided for him is he really grew as a person because that was the creative outlet that he needed, working with people's hair, and he was really good at. He made lots of money doing that. But then he noticed something...

I was a teacher and as a teacher I had a friend who asked me to be a soccer coach. I had never coached. I didn't even know the rules of the game. I was a soccer coach because I was a licensed teacher, but these other two guys were supposed to be the actual soccer coaches. I just tagged along. I figured, *hey, maybe I'll learn how to become a coach and years from now maybe I can become a coach myself.*

Well, the very first game was a blowout. I gassed us. My team got smoked ten to zero. It's because they weren't trained. These two guys who were supposed to be the coaches, they weren't coaching. The kids were out of shape, undisciplined, un-coached, nothing. The only reason why we didn't lose by twenty is because the other coaches called it quits. They called out, "Two touch, no shooting." They were just practicing on us. The two guys that were supposed to be the coaches got into a fistfight at halftime, accusing each other of being stupid. I had to separate them. They both quit. The kids look at me, *what now? What now, Coach?* I got yellow carded. I didn't even know what the hell that was. I got yellow carded because I tried to call time out. There are no time outs in soccer.

After the game, my friend Carl Zesseta, the head coach, said, "Hey, listen, I know you didn't sign up for this. If you want to quit, I won't hold it against you." But I feel like a duty to these kids because I had been suffering along with them since that summer.

That night I went to the library and I went to the book store, and I actually got a book, *Soccer Rules for Dummies. That's what offside means.* I got a couple of coaching books. Then I thought back to all the trainings that I had partaken in as a kid with football. I never did play any organized sports because my parents didn't have the money. I wanted to be part of the Boy Scouts, but you have to pay for that too.

I just gave the kids training regiments of things that I had seen. I rented some videos. We did what they did. I rented an African team's actual drills that they do. I had to teach these kids the African step. I was hard on them; I did all my teaching things. About the fifth game, we finally won the game. The very first few games were terrible because my guys who were out there for five minutes were already asking for a sub. I had to condition them. I just started late from where we should have been. We actually did pretty well. We finished off five and eleven or six and eleven; something like that. We actually won a few games. I was actually really proud of that.

### **This was with Rancho High School?**

At Rancho High School, yes. As a matter of fact, I learned the tactics. I learned everything. The very first time we played against a rival, they had a top-flight program and their AV coach was incredible. He was the head coach at Rancho back in the late seventies or early eighties. He had coached my brother and he coached my cousins, one of whom got picked for the Olympic Developmental Team, the ODT, but he couldn't play because he didn't have any papers; he wasn't documented. But at Rancho, this guy coached something like four state title teams and my cousins were on all four of them. He knew me. He said, "Don't I know your family?" "Yes." He was Coach Minego. He was coaching the JVs because he just like coaching, but he didn't want the pressure of the varsity coach.

The first game, they had this one tall Argentine kid and they clobbered us like seven to one, seven to two—seven to three, I think it was. (Indiscernible score book) He was the pride and we hadn't scored on him.

It was the last game of the season and I had now established myself as the coach. I had added a few kids. I was teaching ESL, and so I had access to some of the immigrant kids. I had

an immigrant African kid, my fastest player. I had pretty much figured out how I am going to nullify that Argentine kid; I had my African player, Gamichu De'Kebo—I said, “You’re going to be his shadow.” “Coach, shadow? You mean... Why, because I’m black?” “No, because you’re going to be this close to him.” I put my shoulder into him. “Now, you do that. No, you’re too far away.” He put his shoulder into me. “That’s too far away.” “Too far?” “Yes. Closer. Closer. Pretend you’re going to knock me over. That’s how close you’re going to be to this Argentine kid.”

I had acquired another kid, another immigrant kid who had been ineligible to be on the team, but I got him eligible and put him on the squad. Now we learned about defense. Again, I knew how to shuffle a person around. With only five minutes to go, we were winning, two to one. We were beating them. It seemed like almost at the last second, the Argentine kid got away. Gamichu got tripped by one of their players. Maybe it was an accident; I don’t know if it was. The Argentine kid got away, center, and the guy who got away from his defender headed it in, and they score on us. Ugh. We reformed but before they could really attack, the whistle blew. Man, ah, so close.

Coach Minego came across the field and shook my hand. “Congratulations, you guys got way better.” Coming from him, it meant everything. He told me, “You guys are the first team who we haven’t beat in a month.” “Really?” “Yes. I thought you guys had us. That was a good move. That African kid was a good move, man.” I couldn’t believe who was telling me this; Minego.

I was coaching and that was great. I learned a lot. I used the coaching to reach a lot of those other kids that came to Rancho High School. I wound up making a team after school. I thought I was going to be done because club soccer is a big deal. All these kids, they play on

their club teams after the season. But I had several of the kids who came to me because they were either, A, kind of chubby and no one wanted them or too small or didn't have a lot of skill, or they were these little *Cholitos*, these gang members, and no one wanted them. A group of these little misfits, some of whom had already played for me, they came to me, "Hey, Coach, will you make a team?" I said, "No, I can't do that." "Yes, yes, you can do it. You just make a team for us and then we'll coach ourselves."

I said, "Okay, guys." I was suspicious, but I went ahead and I registered the team in this one thing called the Azteca League. I'm in there registering the team with a guy. He was a nice guy. He was a father of one of the players. He had his own league. I'm in there and I'm surrounded by all these soccer jerseys and I didn't know what the hell they were. You enter the team. Okay, it's going to be an Under 16 team. Okay, good. They said, "What's the name of your team?" "Well, I don't know." "The kids didn't talk about it?" I said, "No." "Well, normally, most of the teams are named after one of the professional teams."

They have all these brightly colored jerseys. They look amazing. I looked around and one stood out more than anything else. [Searching computer] Where is my Chivas? I'm looking around the room and one jersey stood out more than any other. The stripes of Chivas de Guadalajara. I said, "That one." And he smiled at me. "The Chivas, huh?" I said, "Yes. The Chivas? That's a name; Chivas?" "Yes, Chivas." He just smiled because he was from Guadalajara himself. He said, "That's Mexico's most popular team. Their bitter rivals are a team called America; that's the yellow team over there." He said, "That's the name of the team; America."

That's one thing I did gain appreciation for. When I was in Winnemucca, I met the two other teachers; one was at an elementary school and one Roger...I forget his last



name...Peruvian guy. I went to go meet him and he taught me all about second language. He started speaking to me in Quechua. "The same way that you couldn't understand my Quechua, that's what your students feel when they go to you." *Ooh.*

I said, "Where are you from? What's your nationality?" "Well, I'm American." *Ah.* Then he taught me my second lesson. You're American; I'm American, too. "I thought you said you're from Peru." "Young man, America extends from Canada all the way down to Tierra del Fuego. You're a North American; I'm a South American; but, nonetheless, we're still Americans."

That's why insisted that we name the team that we made Copan, Pan-American, because if you're a Canadian, you're American.

Before we move on to your organizations, can you tell me about the changes that you saw since you left Rancho High School to when you began teaching—

Oh, I haven't left.

To now. But when you graduated.

Oh. I'll get to that.

I named the team Chivas. By the way, I helped the kids get the team going and then I paid for their inscription fee. Before I knew it, the team was mine and every Saturday I was out there. Sometimes I took my kids with me. I spent so much money on soccer balls and we did car washes for their uniforms and sometimes the kids didn't have to pay—every kid normally pays two bucks to pay the ref at halftime. Some of the kids didn't have any money, so I took care of that. But the most positive thing, though, was, A, I gave a team to kids who no one else wanted them. If you're really good...Then the kids who didn't have skills, we got them better. But I could always tell their parents, "Hey, listen. Two days on the week and on Saturday you know where you're going to be, and when they get home they're going to be too damn tired to do

anything else.” I never had too few kids. I always had lots. Sometimes they would get better and other teams would steal them away because they would have more prestige. We didn’t win that much because we didn’t have too much talent and I wasn’t that great of a coach. But I started learning and, before you knew it, we started winning more. But, mostly, I wanted these guys to have fun.

That’s one thing. When I left Rancho I told my students it was part of the pride of being part of Rancho and a lot of it had to do with our sports program, especially the football team. Our football team was feared and respected. If someone is listening to this, most definitely, if you grew up here in the eighties, it’s absolutely true. If you went to a party, and by the time I was in high school, I would go to these parties across town—I shouldn’t have been there—you go to a party and you could hear, “They’re from Rancho.” You could hear the little insults. “F Rancho; we’re going to get Rancho this year.” But instead, we wore it as a term of pride.

I grew up in a neighborhood that produced people like Greg Anthony. Of course, he led Rancho to a state title win over Gorman High School. A quick little... We were happy to be part of Rancho High School and this is why. In that state title game in 1986, state title game against Gorman High School, they had Matt Opic—I think that was the guy’s name—but we had Greg Anthony. The game was going.

I didn’t ditch and go with some of my friends to the state title game in Reno, but there was a contingent of Rancho High School kids and a contingent of Gorman kids. At any Rancho game, if it was a home game, it was always standing room only because we were packed. We had a lot of pride; we did. We were doing one thing whether it was football or basketball: *We’ve got spirit, yes, we do. We’ve got spirit. How ‘bout you?* And they point to the opposing fans. We would out cheer teams on the road; we had that much pride, oh, yes. The Rancho fans traveled

really well and we took over these other stadiums whether it was Western High School or Eldorado. Vegas wasn't much of a competition at all, but they always competed well.

Anyhow, the Gorman kids came back with this one: *We've got money, yes, we do. We've got money. What happened to you?*

To which this one guy who was one of my schoolmates in the class, captain of the football team, Jason Rivera, he came up with the best line ever. "Oh, yes? Well, money can't buy you state." Hey, guys, that's the one. *Money can't buy you state. Money can't buy you state. Money can't buy you state. Money can't buy you state. Money can't buy you state, yes.*

It was actually documented. There was a sportswriter who was up there and documented the whole damn thing. Rancho won.

I still have hard feelings against Gorman. I do believe they have undue influence. Hey, at one of the games there when I was a senior, it was the district final against Gorman. We had them pinned well on their side. There was no way they could do anything. Their quarterback threw a pass. There was an interference call against our defender, one of my friends, Chuckie Porter. He was nowhere near the guy and they flew a flag anyhow. They kicked a field goal and wound up beating us in overtime. But that game I still think was rigged. I don't care what anyone says. Maybe it's urban legend. If any of the Gorman people are hearing me, I don't care how many lawyers you get, that game was rigged and you know it, damn it.

By the way, the next year after I left I'm happy to say that in 1988, basically almost the same team, actually maybe a little bit less talented Rancho team went to the state title game and whipped the best team in the state. They had never seen a team like us with our speed. We whipped them. If they thought that team was... You should have seen that team because that team had several people who ended up playing in the NFL, including one of my friends named Mike

Pritchard who won a National Championship with Colorado and was selected in the first round by the Atlanta Falcons and he also played for the Broncos. We had lots of talent. We would have beaten that team. I still think we were ripped off and that's not just me being sour grapes. We still see things that are not quite kosher even today. I can show you guys videos that you guys would say, *what? That actually happened.* Yes, that actually happened.

I would say that the school, of course, had a very large black student body. It was a rough school; it really was; there's no other way to say it. Even little skinny guys like me would get into a fistfight in a corridor, and I was sick from arthritis and I would still get into fistfights.

When I came back to do my student teaching at Rancho High School, it might have gotten just a little bit rougher. By the time I came back in 1997, the school had changed quite a bit. It was still a tough school, a hard, tough school, but they added a magnet and things began to change. We still had lots of fights and there was a few what they call racial fights, but they were mostly between gang members, black gangs and Latino gangs. But then later on, we had Latino gangs going at it because there were different sets. That didn't calm down until Desert Pines and then Canyon Springs got opened up and it spread the population. What happened is most of the population, I'd say—and I'm happy we grew up kind of tough and resourceful—Rancho High School changed because the neighborhoods changes; you had a huge influx of Latinos. The neighborhood that I grew up in, like I said, it was maybe a little bit over half black, and now it's 70, 80 percent Latino, maybe even higher than that. The neighborhoods around Rancho also changed. The gangs were still there, but the district, to avoid getting sued and to raise the test scores, added this magnet, and it's a good thing.

Vegas got closed because it was 90 percent high minority; they had to move it out to the mountain. It turned into a full-time magnet school. For a short time, Rancho High School was

supposed to be demolished and rebuilt where Kenny Springs is at, but the Rancho alumni got together and pressured the school district and that never happened. Rancho has stayed Rancho at the same spot.

But now a significant portion of the students there are magnet, and that has some problems and it has some advantages. One of the advantages is that it has brought in a whole different set of students. Rancho High School is still a majority Latino, but even the Latinos who are bussed in, the magnet kids, even they are majority Latino.

I have my neighborhood kids. I went to this one nonprofit fundraising race for autism way on South Buffalo way in the Southwest. I was out there and I had announced it to my club, the Hispanic Student Union, and the kids were out there; they had made it. I couldn't believe they had made it out there so far, ten of them, a significant amount. That's because a couple of their friends lived out that way and they knew all about it. Yes, they have these South Asian friends who live out that way, so it was no big deal for them to catch a ride to get out there.

Rancho is much more diverse, I would say, the students, economically. But the one thing that I think is bad is we've really cut down as to how many of the neighborhood kids get serviced. It makes me kind of sad because the amazing programs that we have there, I don't know if all my neighborhood kids have full access to them. The principal there is trying to do some new things, have some CT programs, programs that the neighborhood kids are going to be interested in. But whenever you look at the AP classes and you look at the honors classes, if you look in there you'll swear that Rancho is in a majority Asian community.

Again, I don't have a problem with Asians coming in, not at all. I think this is a fantastic thing. But there is reasons why many of the neighborhood kids are not getting into these classes although some are represented there, but not as many as you would think, not in the same

proportion. If you have a 70 percent Latino school, you would think you should have 60 percent, 70 percent Latino membership in those classes, and that's not quite the case. I don't think it's the teachers' fault, but there is something that seems wrong.

I was so happy when the school district closed down the so-called opportunity schools. Those were a dumping ground for students that nobody wanted. It just so happened they were like 80, maybe 90 percent black and Latino. There is something fricking wrong when you look at the list that kids are being referred. If you looked at those schools, you would swear we were in the Deep South or something. There is something wrong with it. I was so happy that the school district eliminated those schools.

***How long were opportunity schools around?***

Since before I can remember. Since before I was there, oh, yes.

**Where were they located?**

Ha. North Las Vegas.

***I need to do research, okay.***

***ELSA: There was one right next to my house, just a couple of feet away.***

To me the most depressing thing is the two original opportunity schools were Washington Opportunity School and Jefferson Opportunity School. Of course, if you went there, you would swear that the fricking schools were African or African American, black American communities, and they weren't. I'm so happy the City of North Las Vegas has acquired both of them. After the schools were shut down, I saw an opportunity. I talked to the mayor, and he pulled a few strings. We got that one [Washington] actually just transferred to the City of North Las Vegas. I'm going to turn it into a flex building to be part of a greater learning campus. I have the plans. I'll show

them to you. We're going to turn it into a flex base for small art shows and we're building the Canyon Electric Building into our new library.

***The new library that's coming on...***

Yes, we have a little library that's coming in downtown North Las Vegas to replace the one that we had shut down.

***Is this the one on Bonanza and Twenty—***

Oh, no. No. This one is right here down on—this is one of my pet projects here. I am really excited. I get goosebumps on this one. [Perusing materials] This is one of my *raison d'être*. This is why I'm elected and this is why I'm really happy to be over there, because I think I'm really getting lots of really important things done. This is really important. My new library...Here is where you come in off of Lake Mead. The Washington School is right here. I get confused because...Okay. It's right here. Here is Fifth Street, Lake Mead. I champion this one. That's the new Expertise cosmetology school.

***Oh, yes.***

That one wasn't so easy. I had to resuscitate that one a couple of times. It was on life support a couple of times, but we got it going. Gwen Vermonde has been doing a fantastic job. The Washington School is right here. We have acquired all this land and we're putting it all together. We're going to shut down that street here. I forget the name of the street. Anyhow, we'll shut this down and that's the Canyon Electric Building that very soon is going to be a new library. We're going to build onto it and make it bigger. It will have a job creation center there. It will have an educational component. The whole thing will be a part and the center point will be what will be the Washington School.

Just down the street around the corner—I have so many stories for you guys. A library is still needed in this area. So many people don't have access to education. They desperately need somewhere to go.

**You do have a lot of stories and we want to preserve all of them.**

I get it.

*No, we want all of them.*

I know you guys have a time limit. I get it.

**But we want another session with you.**

*We want to come back.*

I'll tell you what. Before you go, let me do this. Let me tell you how I got into this thing and then I'll tell you—there are several things. I guess I don't toot my horn a lot, but there's a few things that I can say that I can genuinely point to as real accomplishments. One of them is this; getting some things done here in North Las Vegas: A police chief; that Latino police chief who has redone our police force.

*Yes, a woman.*

That was the latest one. I'm proud of that one, too. She wasn't my idea, but I'm happy to support her.

But I'll tell you this. So, how did I get into this whole thing? Well, in the same way that I got hooked into doing coaching, I wound up being an assistant—at first, my friend Carlos Aseta, he was the advisor to the Hispanic Student Union. It's kind of complicated. They are a school of community service leadership organization. They do a lot of cultural awareness projects, projects out in the community. It really just needed somewhere to meet on Fridays, so they started using my classroom because back then, the original school, I had a pretty good-sized classroom. Well,



before I knew it, I was like the assistant advisor. But then eventually he left Rancho High School, so the mantra was left me and I inherited this one organization that had these kids who were really, really active. Now, I didn't want to be the advisor. I kind of got hooked into it.

I was the kind of guy who was kind of resentful of the Democratic Party because I thought they had used Latinos to further their own interests. They would have Democratic speakers come and I really wasn't all that warm to them. But then I started seeing how the students were really active politically, including a young woman named Mariana Kihuen, so I started going along with it. Before you knew it, I started supporting certain causes, marching in the street with Dreamers, for Dreamers, because, of course, many of them were my students.

There is nothing more depressing than almost every May for the first ten or fifteen years of my teaching at Rancho, I'd have the same thing that would happen where I would have these children that would come up to me and say, "Mr. Barrón, can you help me?" "What?" And the key was they closed the door. "I don't have any papers and I didn't know about it." So many kids didn't even fricking know they didn't have papers until at seventeen years old, they're getting ready to graduate, and they tried to join the Army and they were asked did they have their birth certificate, and their parents can't give them one because they don't have one. Or they try to apply for FASA and it turns out they don't have papers.

I started taking action. We started helping to get people elected who I knew were going to be friends to the community, politicians locally and then eventually even national ones. Before I knew it, I was involved in it, too. Then here I am, I'm working out and helping in the community and then eventually you have to turn the mirror. By the way, our crowning achievement was definitely—I had to be careful on how I did this one—but we were able to help out Senator Reid in his reelection campaign where he was destined to lose in 2010 until his opponent who had

everything to win showed up at Rancho High School and couldn't take fifteen minutes of questions from my students.

**What year was this, again?**

Twenty ten. Actually, I'll be honest with you guys. If Sharron Angle is listening to this, I am not sorry that you lost and it was a setup. Yes, you got set up. It was an ambush from the very beginning. I feel totally justified in pulling that one off. Back before President Trump, she was playing the race card against Latinos. If you guys don't remember, all those horrible ads that she was portraying, *Harry Reid, an illegal aliens best friend; illegal; illegal; illegal*. That was shocking back then. That is nothing compared to our president now, racist in chief.

The kids videotaped her appearance. We had her covered from three or four different angles, no pun intended. She actually was on tape talking about how the terrorists came from Canada; that they looked Asian; they didn't look Latino; they looked Asian. That got uploaded to a very young YouTube, it caught the wire, and it spread across the country. The race, the national race, the Republicans had their eye on Harry Reid to knock him off, the arch Democrat, President Obama's right-hand man, and they were just counting...

By the way, the Republican National Party actually sent a handler, a handler, a six-foot-four, Nordic-looking guy to handle him, and he failed because they were a bunch of morons and fate was on our side. Someday I'll tell you guys the full story. It's amazing.

The next day, from that point on...Harry Reid was ten points down and wound up beating that lady by six or eight points. I'm proud to say it was done at Rancho High School. It's very simple. Sharron Angle had already declared herself an enemy of my community.

How did I get here? Here we are doing all sorts of things on the national level and I started looking around and realized things aren't doing so well here in my city. This building that

we're sitting in? A hundred and thirty million dollars. Does the city really need a hundred-and-thirty-million-dollar building that really is only now beginning to be actually populated? There were a lot of things that were being done and I saw my city being run into the ground. Why is this? Why is that?

Actually, the seeds of it had started back when I was still a teenager. The apartments that are just beyond the Maya Cinemas came in, at that time in the late eighties, this was one of the highest crime rate areas in the city. Here we were having some new apartments that were going to bring in another fifteen hundred residents into an area that has a lot of high crime. I was a member of a small group called the North Las Vegas Homeowner Association. I was a representative on that. I was seventeen. I went to the city council meetings and I still think it was very underhanded how they got approved because the residents were coming out and we were totally against it. Resident after resident after resident was speaking out against it. *Hey, there is a lot of crime.*

What I didn't understand at the time, whoever was going to build the supermarket, the agreement was they wanted more rooftops, and so they were only going to come if the apartments were getting built. But that doesn't excuse the fact that the neighbors didn't want it, all of us. It went on and I learned about tabling. That city council with that mayor, because they didn't have the vote for it, they tabled it and they tabled it and they tabled it until one time in a December meeting there was only me and two other people from the group who showed up because everybody else was out Christmas shopping. It was the only thing on the agenda to get voted. But they saw that our group wasn't there. Something really weird happened. They adjourned the meeting for a little bit and went in the back and came back and put it on the agenda and it passed. Of course, it did.

At that point on I realized just how important it was because it's the city's. Hey, with all respect to our congressmen, it's not congress who keeps the lights on, yes, the streetlights. It's the city council. They don't fix the streets. They don't mention the firemen that show up to your house. They're not the ones who approve licenses. It's your city government; they're your first line of defense. I realized it wasn't working for us, so the kernel was planted way back then.

Then we go twenty years later here and I saw an opportunity because I noticed that the rest of North Las Vegas was being left behind, and this, the classic part, the only thing that city council before we came on had to show for redevelopment down here was a new Taco Bell. Oh, I guess they also did redevelop Arby's. Give me a break. They needed a new vision. Although it kind of frustrated me sometimes, about 90 percent of my time is spent trying to fix things down here, but there is a reason; it's because we've been left behind for so long. There is no other way of saying. Well, a chain is only as strong as the weakest link and this link was rusted. On another occasion I'll tell you guys about my vision, and I think we've made a lot of progress.

**I want to know about the vision. I want you to talk about this. I want you talk about your entire vision for this older part of the city because you've done fantastic with Aliante and all of those areas.**

Now, some of it is mine and some of it I share, but we all do this together. I had an idea that we have so much available land in the downtown core, but what we don't have is access to things, like newer employment, medical care, and I knew we were going to have to address those kinds of things for my students, maybe, to get a job after they graduate. We identified some key markets that we wanted to go for: Medical, education, some entertainment maybe, but medical and education more than anything else. Also, I was looking at quality-of-life issues. This was in 2013. This was at the height of the bust. For a while you couldn't get people to come down here

to reinvest in North Las Vegas. I had a town hall meeting and the residents and some businesspeople who showed up, I thought that their number-one issue was going to be crime. Their number-one issue was, of all things, graffiti, tagging; they were tired of seeing it. I had a couple of businesspeople who said, “Yes, we were actually going to go ahead and open up our store over here and we looked in the area and there is all that tagging, all that graffiti. I don’t want to pay to be taking that stuff off.” We addressed that.

We have the best graffiti program in the valley. A lot of it has to do with... We were going to get tough by whacking these kids who are the graffiti artists until a judge and his assistant set us straight on that one. “So, Councilman, what you’re telling me is you want to be tough on all these kids of color who already have people getting tough on them? You want to get tougher? Is that what you’re telling me?” “Uh, we don’t want to do that, do we?” “No.”

We came up with a more creative solution. The solution was—it’s kind of funny. We kind of make fun of it. I found a crew that uses a program—get this—they have a paint truck. They’ll show up to a place and they take a picture of the graffiti or the tag, whatever it is. They have the background of it. They have an onboard computer that does matching of the background and so they can adjust the paint to match the background. After just a few minutes, they paint it and it looks like the graffiti was never there. The key is getting it removed as soon as possible because the graffiti artists, what they groove off of is... They graffiti it and then they take pictures of it and they want everyone to know. What happens when you remove it? They come back a few minutes with their friends. “Hey, man, what happened to your tag? It’s not here.” “It’s not there? Where is it? It’s gone. How did that happen?” Well, it cost the graffiti artists, especially the kids; it’s difficult for them to get the paint; it’s expensive. After they have spent

thirty or forty bucks for the paint and then we remove it the next day, it's not worth it for them to paint there. We use basically market forces to get rid of them.

But to pay for that truck...I didn't have any money, but I noticed that there was a beautification fee of twenty-five cents attached to every water bill. One of my guys said, "Hey, Councilman, if we just raised that to a dollar, we can get three or four trucks." I went for the full dollar and I got rebuffed. Believe it or not, some people in the community fought it, the whole dollar. We struck a middle ground and we raised it to seventy-five cents. That allowed me to get two graffiti trucks operating.

Also, if you go onto your phone—the employees here who are left are so great. If you go onto your phone, you can download a fantastic app. The app is called Contact NLV. Check this out. This is great. [Pulling up app on phone] My team came up with this one, too. Check this out, Contact NLV. When you hit it, it says this and then what it does is go straight to a camera setting. If you're out on the street, like, say, over here on Lake Mead, and you see something that has some graffiti, you load this up, fire up Contact NLV, you take a picture of it, write a brief description of what it is and where it's at. But the satellite has already marked it, too, because you let the satellite mark it. You upload the Contact NLV. Our team gets it and dispatches someone. We guarantee that it will be removed within seventy-two hours. If it's couches that have been left on the side of the road or something, we guarantee action within seventy-two hours.

But here is the beautiful thing about the graffiti truck. I took on these guys. If they are cruising and it's in the area, they get it, go by there, hit it, and they're gone. We've actually had residents who have reported graffiti on their way to the store and on the way home it's already gone.

***Oh, that's great.***

When the Review-Journal wanted to do a story on our graffiti program, they couldn't find any graffiti in downtown North Las Vegas to use. I shouldn't say this, but they had to go to Clark County to take pictures in Clark County of one of the washes to get the graffiti. That's one little thing that's made a huge change in here. Just drive around. There's not very much of it. And if you do see it, all you have to do is report it and it will be gone.

***That can do a lot for the pride of the community.***

Oh, yes, most definitely. I'm working on an anti-dumping thing that will be the first of its kind here in Southern Nevada, but we have to work out a few legal details and I have to work out some things with a few of the disposal companies, too, but it's going to be good. There is that.

Some of it, also, we had to change the way we do business with our business licensing and our inspection department. Give good customer service to encourage people to come down here. Some communities have money to throw at people to encourage them to come in. New York was giving all those incentives to Amazon, right? We don't have that kind of money. We have a little bit of money in redevelopment that we can encourage people to improve the façade, but that's not a whole lot of cash. But what we can do is guarantee them that if they build in North Las Vegas that they'll have their inspections done in a timely manner so they don't lose money in cost of overruns and delays. They can choose expedited plan checking.

That was one of my ideas. I got them from one of the developers. He said, "Hey, I'd be happy to pay extra if you put me at the top of the list." Even if you charge him ten thousand dollars extra, he will save that because people start charging him interest on his projects from day one. If he's delayed three months, he's spending more than ten thousand dollars in interest and not getting anything in return. They are happy to pay extra.

All we do is just hire a third-party consultant to come in and handle their case on a case-by-case basis because that is kind of like a pass-through. It costs the city nothing. They get their plans reviewed expeditiously and they're able to go out there and start making money. That's how we're getting more development than Las Vegas and Clark County. They can't keep up with us because we have a much quicker turnaround on plans and inspections. You can buy licenses over the counter here in the City of North Las Vegas; you can't do that anywhere else. Henderson is trying that. They're trying to catch up to us. But because we're small we can move really quickly. I told our city manager, a succession of them and now we're on our third one, "We need to be nimble." That's what's gotten us to beat everybody.

We also acquired the old site right here, the old site for the Jefferson School. We acquired that one. We had to buy it, but I had to do some convincing. Actually, for that one it's too fresh. Let's just say I played pretty good politics to make that one happen. I'm really happy the school district saw it our way because we're going to build something they're going to be happy with, too. I try to partner with the school district. As a consequence of them working with us, I've pledged my support of the school district. Anything they need that we can do to make their life easier, we're going to do.

It's been rough, but now we have a theater coming in; Maya Cinemas is coming in.

[Note: Maya Cinemas opened in North Las Vegas in January 2019.]



**Left: Maribel Estrada Calderón with Mr. Barrón during interview.**



