Through their Eyes: Experiences of Mexican Immigrants in Green Bay, Wisconsin

Kathryn Ebben
To my family, friends, and all the others who helped me along the way, 
too numerous to name but impossible to forget

And for God, with whom all things are possible
Table of Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................................5
Part 1: Introduction to Mexican Immigration .............................................................................7
  1. Mexico and Mexican Immigration ......................................................................................9
  2. Mexicans in the United States .........................................................................................15
  3. Mexicans in Wisconsin ......................................................................................................20
  4. St. Willebrord Parish .........................................................................................................26
Part 2: Narratives of Mexican Immigrants in Green Bay, WI ..................................................29
  Introduction ...........................................................................................................................31
  1. Rosa ..................................................................................................................................32
     Rosa (Spanish) ....................................................................................................................38
  2. Antonio ..............................................................................................................................43
     Antonio (Spanish) ..............................................................................................................47
  3. Lupe ...................................................................................................................................51
     Lupe (Spanish) .................................................................................................................55
  4. Francisco ...........................................................................................................................59
     Francisco (Spanish) ..........................................................................................................62
  5. Isabel ..................................................................................................................................65
     Isabel (Spanish) ...............................................................................................................68
  6. Agustín ...............................................................................................................................71
     Agustín (Spanish) ............................................................................................................75
  7. Carmen ..............................................................................................................................79
     Carmen (Spanish) ............................................................................................................85
Part 3: Conclusions ..................................................................................................................91
  Introduction ...........................................................................................................................93
  2. Common Themes ..............................................................................................................94
  3. Connecting the Data and the Stories ..............................................................................95
  4. Ties with the Larger Community ....................................................................................97
Appendix ..................................................................................................................................99
  Appendix A: Discussion Questions ...................................................................................101
  Appendix B: Works Cited ...................................................................................................104
  Appendix C: Letter to Possible Interviewees ..................................................................108
  Appendix D: Interview Questions .....................................................................................109
  Appendix E: Follow-Up Letter to Interviewees .................................................................113
Introduction

The United States is a nation of immigrants. The ever-present influx of immigrants has enriched American culture and strengthened this country, although immigration itself has created controversy. Even in the contemporary United States, immigration, especially Mexican immigration, remains a very present and controversial topic. According to the United States Census, there are currently 20,640,711 individuals of Mexican descent living in the United States. The number of Mexican immigrants in the United States is greater than the total number of immigrants in any country in the world, with one-third of the number of foreign-born persons living in the United States today having been born in Mexico. This number is not unprecedented, however. Between 1850 and 1870, Irish immigrants composed at least one-third of the foreign-born population in the United States, and Germans made up between one-quarter and one-third of immigrants between 1850 and 1900. Despite the precedents that other immigrants provide, Mexican immigrants still face unique challenges in their adjustment to life in the United States.

Immigration is a complex issue and each immigrant’s experience is unique. The development of this book is intended to provide a context for understanding Mexican immigration in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Throughout the first part of this book, I hope to explain how Mexican culture and society affect Mexican immigration in this country and provide an overview of the experience of Mexicans in the United States, with an emphasis on the Green Bay, Wisconsin, community and the assistance that the St. Willebrord Parish provides. The second section is devoted to interviews with seven individuals from the Hispanic immigrant community in this city. The backgrounds of these individuals vary greatly and the stories that they share offer witness to the multiplicity of experiences that characterize immigrants’ journeys. The third section will conclude the book with connections drawn between the research presented in the first section and the stories told in the second. It will also highlight common experiences among the immigrants interviewed and provide connections with the lives of individuals in the greater Green Bay, Wisconsin, community. The appendix provides discussion questions meant to stimulate conversation and encourage reflection.

My desire to create this book was based on my experiences working at St. Willebrord with the Hispanic immigrant population in the summer of 2009. The concept for this book is based on research that taking the perspective of individuals from a different culture may create empathy and lead to a decrease in discrimination. Investigations performed by Margaret Shih, Elsie Wang, Amy Trahan Bucher and Rebecca Stotzer and discussed in the article “Perspective Taking: Reducing Prejudice Towards General Outgroups and Specific Individuals” demonstrates that individuals who are able to take the perspective of members from a different cultural group, such as through a movie or a book, are able to relate more to this individual and feel empathy towards him or her. In addition, this feeling of empathy can then translate into a decrease in discrimination towards members of that cultural group. Additional research supports the theory that reading about discrimination and increasing empathy decreases prejudice, as shown by studies done by Krystina Finlay and Walter Stephan. I hope that readers of these interviews will gain a more empathetic understanding of these Mexican immigrants in Green Bay, whose values and aspirations are most likely not very different from those of the readers.

---

3 Ibid.
Introduction to Mexican Immigration
1. Mexico and Mexican Immigration

Introduction to Mexico

Mexico is a country of rich cultural diversity. It is the twelfth most populated country in the world and has the fourteenth largest land area. The country’s great size provides for a wide diversity in landscapes, including mountains, plains, plateaus, deserts, and coastline. The heritage of Mexico is equally as impressive. Before the arrival of European conquerors, advanced civilizations such as the Aztecs and the Mayans existed in this area, and the remnants of these civilizations can still be seen today in the forms of pyramids, clothing, ceramics, metalwork, and carvings, as well as their influences in contemporary dance, food, art, and speech. In contemporary Mexico, these historical artifacts survive and the unseen influences continue, serving as links to a present that is filled with a culture just as rich.

Population

The population of Mexico consists of three different ethnic groups: mestizo, indigenous, and white. Mestizos, people of mixed white and indigenous ancestry, make up the majority of the population, approximately 60 percent. The indigenous population is approximately 30 percent and the remaining 10 percent is white. Spanish is the main language spoken by Mexicans, although indigenous languages such as Mayan and Nahuatl are spoken by a small segment of the population as well. Three-quarters of the Mexican population identifies themselves as Catholic with 6 percent identifying themselves as Protestant. In comparison with the United States, half the U.S. population is Protestant while only 24 percent identifies as Catholic. Life expectancy in Mexico is 76 years, although the median age is 26.3. The United States shares a similar life expectancy of 78 years, although the median age is older, placed at 36.7. Ninety-one percent of the Mexican population is literate, as opposed to 99 percent in the United States. Seventy-seven percent of Mexicans live in urban areas, slightly lower than the U.S. figure of 82 percent.

Economy

Mexico’s economy has been growing over the past century. The economy is based on agriculture, industry, and services. Agricultural cultivation employs approximately 15 percent of the population and some of Mexico’s more important agricultural products are corn, wheat, soybeans, coffee, beef, dairy, and wood. Industry employs 26 percent of the population and includes areas such as food and beverage production, iron and steel manufacturing, mining, textiles fabrication, vehicle construction, and tourism. The remaining 59 percent is employed by

the service sector. In the United States, 23 percent of the workforce is employed in manufacturing, 36 percent work in professional or technical fields, 25 percent in sales, 16 percent in other services, and less than 1 percent in farming, forestry, or fishing. According to the World Bank, Mexico’s gross national income (based on purchasing power parity) per capita is $14,270, whereas in the United States the figure is $46,970. Mexico has a current estimated unemployment rate of 5.6 percent, although the underemployment rate, which includes the amount of people who are employed but who are not able to work enough hours or earn enough money to meet their needs, may be as great as 25 percent. In the United States, the unemployment rate is estimated at 9.4 percent, although there is no rate of underemployment. Although the current unemployment rate in the United States is greater than that of Mexico, incomes in Mexico are much lower, generally one-third of that in the United States. Fourteen percent of the Mexican population does not earn enough money to feed themselves on a day-to-day basis. In addition, Mexico’s economy was devastated in 1994 with the devaluation of the peso, which caused a deep recession. The recovering economy was damaged by the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008.

Mexico’s economy has also been hurt by policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA, an arrangement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico that was signed in 1994, sought to eliminate trade barriers between the three nations by eliminating tariffs on imports and exports. NAFTA has affected Mexican agriculture by making it cheaper to import food from the United States than buying products that are grown in Mexico, leaving Mexican farmers without a market. According to Tim Padgett, “Less than 3 percent of Mexican farmers today can compete with cheaper and heavily subsidized agricultural imports from the United States.” Since NAFTA was created, the richest ten percent of Mexican citizens have become richer, whereas the poorest ten percent has become even poorer.

Problems

Other issues plague Mexico besides a bad economy. Migration from rural to urban areas, especially the capital, has lead to overcrowding and pollution. In some areas, particularly the north and southeast, a lack of fresh, clean water has resulted in a higher rate of illness and diseases. Environmental problems such as deforestation have resulted in the destruction of natural habitats of various animals. A decrease in the quality of agricultural land has resulted in

9 Ibid.

a simultaneous decrease in productivity, a serious concern for those who depend on the land for their livelihood. Lack of work and the poverty rate have combined to give Mexico a high emigration rate, with 3.61 of every 1000 people leaving the country each year. This number places Mexico with one of the highest emigration rates in the world and the highest emigration rate in Latin America.14

Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, and Michoacán

The four-state area of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, and Michoacán is where the majority of Mexican immigrants in Green Bay have come from.15 Lupe, Agustín, Rosa, Francisco, and Antonio, who are interviewed later in this book, all came from the state of Jalisco. In addition to Jalisco, Rosa has also lived in other states, including Zacatecas. Isabel is also from Zacatecas, and Carmen, the final interviewee, is from the state of Toluca, which is not previewed in this section.

Jalisco: The state of Jalisco is home to many of the things considered quintessentially Mexican, such as mariachi and tequila. The name “Jalisco” means “on the sand.”16 This state literally is on the sand since it borders the Pacific Ocean. The terrain in Jalisco includes mountains, with the Sierra Madre range running right through the state. Despite the topography of the land, agriculture is still practiced here, with corn, beans, and wheat being three of the most common crops.17 Jalisco produces the highest amount of corn of any state in the country and raises the second-highest number of cattle.18 Many of the fields used to grow wheat in this region are now being converted to growing other produce, such as peas, broccoli, and cauliflower for corporations in the United States. Jalisco, along with Guanajuato, Michoacán, and several other regions, is part of what is known as the “Central Breadbasket” of Mexico because this area accounts for 20 percent of the country’s agricultural land.19 The capital of Jalisco is Guadalajara, the second-largest city in Mexico. Guadalajara is an important center of food distribution, textile manufacturing, and technological production, especially electronics and computers.20 Although a considerable amount of land is devoted to farming, Jalisco is one of the most heavily populated states in Mexico and its economy is one of the most flourishing. Because of the importance of agriculture, religious and regional fairs dedicated to produce are common here. Jalisco’s climate varies, with its temperature ranging from 64 to 79 degrees Fahrenheit.21

14 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
**Zacatecas:** The state of Zacatecas is located on the northern border of Jalisco. Zacatecas is a native Náhuatl word that means “place where the grass abounds.” The grasses Zacatecas is known for consist of grains and medicinal plants, some of the agricultural products of this region and are also important for supporting the cattle raised in this state. The discovery of mineral deposits in Zacatecas during European colonization lead to the building of mines in this area and an increase in the importance of this state, with its burgeoning wealth displayed in ornate colonial architecture. Silverworks are still produced here today, as mining remains the chief industry. Tourism is an important industry here as well, as it is in the rest of the Central Breadbasket region. Government-subsidized programs assist artists of traditional crafts in an effort to prevent migration from the country to the cities. Important festivals in Zacatecas are predominantly religious, although the city of Zacatecas does have a festival to celebrate its founding. Zacatecas is one of the poorest states in Mexico and approximately one-third of its population has immigrated to the United States. The climate is dry and because of its location in the Sierra Madre Mountains, the temperature averages 61 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Guanajuato:** Guanajuato is located south of Zacatecas and shares its western border with Jalisco. The word “Guanajuato” means “hill of the frogs;” the state is named for several hills in the region that appear like frogs. Guanajuato is located on a mesa in the Sierra Madre mountain range and some of its elevations reach over 9,800 feet. Despite its varying terrain, Guanajuato’s fertile soil facilitates the growth of a variety of crops, including cotton, sugarcane, corn, and tobacco. Cattle are also an important industry. Guanajuato, similar to Zacatecas, contains important silver mines that are an important contributor to the state’s economy. Guanajuato played an important role in the Mexican Revolution because it was where the first

---

battle for independence, lead by Miguel Hidalgo, was fought. Well-known individuals from Guanajuato include the famous muralist Diego Rivera as well as Vicente Fox, who was elected president of Mexico in 1995. A few well-known festivals are the *Fiesta de las Iluminaciones*, in which Guadalajara is lit up with lights and fireworks, and celebrations in September that commemorate Miguel Hidalgo’s call for independence. The area’s climate ranges from semi-dry and hot to temperate, with the average temperature range being 61 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.33

Michoacán: Michoacán borders on the north both Guanajuato and Jalisco and the Pacific Ocean on the west. The name Michoacán comes from a Nahuatl word meaning “the place of the fishermen.”34 The Sierra Madre range covers Michoacán, which causes the variety of climates that are present in the state. Michoacán is also known for being the wintering grounds of the monarch butterflies, and monarchs are even seen to cover the trees that are found in this state. The presence of the indigenous Purépecha population in Guanajuato has contributed to the state’s rich history. Temples and other Purépecha ruins can still be seen today in addition to its beautiful colonial architecture.35 Michoacán played an important role in the Mexican Revolution because several of its leaders were from this state and many of the battles were fought on its soil.36 In contemporary Michoacán, agriculture is an important industry and avocados, of which Michoacán produces the highest number of anywhere in the world, are one of its principal economic crops. Mines, cattle, and hydroelectric facilities also support the state.37 Michoacán’s economy has been affected by poverty and a lack of employment, which results in the state having one of the highest rates of people who immigrate to the United States.38 Some important festivals in Michoacán include a remembrance of the 1943 eruption of the Paricutín Volcano as well as Maiapita, a festival that celebrates *atole*, a flavored drink made from corn.39 Michoacán’s climate varies greatly from the mountainous North to the sea-touching Southwest, with its range of temperatures between 55 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit.40

---

Why Immigration from Mexico Occurs

Immigration from Mexico to the United States is a very prevalent issue. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, “About 11% of everyone born in Mexico is currently living in the U.S.” Sometimes whole families immigrate; other times individuals make the journey alone and then support their families by sending money home. Rural poverty is an important contributor to immigration to the United States. The majority of Mexicans immigrate to the United States for financial reasons. Although many of these immigrants have jobs in Mexico, their positions do not pay enough for them to support both themselves and their families. Poor educational opportunities force Mexicans to seek low-paying jobs which also do not allow them to support their families. Moving to the United States, even while working at a relatively low-paying job, can allow immigrants to better support a family than in Mexico.

2. Mexicans in the United States

Demographics

The Mexican population in the United is different than the population in general. Almost 40 percent of people of Mexican heritage were born outside the U.S., as opposed to 13 percent of the rest of the population. In addition, 63 percent of Mexican immigrants have come to the United States since 1990, which highlights the contemporary nature of this phenomenon. Mexicans are younger than the U.S. population in general, with an average age of 25 as compared to that of 36 for the population at large. Although immigrants are often accused of not being able to speak English, studies show that approximately 60 percent of Mexican immigrants are able to speak English proficiently.\textsuperscript{44}

History of Mexican Immigration in the United States

Mexicans have lived in the United States before the boundaries of what we currently know as the United States were created. Mexicans made their homes in the southwestern United States before these areas were incorporated into the country. The Texas War of 1836, the Mexican American War, and the Gadsden Purchase added land to the United States from that which had previously belonged to Mexico.\textsuperscript{45} Subsequent decades saw an increase of Mexicans in these areas as employment in the railroads, farms, mines and other areas drew immigrants from Mexico; these immigrants often created their own neighborhoods where they could continue their traditional practices and culture.\textsuperscript{46} The Bracero program established during World War II encouraged seasonal farm workers from Mexico to enter the United States with the promise of earning between 10 and 15 times more than they could at home. At the termination of the Bracero program in 1966, however, seasonal workers did not stop coming to the United States. The pull from the agricultural industry continued to draw migrants into the United States, and growing opportunities in year-round employment in slaughterhouses, poultry plants and restaurants have encouraged more and more workers to settle permanently in the North.\textsuperscript{47} During the 1980’s, the number of Mexican immigrants in the United States increased rapidly due to Mexico’s poor economy, and shifting employment trends resulted in a wider dispersal of the United States Mexican immigrant population. Currently, immigration from Mexico in the first decade of the Twenty-first century (2000 to 2008) appears to have slowed slightly in comparison


to the previous decade, although data is incomplete. Possible causes for this phenomenon area a downturn in the U.S. economy as well as stricter immigration policies.\textsuperscript{48}

**Figure 1: Legal Permanent Residents from Mexico 1820-2008**


**Where do Mexican immigrants settle?**

Historically, Mexican immigrants settled in the areas closest to Mexico, with Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California being especially heavily populated. Many immigrants settled in cities because of the employment opportunities available there. The later Twentieth century saw a shift in destinations, with the South and Midwest becoming more common destinations as well. States such as Georgia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin began to have an increase in the number of Hispanic immigrants as Mexicans began to transition “from a regional minority to a national presence.”\textsuperscript{49}

**Issues facing Mexican Immigrants in the United States**

Mexican immigrants in the United States face a number of different issues, namely maintaining their cultural identities, navigating changes to family structures, and decreasing language barriers. These issues are explored more fully in the interviews provided in the second section of this book.


Maintenance of Cultural Identities: The maintenance of cultural identities is a significant issue facing Mexican immigrants. The question of whether to assimilate into American culture or remain separate from it determines the extent to which immigrants are able to maintain their cultural practices. Mexican names, stores, and food help to maintain a Mexican presence within the community; Mexican music and television shows are available from the mass media. The celebration of certain traditional festivals is slightly more difficult however, because city ordinances often prohibit gathering in the streets, parades, or celebrations that occur for extended amounts of time. In order to celebrate these traditions, it is necessary to adapt the traditional Mexican practices into something more feasible with American society. Many Mexican Catholics and other Mexicans have been able to continue their religious practices and celebrate religious festivals through churches, though their manner of celebrating may have had to be adapted slightly to account for American customs as well.

Changes to Family Structures: Changes to family structures are a challenge to Mexican immigrants as well. In Mexico, the extended family plays an important role in people’s lives. In the United States, many Mexican immigrants still place a high importance on families and their families are often larger than those of other Americans, consisting of both nuclear and extended family members. It is almost impossible for family dynamics to remain exactly the same, however, because it is rare that every member of an extended family moves to the United States. Connections to family in Mexico are often maintained through travel and other means of communication. In addition, family structures change because Mexican immigrants often see changes to traditional gender roles. The strong and authoritative “macho” male traditionally present in Mexican culture comes into conflict with more egalitarian roles practiced in the United States. Mexican immigrant women working outside the home further challenges the traditional household structure.

Language Barriers: In addition to changes in family structures, language barriers also present a problem for Mexican immigrants. Some individuals choose to leave their mother-tongue behind in order to more completely assimilate into the American culture. In order to maintain a command of the Spanish language, many immigrant families speak Spanish in the home and rely on their knowledge of English for interactions outside. Immigrant children frequently have a better knowledge of the language than their parents; however, this may occur at the expense of their knowledge of Spanish. Additionally, immigrants’ abilities to speak Spanish often change slightly as they are influenced by the English speech patterns observed

New words are occasionally added and speech patterns are re-interpreted, leading to a variety of Spanish that is uniquely American.

Reception of Immigrants

The reception of immigrants in the United States today varies greatly. Although the U.S. prides itself on being a nation that welcomes the tired, the poor, and the masses yearning to be free, the history of its reception of immigrants has never been very good. Each wave of immigrants that entered the United States, from the Irish and Italians and the Chinese and Koreans to the Mexicans and Nicaraguans, has met with resistance and discrimination from those who have settled here previously. While today there are plenty of people who welcome immigrants, many immigrants have experienced discrimination in the form of ethnic slurs or racial profiling. Unfortunately, stereotypes are often perpetuated by representations in the media. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, 82 percent of Hispanics see discrimination as a problem that affects them, with differences in language and appearance being the most common causes.

Legal versus Undocumented Immigration

The stereotype of Mexicans as undocumented immigrants is one factor that has contributed to the discrimination against this group. The problem of undocumented immigration has been especially relevant in recent years, with various bills and policies attempting to create immigration reform. Of the nation’s 11.9 million undocumented immigrants, over half (59 percent) come from Mexico. In addition, of the 12.9 million Mexican immigrants in the United States today, the majority of these immigrants are undocumented. Current immigration policies passed in 1965 limited the number of immigrants coming from Latin American countries. Individuals with family members already in the U.S. were able to enter more easily than those who had no relatives in the country; legal entrance into the United States required a wait that could last several years.

Many immigrants choose to enter the U.S. without legal immigration documents because it allows them to do so more quickly. Swimming the Rio Grande, trailing through the desert, or hiding in a vehicle are three ways immigrants are able to enter without documents, but all routes

---


present difficulties.\textsuperscript{60} Payment of a smuggler to assist in crossing has become more common, although this practice does increase the expense of crossing and can create additional dangers, like violence and rape.\textsuperscript{61} The greatest number of undocumented immigrants enter the United States through states that share a border with Mexico, specifically Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Despite the possibility of apprehension, injury, and even death, some immigrants choose to enter without documents because the allure of a better life in the United States is so strong. Not all undocumented workers enter the United States by crossing the border without documents, however. Some undocumented workers come to the United States with temporary visas and are then unable to renew them. Although they enter the country legally, the expiration of their visas changes their status and makes them subsequently undocumented.\textsuperscript{62}


3. Mexicans in Wisconsin

History of Mexicans in Wisconsin

Although Mexican immigration has often been viewed as a recent phenomenon, Mexicans have lived in Wisconsin since the beginning of the Twentieth century. Some of the earliest Hispanic settlers in Wisconsin came as a result of the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. These immigrants settled in Milwaukee and found work in the city’s factories, especially the tanneries. Mexicans were recruited to work in the tanneries because of a decrease in cheap labor from European nations and also because the outbreak of World War II had reduced the number of workers available in Milwaukee during this time. Some factories also used Mexican immigrants as strikebreakers. When the Great Depression came, unemployment rates rose and Mexican workers lost their jobs; relief agencies assisted many of them in returning to Mexico. The number of Mexican immigrants in Wisconsin remained low until the outbreak of World War II, when an increased number of workers was again needed.\textsuperscript{63}

Mexican immigrants did not only work in factories in Milwaukee during this time period; many Mexican immigrants were also employed as agricultural workers in rural Wisconsin. The close of the 1920’s saw a rise in the number of Mexican-American migrant workers. The majority of these workers came to Wisconsin from Texas to help with the sugar beet harvest, although other migrants worked harvesting cucumbers and on smaller vegetable farms. The number of Mexican-American agricultural workers increased during World War II, when a federal program placed eight hundred Mexican-Americans in Wisconsin. This number grew to over 2,600 by 1948, and the end of the war did not decrease the number of Mexican agricultural workers in Wisconsin. Rather, the establishment of the Bracero program assisted Wisconsin farms in employing Mexican and Mexican-American migrant workers if they were unable to find other help.\textsuperscript{64}

In the 1970’s, many Wisconsinites began to migrate from the country to the city, and this phenomenon occurred with the Mexican immigrant population as well. This migration was caused by a decrease in jobs: an increase in the number of machines used to pick and sort produce decreased the number of manual laborers needed for these positions. In addition, urban areas offered better paying jobs, which created an extra incentive for moving to the city. The majority of these Mexican immigrants relocated to the cities in the larger Milwaukee area. By


1980, there were approximately 35,000 Mexican immigrants living in Wisconsin. Since that time, the number of Mexicans in Wisconsin has grown to over 192,000, although the majority of them still reside in the southeast corner of the state.

Demographics

According to the Year 2000 Census, the demographics of Hispanics in Wisconsin are different than that of the population as a whole. The data in this census do not strictly compare Mexicans with non-Mexicans, but rather Hispanics to the Wisconsin population at large. The data fit closely enough to be used as a comparison, however, because the majority of Hispanics in Wisconsin (66 percent) are Mexicans.

Age: The Hispanic population is younger than the Wisconsin population as a whole. The median age for Hispanics in Wisconsin is 23 years, as compared with the 36 years of the larger population. Only 3 percent of the Hispanic population is over 65 years of age and 13 percent is under the age of 5, whereas 13 percent of the total Wisconsin population is over 65 and only 6 percent is under 5 years of age.

Living Situation: Hispanics differ from the Wisconsin population regarding living situation. The Hispanic population is more urban, with ninety percent of Hispanics living in urban areas, as compared to 68 percent of the population in general. Seventy-six percent of Hispanic households consist of families living together, versus 67 percent of the Wisconsin total. Hispanic families also have a higher average number of people per family than Wisconsinites in general, 3.8 compared to 3.1 persons. There is also a larger percentage of female householders in the Hispanic population: 22 percent of Hispanic households were headed by a woman as opposed to 14 percent in the population in general. The average value of homes owned by Wisconsinites is higher than that of the Hispanic population by 24 percent and fewer Hispanics identified themselves as owning homes.

Income and Employment: Hispanics in Wisconsin also differ from the greater Wisconsin population as regards the income that each group earns. The median family income for Hispanics is $35,733 as compared with $52,911 for the population in general. This figure is especially significant because Hispanic families tend to be larger, which means that there is less money to be spent per member. The disparity in income between Hispanics and the Wisconsin population has increased in the 30 years previous to this study. In 1970, Hispanics earned 84 percent of the Wisconsin total, but currently this group only earns 68 percent of what the rest of Wisconsin earns.

---

65 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
the population does. Close to 23 percent of Hispanics live under the poverty line, while only 9 percent in the total population does, although this figure has improved since the previous census in 1990. Unemployment for Hispanics is also more of a problem than for the Wisconsin population at large; the Hispanic population is twice as likely to be employed.\textsuperscript{70}

**Mexican Immigrants in Green Bay**

Although it is difficult to determine exactly, Mexican immigration in Green Bay most likely began in 1976 with the arrival of several Mexicans from Milwaukee. These immigrants came to Green Bay to work in the meatpacking industry and were some of the only Spanish-speakers in the city, aside from a few Texans who also worked in the plant. The Hispanic community in Green Bay began to grow as these individuals encouraged their families and friends to move to this city. These immigrants liked Green Bay because it was a smaller city with less crime and also offered higher pay than big cities. Despite the encouragement, the community remained rather small at first, with only 15 or 20 members after the first 8 years, with the majority being from the Chihuahua and Jalisco districts of Mexico.\textsuperscript{71} Between 1980 and 2000, however, Green Bay and Brown County experienced the third highest increase in Hispanic immigrants of any county in Wisconsin.\textsuperscript{72} In 1989 the Mexican community in Green Bay began to grow due to the expansion of the Packerland meatpacking company. With the addition of a second shift, the company brought hundreds of its employees from Washington State to the Green Bay area, who then in turn encouraged their family members and friends to move to the Green Bay area.\textsuperscript{73} Since its beginning in 1976, the community has expanded to include individuals from many other Latin American countries, including Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, although Mexicans still make up the majority of the Hispanic immigrant population.\textsuperscript{74} There are currently over 8,800 people of Mexican descent living in Green Bay, which places them at 9 percent of the city’s total population.\textsuperscript{75}

The meatpacking industries have historically lured immigrants to Green Bay, an occurrence that continues today. Many of the Mexican immigrants in Green Bay work in the meatpacking industry, either at JBS Packerland or Dressed Beef. TNT Crust, a business that makes pizza crust, Sanimax, a company that works with the hides from the slaughtered cows, Bay Towel and other packaging corporations are the main employers of Mexicans today. Additionally, some Mexicans work in housekeeping in the larger hotels. A growing number of


\textsuperscript{71}Sánchez, Luis. Personal Interview. 25 Nov. 2009.


\textsuperscript{73}Sánchez, Luis. Personal Interview. 25 Nov. 2009.

\textsuperscript{74}Maczka, Sr. Melanie. Personal Interview. 9 Oct. 2009.

Mexicans are learning trades at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) and working in industries such as welding.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Maintenance of Cultural Identity:** Adjusting to life in the United States requires more than just finding a job; immigrants seek to maintain their cultural traditions as well. Celebrations such as Our Lady of Guadalupe,\footnote{The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a day-long celebration on December 12 of each year. It commemorates the apparition of the Virgin Mary to an indigenous man named Juan Diego in 1531. St. Willebrord’s Catholic Church. St. Willebrord Parish. 20 Sept. 2009. <http://www.stwillys.org/> .} Christmas, New Year’s, Lent, Holy Week, Quinceañeras,\footnote{The Quinceañera celebration is based on Mayan and Aztec traditions. It celebrates a girl’s coming of age when she is 15. Today, it frequently has religious significance as well. Ibid.} and Mexican Independence Day\footnote{A city-wide, day-long celebration on September 16 that commemorates the beginning of the fight for Mexican independence from Spain on this day in 1810. Traditionally, it is celebrated with a large gathering in the town square. Ibid.} are ways the community keeps its traditions alive. It is difficult, however, to continue celebrating traditions in the way they are celebrated in Mexico; snow and the weather affect processions that traditionally take place with Our Lady of Guadalupe, Las Posadas,\footnote{A remembrance of Mary and Joseph’s journey through Bethlehem and their process of seeking shelter. It is traditionally celebrated by going door to door to different houses on the nine days before Christmas with different individuals representing Mary and Joseph. It culminates on Christmas Eve with a procession to church. Ibid.} and Christmas. City ordinances also regulate parades and large gatherings, which means that celebrations like Mexican Independence Day have to be adjusted from how they are celebrated in Mexico. Despite the difficulties in adapting these traditions, the community finds ways to maintain its cultural practices so that future generations will not lose the richness of their cultural heritage.\footnote{Sánchez, Luis. Personal Interview. 25 Nov. 2009.}

**Reception of Immigrants:** The reception of Mexicans in Green Bay has varied. The original Hispanic immigrants faced hostility because of language differences. Although discrimination still occurs, many people’s attitudes towards them have changed once they have gotten to know members of the Hispanic community. Social services such as schools and hospitals have been very supportive in adding necessary programs and adapting to different customs; the Literacy Council and NWTC offer English language classes that help these immigrants improve their English abilities. Many other organizations in Green Bay serve the Hispanic community. The NEW Community Clinic and Clínica Hispana especially reach out to the medical needs of this community, while a group of attorneys provides a free initial legal consultation. JOSUE, the Spanish-speaking branch of JOSHUA, a local social justice organization, focuses on many issues that affect Hispanic immigrants, such as discrimination and legislation for driving cards. The Immigration Task Force, a coalition of immigrants and individuals who work with immigrants, seeks to help immigrants understand their rights and also
assists with the completion of necessary legal documents. All these organizations and changes to the city’s structure allow for more of a welcoming atmosphere for the immigrant community.\footnote{Maczka, Sr. Melanie. Personal Interview. 9 Oct. 2009.}

**Immigration Raids:** A major event that influenced public opinion regarding the Hispanic community in Green Bay was the raid of the Dressed Beef meatpacking plant in 1995. Immigration officials came to the factory and did an instant sweep of the premises, arresting 187 workers for not having documents. These people were shackled, taken to the armory, and subsequently deported to Mexico. The raid on Dressed Beef had a strong negative effect on the Mexican community because families were torn apart and people were living in fear. Even individuals who had documents were affected through people they knew or the fear present in the community. The larger community had mixed reactions. The raid was heavily publicized and so it served to alert many people to issues related to immigration. Many community members were shocked by the harsh treatment of these immigrants, who they saw as simply wanting to work and attempting to make a living for their families. Other reactions were more negative, however, and were expressed through editorials, acts of discrimination, and calls for public policy changes.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Raids and Legislation Today:** Immigration raids do continue in Green Bay today, although on a smaller scale. Instead of making large sweeps of factories, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials come into the city quietly, enter homes or workplaces, and arrest between 18 and 20 people. Because they act with more subtlety, few people outside of the individuals immediately affected realize what has happened, which leads to less outrage against the raids. In addition to the raids, public policy changes have shown an anti-immigrant trend. In 2002, city officials passed legislation that declared English to be the official language of Brown County. This situation makes life more difficult for immigrants in this area, since publications and other services only need to be offered in English. More recent immigration legislation that has been passed came in 2007, when the city passed a law which allowed it to revoke the license of a business that employed illegal immigrants.\footnote{Dodehnoff, David. “The Economic Impact of Immigration on Green Bay.” 23 March, 2008. WPRI. 20 Sept. 2009. <http://www.wpri.org/Reports/Volume21/Vol21No3/Vol21no3p1.html>.

**Challenges:** Several challenges face Green Bay’s Hispanic community in the future. Discrimination and prejudice continue to exist and remain something that the community will have to work to slowly try to dispel. There is also a lot of poverty, with families attempting to support themselves with incomes earned from low-paying jobs. Not having driver’s licenses or proper documentation continues to create hardships for some Mexican immigrants; for others, a lack of English complicates an already-confusing system of courts, legalities, insurance, and education.\footnote{Ibid.}

Additionally, the Mexican immigrant community is young, with a median age in
Wisconsin of 23 as of the 2000 Census. As this community grows and develops, how it responds to these challenges will affect the social fabric of the Green Bay community.

4. St. Willebrord’s Parish

St. Willebrord Parish in Green Bay has played an important role in the lives of many Mexican immigrants. In Mexico, the Catholic churches frequently function as the social center of a town. Many immigrants continue this practice in the United States, and St. Willebrord Parish, being a Catholic parish in the center of the city, has become the social and religious center in many Hispanic immigrants’ lives. St. Willebrord Parish was begun in 1864 by the Dutch Catholics of the city. Wanting a church of their own, they asked Father William Verboort if they could begin one. With his consent, the community of forty-seven families began their own parish and named it after St. Willebrord, an apostle to the Netherlands.

Over the next one hundred years, the parish grew and expanded, ministering to the non-Dutch Catholics of the area as well. Fr. Ken De Groot, the current pastor at St. Willebrord, began his ministry at St. Willebrord in 1980. Sr. Melanie Maczka, the pastoral minister, began at St. Willebrord in 1981. Both of these individuals have been instrumental in incorporating the Hispanic community in the parish. In 1985, Fr. Harvey Toonen, a Norbertine father, began saying Mass for a small group of Hispanic Catholics in the area. The community had no place that they could call their home, and they were often shuffled from one church building to another. Fr. Ken saw this need and talked with Fr. Harvey to determine the feasibility of welcoming the Hispanic community into St. Willebrord’s. Fr. Harvey agreed, but the process of opening St. Willebrord’s to the Hispanic community took some time to implement. Fr. Ken devoted one year to dialoguing with members of St. Willebrord about this next step. After a year’s worth of discussions, the vast majority of the church community was in agreement with this course of action.

On August 15, 1991, St. Willebrord offered its first Mass in Spanish to the Hispanic community. On December 14, 1991, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Hispanic community was officially welcomed to St. Willebrord. St. Willebrord began to minister to the Hispanic community by offering one Mass in Spanish on Saturday evenings. As the community grew, St. Willebrord added more Masses in Spanish to meet the needs of the community, and currently offers a Mass in Spanish on Saturday evening as well as one on Sunday afternoon, one on Sunday evening, and a bilingual Mass in the morning.

The process of meeting the needs of the Hispanic community at St. Willebrord was different than either Fr. Ken or Sr. Melanie expected at first. Since St. Willebrord was the first church in the area to attempt a project like this, it was without a model to follow. In the beginning of the process, many parishioners believed that opening the church to the Hispanic

---

89 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
community meant offering Mass for them once a week and that after about three or five years, the community would no longer need Mass in Spanish because they would be able to speak English well enough to attend the regular Masses the parish offered. Fr. Ken and Sr. Melanie knew, however, that the ability to attend Mass in Spanish was about more than just reciting prayers in a different language. In reality, it served as a deep connection with their faiths and touched a need they had for constancy among the difficulties of transitioning to life in the United States. If St. Willebrord was really going to work to meet the needs of the Hispanic community, Fr. Ken realized that its leadership needed to be able to speak Spanish as well. Consequently, both he and Sr. Melanie began studying Spanish via immersion programs in Mexico. It was also Fr. Ken’s dream to have a bilingual staff at St. Willebrord, a goal which today is a reality.

Mass in Spanish is not the only service that St. Willebrord offers the Hispanic community; this parish offers a place where the Hispanic community can learn about life in the United States and keep its traditions alive. Immigrants come to the parish with their questions and concerns about life in this country and staff members are either able to help them directly or refer them to the appropriate agencies. Immigrants are drawn to St. Willebrord as a place where they can continue their traditions. Our Lady of Guadalupe, an important feast day in Mexico that celebrates the apparition of the Virgin Mary to a poor Indian, is celebrated at St. Willebrord with music, food, dancing, dramatizations, processions, and Mass. During Christmastime, the community celebrates Las Posadas, a re-enactment of Mary and Joseph’s journey into Bethlehem, as well as Día de los Reyes, or the Feast of the Three Kings. Lent and Easter include Semana Santa (Holy Week) youth retreats, while Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is celebrated in November. Other traditions such as that of the Quinceañera are continued at St. Willebrord as well. Because of what it has done for the community, St. Willebrord Parish has become an important social, cultural, and religious center for the Mexican-Americans in Green Bay, just as it was for the Dutch immigrants who founded it originally.

---

92 Who Are My Sisters and Brothers?: Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees. USCCB, 1996.
93 Día de los Reyes celebrates the Three King’s visit to the Baby Jesus. Children often receive presents on this day as a remembrance of the gifts the Three Kings gave to Jesus. St. Willebrord’s Catholic Church. St. Willebrord Parish. 20 Sept. 2009. <http://www.stwillys.org/>.
94 Celebrated on November 2, Día de los Muertos is a special day for Mexicans to remember their loved ones who have died and often includes visits to the cemetery and creating a special altar at home with remembrances of the loved one. Ibid.
95 Ibid.
Narratives of Mexican Immigrants in Green Bay, WI
Introduction

The following section consists of seven interviews with Mexican immigrants in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The individuals were selected because they have legally resided in the United States for at least one year and also came to the United States when they were at least ten years old. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questions; the questions used can be seen in Appendix D. All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish using a digital audio recorder and were subsequently transcribed. For ease in reading, I have combined the interviews into narrative form, using almost completely the interviewee’s original words and voice. I also translated the interviews into English in order to make them accessible to a wider audience, but I have included the original Spanish version after the English for those who wish to read it in this form. In order to protect the identity and privacy of those interviewed, I have used pseudonyms in place of their actual names and changed biographical data when necessary.
1. **Rosa**

**Mexico**

My name is Rosa. I am forty-three years old, although I don’t want to admit it. I’ve lived in the United States for eleven years and one month. I was born in the city of Guadalajara. My dad was the manager of a bank and he was assigned to different branches. We lived in many places, in many cities, some big and some small. I never lived in one set place. This was relatively good because I was able to get to know a lot of places and a lot of people. Normally, I lived in large houses with a lot of rooms, almost one for each child. The houses would have five or six rooms, a separate kitchen, a separate living room, and a yard. We always lived in large houses.

On weekends in Mexico we always went on family trips. We would go for walks in parks, to museums, or to small villages in the country. A lot of times we went with other families. We almost always did something outside: play ball, play baseball, or ride bikes—many things outside. More than anything else, I was with my family. I was always very close with my family.

As a child, my life was very good, very pretty. It was a little sad because I couldn’t have set friends because we were always moving from one place to another, but in general I was happy and content. As a teenager, I had a lot of good friends and schoolmates and we would hang out together. We went on a lot of vacations, up to three or four times a year. We really liked going on trips. We were able to get to know cities like Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Veracruz, Sinaloa, and Nayarit. I like all of these cities because they each have something unique to discover. In this way I was able to get to know many parts of my country.

I like the traditions of my country, especially Christmas and New Year’s, because we were together as a family. Always, every year, we spent these holidays with my mom’s side: my aunts and uncles and my cousins. We would always get together for the Posadas, eat together as a family, dance, and sing. It was really beautiful being together as a family, and I miss that a lot. In each town there were religious festivals, too. For example, we celebrated the Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe for nine days. We celebrated it with music, with drinks, and by going for walks. There were pilgrimages and meals for the whole town. There were rodeos and many other events. The 16th of September was also well-known there; this day commemorates Mexico’s independence. We celebrate it with a midday meal of pork, beans, and chilies and music for the whole family. At night the mayor would shout, “Viva México! Viva!” and all the people would go to the center of town to hear the proclamation of the shout for Mexican independence again and remember these moments of independence. And after this there were fireworks. This happened everywhere. For the national celebrations, like the 24th of February,

---

96 Interviewed on November 25, 2010 in Green Bay
97 February 24 is Flag Day in Mexico.
the 20th of November,98 and the 5th of May,99 the same thing happened. Schoolchildren would parade around in their uniforms, all the same, and after everything we would spend time with family and friends.

After my years of schooling, I graduated from the university. When I finished college I worked at the bank, too. Afterwards, then, my dad owned a business, a pharmacy, and then I worked in his business. Before 1980, the economic situation was more or less good. Afterwards, it was a little bit difficult because of the nationalization of the bank. Because of this, salaries were reduced. This was difficult for a lot of people, but in general, we were good. Afterwards, I was already earning my own money and working, but economically it wasn’t difficult for me or my family because we always had enough; we never lacked food, we never went hungry. We were always good. My economic situation was good.

We, fortunately, were always able to eat well. There were families that weren’t able to eat all types of food. We were able to eat everything—meat, fish, turkey, chicken, vegetables, and fruit. We didn’t eat anything processed; everything was natural. We had pork with chilies, taquitos al pastor, tostadas—almost all our foods were with chili.

**Transition**

I met my husband in Mexico. His parents lived very close to my parents’ house in one of the towns we lived in. We met in Mexico and we got married there. My husband already was living in the United States. He was working for a meatpacking company in Pasco, Washington. A company from Green Bay went to look for workers there, offering them a better salary, and for this reason he decided to come to Green Bay. We got married in Mexico and my husband brought me to Green Bay as well. At first, I didn’t want to come. It was hard to leave my family and come to a foreign country. My friends and family didn’t want me to leave either, but they supported my decision because I was married and so they had to respect what I decided. Fortunately, it’s a blessing from God that I am able to visit them and they are able to come and visit us.

The process of coming to the United States for me was easy. I had my visa and my passport, so I was able to enter quite easily. Afterwards, my husband took the exam to become a citizen and this was how I was able to obtain my residency. I didn’t know anyone besides my husband when I came to Green Bay, but it wasn’t difficult for me to adjust. I had adjusted to a lot of new places in Mexico and so for me it was just a normal change. It was a change to a different country, with a different language, but it wasn’t very difficult for me because I already understood the basics of English, and so the transition was easier.

**United States**

I’m practicing my English. Immediately after I arrived I found an English tutor to help me study it more. I found the tutor through the Literacy Council—I still have him today. I don’t

---

98 November 20 commemorates the Mexican Revolution which began in 1910.
99 May 5, or Cinco de Mayo, celebrates the victory of the Mexican army over the French in 1862.
want to leave him. Whenever I go to stores, to the bank, or wherever, I have to practice English. The people understand me and I understand them—well or badly I don’t know—but we understand each other. In my job I am able to practice my English a little. I understand English. At meetings with a lot of Americans, my mind has to work twice, but if I keep practicing, I can make progress. I go to stores, to the bank, and to the doctor all in English. For me this language isn’t a problem. For my spouse it is, because he almost doesn’t speak English. At home, we only speak Spanish. Children learn English at school, which is why I prefer to keep speaking Spanish at home.

Here, my family and I celebrate the holidays like Mexicans: Christmas, New Year’s, and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I go to sing las mañanitas to Our Lady and we go to Mass this feast day. For Christmas and New Year’s, we get up, sing to the Christ child, put up the Nativity, put up the tree, make the Posada, sing, and eat. Occasionally, two or three times, an American family has been with us to celebrate and they liked what we do. We eat traditional Mexican food on these days: roasted meat with potatoes and vegetables, chili, salsa, and pozole. We celebrate this all with just my husband and daughter because we don’t have any more family here; this is hard. We could celebrate with another family if they invite us, but we don’t want to go because we know these celebrations are more for families.

I continue my Mexican traditions as regards cooking. Normally we eat the same type of food that I ate in Mexico. I have recipes from home, from my family, from my mom, and in general the food I make is from her recipes. It used to be harder to find the ingredients but now it isn’t, all the American grocery stores have these ingredients. I buy from American grocery stores because for me it’s cheaper. At the Mexican stores you can find everything as well, but it’s more expensive for me. I buy a lot of natural foods: a lot of vegetables, a lot of fruit, and a lot of chicken. Personally, I love American food as well. I’ll eat any kind of American food—Chinese, Italian, chili, barbecue, salad—and I like it all. My husband really doesn’t like the food from here because it doesn’t have chili.

My life in Green Bay is very much “nose-to-the-grindstone”; I’m always running. I wake up running and the whole day I go from one place to another as if on a racetrack. For me, life passes very quickly; the days don’t catch up to me and they go by quickly because I do so much. I have my English classes, I go pick up my daughter, I make something to eat, I clean the house, I wash, I go grocery shopping—I’m always busy. In Mexico, time passes more slowly and I don’t understand why. I don’t know, maybe it’s because of the distances here. In Mexico you are able to sit down calmly to eat as a family. You leave work and go home to eat and go back afterwards, after maybe an hour and a half or two hours, to work again. Here you don’t. Here you eat quickly and then you run. And then afterwards you go to the store quickly and what happens next all happens quickly; I don’t know why. There I have time there to visit with

---

100 Las mañanitas is a traditional Mexican song that is often sung on birthdays and holidays.
family, with my sister, to be here for a while and there for a while, and here I don’t have the time to visit with people.

There are things that I like and things that I don’t like about the United States. What I like about the United States is the discipline that the people have and the punctuality that they have. I like the cleanliness. There are some places that are very pretty, and, above all, I like the change of seasons. Here you’re able to see the change from spring to summer, or from summer to fall, or from fall to winter, and in Mexico you can’t. I love when summer comes because I like to go outside and walk or ride my bike. We like to walk by the river, on the riverbanks and go to the parks—this is what I like. I don’t like winter very much, but what can I do? I’m here. So, the change of seasons is very pretty and this is what I like about here. What I don’t like about the United States right now is what is happening with the Hispanics, or with the immigrants, rather, because not all are Hispanics, they’re from many places. I don’t like what’s happening because there are many people who are racist or stare cruelly at immigrants—some people, I should say, not everyone. This is what upsets me the most: that we’re all human beings but we can’t help one another.

I have never been personally discriminated against. Thanks be to God, I have found people to be very good, but I have seen other people experiencing this type of discrimination. People look at Hispanics badly because they might not be well-dressed. People don’t serve them well in the stores. If they want to ask something, the workers answer very quickly or not at all or they make an ugly face, and I don’t like this. I don’t like it. The police also know who is Hispanic and they immediately stop them for some small reason and give them a fine because they’re Hispanic. This isn’t fair because there are Americans whose vehicles for example don’t have lights on the back and I have seen the police not stop them. But if a Hispanic were to not have lights on the back of his or her car, they would stop them and give them a fine. For me, this isn’t fair because we should be equal. Hispanics have feelings, too. They have hearts. We’re the same. We just don’t have colored eyes like you do.

I think of myself as Mexican. I’m a citizen, and I will always be Mexican. I think it’s because we carry it in our blood. Regional dances, food, family—all these are things we carry with us. This country has treated me very well. I have met very good people here.

I live fairly well. My house is new. It has three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, a living room and a large yard with games for the children. There’s a two-car garage and the area is pretty, calm, and safe. We celebrate some holidays from this country, too. On the Fourth of July we go to see the fireworks and we go for a walk and we enjoy this day. Thanksgiving for us is only a day of rest. We don’t celebrate it at home. My husband rests, I rest, we don’t work, and we’re at home. People don’t visit us and we don’t visit other people because there are others who do have their relatives here and we don’t have relatives. Because of this, it’s harder to celebrate this day.

I miss my family a lot: my parents, my siblings, my aunts and uncles. I keep in touch with them by email, through Instant Messenger, by telephone, and by sending cards. I talk with my family almost every day online and by phone I talk to them two or three times a month. I am
able to visit them once or twice a year. I would like to return to my country one day to be with my family. Maybe when the weather gets cold I’ll go to Mexico and then come back like the old people here who go to Florida—I’m not sure yet.

I’m content with my life in Green Bay. Winter for me is a sad time, but I’m at home here. I like the people and my coworkers, who are now my family after so much time. I’m at home in Green Bay, with the exception of the cold. I just don’t like the cold, but I warm myself up a little and then I’m fine.

**Connections**

The most important thing for me is my family. The Sunday outings with my family are my favorite memories. We would spend the day outside and eat and play. When I go to Mexico, for example, although my siblings work, when we get together on Sundays, we still go to enjoy the country and the day. We go to Mass first. My whole family—nieces and nephews, grandchildren, children, and in-laws—all get together in one place and spend time together. Everyone brings food and we play ball.

I want my children to have memories as good as mine. My husband and I are saving money for when we’re old, but we don’t know how long our lives are going to last. Because of this, we want to go on a trip each year. I would like to go to Europe. If not in two years, then maybe three or four or five, but hopefully we’ll go. If not, we’ll travel here in the United States because I already know a lot of places in Mexico. In the United States, I would like to get to know many pretty places like the ones my parents showed me in Mexico.

My parents are the ones who have influenced me the most in life. I was the last one to get married. All my siblings had already married before I did. Since I was the last, I was with them for the longest amount of time. I learned a lot of things from my parents: to be responsible, a hard worker, a good housekeeper, a good wife, and a good mother. I want to be a good mother because my parents were good with me. They educated me well, and so I want to follow the example they showed me. I had, thanks to God, a very good family—this is a blessing.

True wealth for me consists of being healthy. Being healthy, we are rich because we can walk, eat, and dance. I can work. So, first of all, it’s important for me to care for my health, and then next to care for that of my family because how am I going to care for my family if I’m sick? I try to eat well and to feed my family so that we’re all healthy. If we’re sick, well then, we can’t function. For me, this is what wealth is. I want to enjoy life because you don’t know if tomorrow you’ll be here. For me, money is meant to be given; I would like to give it all away. I only need enough to eat and dress myself, and that’s it. I have money right now and later maybe I won’t. I give money to my parents, I always give money to my parents because I work, and I don’t know how, but I always have more money.

The United States is a great country, it’s the Land of Opportunity, but you have to know how to live here. You have to know English and prepare yourself in your studies at school. You need to keep preparing yourself all the time. Although in our countries people don’t study, they do here because this is the Land of Opportunity. They give you opportunities and you have to prepare yourself. There are people who come here and make money and think that money is
everything, but it’s not everything. They stop caring for their children, their spouses, and their health—all this to keep working. Money, money, money! And this isn’t life, is it?
México


Los fines de semana en México, siempre salimos en familia. Nos llevaba a pasear parques, museos o a aldea de campo. Muchas veces fuimos con otras familias. Siempre era casi más bien al aire libre: era para jugar a la pelota, para jugar béisbol, para montar en bicicleta—muchas cosas de salir afuera. Pero, más que nada, estuve con la familia. Siempre estuve muy junta con mi familia.

De niñez, mi vida fue muy buena, muy bonita. Era un poco triste porque no podía tener amigas firmes porque siempre nos mudábamos de un lugar a otro, pero en general fue contenta y alegre. En la adolescencia, tuve muy buenos amigos y compañeros de escuela y salíamos también de paseo. Salía mucho de vacaciones, hasta tres, cuatro veces al año. Nos gustaba mucho salir en excursión. Fuimos a conocer ciudades como Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Veracruz, Sinaloa y Nayarit. Todas las ciudades para mí tienen algo muy bonito algo que conocer. Entonces, yo sí conocí muchas partes de mi país.

Me gustaban las tradiciones de México, especialmente la Navidad y el Año Nuevo, porque estábamos en familia. Siempre, cada año, la pasamos con toda la familia de mi mamá: mis tíos, mis tías, mis primos y mis primas. Siempre nos juntábamos y pedíamos Posada, comíamos todos en familia, bailábamos y cantábamos. Era muy bonito en familia y extraño mucho eso. En cada pueblo había fiestas religiosas cada año también. Por ejemplo, festejábamos la Virgen de Guadalupe durante nueve días. Lo celebrábamos con música, con bebidas y paseos. Había peregrinaciones y comidas para todo el pueblo. Había jaripeos y muchos otros eventos. El 16 de Septiembre también es muy conocido allá; es el grito de la independencia de México. Lo celebrábamos con comida al mediodía, de carne de puerco, frijoles, chile, música y era para toda la familia también. Y en la noche, el alcalde daba el grito, “¡Viva México! ¡Viva!” y toda la gente se iba al centro de la ciudad para escuchar la proclamación del grito de nuevo y recordar estos momentos de la independencia. Y después de esto había juegos artificiales. Eso es en todos los lugares. Para las celebraciones nacionales, como el 24 de febrero, el 20 de noviembre y el 5 de mayo, se hace lo mismo. Escuelas desfilan con uniformes, todos iguales, y después de esto fuimos a convivir con la familia, con los amigos.

Después de mis años en la escuela, yo me gradué de la universidad. Cuando terminé mi universidad yo trabajé en el banco también. Y después, pues, mi papá tuvo un negocio.
entonces yo estuve en el negocio de mi papá. Antes del 1980, la situación económica era más o menos bien. Después, fue difícil por la nacionalización del banco. Entonces, hubo reducción de sueldos. Esto fue difícil para muchas personas, pero en general, estuvimos bien. Después, yo ya fui ganando mi propio dinero trabajando, pero económicamente difícil no fue para mí ni para mi familia porque siempre tuvimos; nunca nos faltó de comer, nunca tuvimos hambre. Siempre estuvimos bien. Mi situación económica fue buena.

Nosotros, afortunadamente, sí comimos bien. Había familias que no comían de todo. No tenían dinero. Pero comíamos de todo—carne, pescado, pavo, pollo, verduras y fruta. No comíamos nada procesado; todo natural. Estaba la carne de puerco con chile, los taquitos al pastor, tostadas—casi siempre las comidas eran con chile.

Transición

Conocí a mi esposo en México. Sus papás vivían muy cerca de la casa de los míos en uno de los pueblos donde nosotros llegamos. Allí nos conocimos, y, pues nos casamos. Mi esposo ya vivía en Estados Unidos. Estaba trabajando en una compañía de carne en Pasco, Washington. Una compañía de Green Bay fue a buscar trabajadores allá, ofreciendo un mejor sueldo para ellos, y por eso se vino aquí a Green Bay. Nos casamos en México y mi esposo me trajo a Green Bay también. Green Bay es el único lugar donde he vivido de los Estados Unidos. Al principio, no quería yo venirme. Era muy difícil dejar a mi familia y venir a un país extraño. A mis familiares y amigos no les gustó que saliera, pero apoyaron mi decisión porque yo ya estaba casada y ellos tenían que respetar lo que yo decidí. Afortunadamente, es una bendición de Dios que yo pueda ir a visitarlos y ellos puedan venir a visitarnos.

El proceso de venir aquí a los Estados Unidos para mí fue fácil. Yo tuve mi visa y mi pasaporte, entonces yo entré muy fácil. Y después, mi esposo tomó su examen para la ciudadanía y fue entonces como me arregló para obtener mi residencia. No conocía a nadie además de mi esposo antes de venir a Green Bay, pero no era difícil adaptarme a vivir aquí. Yo conocí muchas lugares en México y pues para mí fue un cambio normal. Era un cambio de otro país, con otro idioma, pero no fue difícil porque yo tenía lo básico de inglés y por eso fue más fácil.

Estados Unidos

Aquí, mi familia y yo, celebramos los días festivos con celebraciones mexicanas: Navidad, Año Nuevo y el Día de la Virgen. Para el Día de la Virgen, yo vengo a cantarle las mañanitas a la Virgen y vamos a misa ese día de la fiesta. Para la Navidad y el Año Nuevo, nos levantamos, le cantamos al niño Dios, ponemos el nacimiento, ponemos el arbolito, pedimos la Posada, cantamos y cenamos. En ocasiones, dos o tres veces, una familia americana ha ido con nosotros y les ha gustado lo que hacemos. Comemos comida tradicional de México estos días: carne asada con papas y verduras, chile, salsa de chile y pozole. Todo eso lo celebramos solo mi esposo y mi hija, pues no tengo más familia aquí; eso es difícil. Podríamos ir con otra familia si nos invitan, pero no queremos ir porque sabemos que esas reuniones son más familiares.

Sigo con mis tradiciones mexicanas con respecto a la comida. Normalmente comemos el mismo tipo de comida que comía en México. Tengo recetas de mi casa, de mi familia, de mi mamá, y por lo regular es comida de ella. Antes, era difícil encontrar los ingredientes pero ahora no, casi todas las tiendas americanas tienen los ingredientes. Yo compro en tiendas americanas porque para mí, es más barato. En las tiendas mexicanas también encuentro todo pero para mí es más caro. Compro mucha comida natural: mucha verdura, mucha fruta, mucho pollo. A mí me encanta la comida americana también. Yo como de todo tipo de comida —comida china, italiana, chilli, barbeque, ensalada— y todo me gusta. A mi esposo casi no le gusta la comida de aquí porque no tiene chile.

Mi vida en Green Bay es muy a la carrera—todo el tiempo estoy corriendo. Me levanto corriendo y todo el día voy de un lugar a otro a las carreras. Para mí la vida está pasando muy rápida, y los días no me alcanzan y son muy rápidos porque hago de todo. Tengo mis clases de inglés, voy a recoger a mi niña, hago de comer, limpio la casa, lavo, voy a las tiendas a comprar comida—estoy todo el tiempo ocupada. En México, el tiempo pasa más despacio y no entiendo por qué. No sé si es por las distancias aquí. En México nos sentamos tranquilos a comer en familia. Salimos de nuestros trabajos y vamos a nuestras casas a comer y regresamos después, como a la hora y media o dos horas a trabajar de nuevo. Y aquí, no. Comes rápido, y ¡ya! Y lo que sigue—vas a la tienda rápido y lo que sigue es muy rápido; no sé por qué. Allá tengo tiempo para visitar a la familia, a mi hermana, estar un ratito aquí, un ratito allá, y aquí no me alcanza el tiempo para visitar a algunas personas.

Hay cosas que me gusta y que no me gusta de los Estados Unidos. Lo que me gusta de los Estados Unidos es la disciplina que tiene la gente y la puntualidad que tiene. Me gusta la limpieza. Hay unos paisajes muy bonitos, y, sobre todo, me gusta el cambio de clima. Aquí notamos el cambio de primavera a verano, o de verano a otoño, o de otoño a invierno, y en México, no. Me encanta cuando viene el verano porque me gusta salir a caminar o andar en bicicleta. Nos gusta ir a caminar por el río, en la orilla del río, y salir a los parques—eso es lo que me gusta. El invierno no me gusta mucho, pues, ¿qué le voy a hacer? Estoy aquí. Entonces, el cambio de estaciones es muy bonito y eso es lo que me gusta de aquí. Lo que no me gusta de los Estados Unidos ahorita es lo que está pasando con los hispanos, con los inmigrantes, más bien, porque no todos son hispanos, son de muchos lugares. No me gusta lo que pasa porque hay
personas que son racistas o no ven bien al inmigrante—solo unas, no quiero decir todas. Eso es lo que me pone más triste: que somos humanos pero no podemos ayudarnos unos con otros.

Me ha tocado personalmente no a mí un acto de discriminación, no en mi persona. Gracias a Dios, he encontrado gente muy buena, pero he visto a otras personas teniendo este tipo de discriminación. Les ven mal a los hispanos porque a lo mejor no están bien vestidos. No los atienden bien en las tiendas. Si ellos quieren preguntar algo, los trabajadores contestan muy rápido o no les contestan, o les hacen caras feas y no me gusta eso. No me gusta. Los policías también saben que son hispanos e inmediatamente les paran por cualquier excusa y les dan una multa porque son hispanos. No es justo porque hay americanos que sus vehículos por ejemplo no traen luces de la parte de atrás y yo he visto que la policía no los para. Pero a los hispanos que no traen luces atrás en el carro, les paran y les dan una multa. Para mí, no es justo, porque todos podemos ser iguales. También los hispanos tienen sentimientos. Tienen corazón también. Entonces, somos iguales. Solo que no tenemos los ojos de color.

Pienso en mi misma como mexicana. Soy ciudadana, y voy a ser siempre mexicana. Creo que lo traemos en la sangre. El baile regional, la comida, la familia—todo eso algo que lo llevamos en la sangre. A mí me han tratado muy bien en este país. He conocido gente muy buena.

Vivo más o menos bien. Mi casa aquí es nueva. Tiene tres recamaras, cocina, comedor, una sala y un jardín grande con juegos para los niños. Tiene una cochera para dos carros, y el área es bonita, tranquila y segura. Celebramos algunos días festivos de este país también. El cuatro de julio, vamos a ver los fuegos artificiales y nos vamos de paseo a la playa y disfrutamos ese día. El Día de Acción de Gracias para nosotros es solo un día de descanso. No lo celebramos en casa. Solo mi esposo descansa, yo descanso, no trabajamos y estamos en casa. No nos visitan y no visitamos a otras personas porque hay otras familias que sí tienen a sus familiares aquí y nosotros no tenemos familiares.

Extraño mucho a mi familia: a mis padres, a mis hermanos, a mis tíos. Mantengo relaciones con mi familia en México por correo electrónico, por Messenger, por teléfono y tarjetas de felicitaciones. Hablo con mi familia casi todos los días por Internet, y por teléfono, dos o tres veces al mes. Puedo visitarlos una o dos veces al año. Quisiera regresar a mi país algún día para estar con mi familia. Quizás en el tiempo de frío me vaya a México, luego regreso, como las personas mayores de aquí que van a Florida—no sé todavía.

Estoy contento con mi vida en Green Bay. El invierno para mí es muy triste, pero sí, estoy a gusto. Me gusta la gente y mis compañeros de trabajo que ahora son ya mi familia por tanto tiempo. Estoy a gusto en Green Bay, a excepción del frío. No me gusta mucho el frío, pero solo calentándome un poco y ya estoy bien.

Conexiones

Lo más importante para mí es la familia. Las reuniones del domingo con mi familia es el recuerdo más bonito. Salíamos de día de campo y comíamos y jugábamos. Cuando voy a México, por ejemplo, aunque mis hermanos trabajan, cuando nos toca reunirnos el domingo, nos salimos a disfrutar el campo y el día. Vamos a misa primero. Toda la familia—los sobrinos, los
nietos, los hijos, las nueras—nos juntamos en un lugar para convivir. Cada quien lleva comida y jugamos a la pelota.

Quiero que mis hijos tengan memorias tan buenas como las mías. Mi esposo y yo estamos ahorrando dinero para cuando estemos viejos, pero no sabemos cuánto tiempo vamos a durar de vida. Entonces, queremos salir de viaje cada año. Yo quisiera ir a Europa. Si no es en los dos años, no sé, tres, cuatro, pueda ser que sí vamos. Pero, si no, podemos viajamos aquí mismo en Estados Unidos, porque ya conocí muchos lugares en México. En Estados Unidos, me gustaría conocer muchos lugares bonitos como los que mis padres me mostraron en México.

Mis papás son las personas que más han influenciado en mi vida. Fui la última que me casé. Todos mis hermanos se casaron primero que yo. Entonces, yo fui la última, y estuve con ellos más tiempo. Yo aprendí mucho de mis papás: a ser responsable, trabajadora, buena ama de casa, buena esposa y buena madre. Quiero ser buena madre porque mis papás fueron buenos conmigo. Me educaron bien, entonces yo quiero seguir el ejemplo de ellos. Tuve, gracias a Dios, una familia muy buena—esa es una bendición.

La riqueza verdadera para mi consiste en la salud. Teniendo salud, somos ricos porque podemos caminar, comer y bailar. Puedo trabajar. Entonces, primero, es importante cuidar mi salud, y después la de mi familia también, porque ¿cómo voy a cuidar a mi familia si estoy enferma? Trato de alimentarme bien y de alimentar a mi familia para que estemos sanos todos. Si estamos enfermos, pues, ya no funciona. Para mí, eso es la riqueza. Yo quiero disfrutar la vida porque no sabes si mañana vas a estar. Para mí, el dinero es para dar; yo quisiera darlo todo. Que me quede solo para comer y vestir, está bien. El dinero ahorita lo tengo y al rato a lo mejor no. Yo les doy dinero a mis papás porque trabajo, y no sé de qué manera, pero tengo más dinero.

Estados Unidos es un gran país, es el país de las oportunidades, pero hay que saber vivir aquí. Hay que saber el inglés y prepararse en los estudios en escuela. Seguirse preparando todo el tiempo. Aunque en los países de nosotros no estudiaron, aquí sí, porque aquí es el país de las oportunidades. Les están dando oportunidades y hay que prepararse. Hay gente que viene aquí y hace dinero y piensa que el dinero es todo, pero no es todo. Descuidan a sus hijos, a su esposa y su salud—todo por el trabajo. ¡Dinero, dinero, dinero! Y eso no es la vida, ¿verdad?
2. Antonio

Mexico

My name is Antonio and I am forty-six years old. I am from Jalisco, Mexico. I came to the United States in 1979 when I was fifteen years old. In Mexico I lived in a town with about seventy thousand people. It wasn’t big, but it was pretty. The people were nice; they were good people, like family. I worked in Mexico. I was very young, seven years old, and I was already growing corn. From planting to harvesting, I was already working on the ranch when I was seven years old. My parents did the same work on the same farm as I was.

As a child I liked to do a lot of things. I played with the friends that I had and we also liked to go fishing in the river. We ate the fish and we also sold it. We bought clothes, we bought shoes, and we brought food home to eat with the money we had earned. When I was twelve or thirteen years old I didn’t have a lot of time to play because I was working. I had to work to help my father make enough money to support the others because there were nine of us. I was the oldest and because of this, I always had to be his strong hand.

My life in Mexico was a poor life, a humble life, but I was content. It was a good life and healthy. More than anything else, we were poor people, but we made enough money to be able to eat. Normally my parents would make tortillas, beans, and once in a while meat, but only once a week. We never lacked anything to eat, and it was always good food and natural, from the ranch where my father worked and the eggs from the chickens on the land. We didn’t ask, for help from anyone or anything. My mother and father were the ones who taught us how to be good people.

Transition

Like everyone else, I came to the United States for the American Dream. The U.S. is a country where if you want to move forward, you can. There are a lot of opportunities. I think that the reason why I came was the same: to better my life, to keep moving forward, to progress a little bit, to help my father, and to support my siblings. The decision to come more than anything was based out of necessity—I needed to work to earn money to be able to support my parents and my siblings. I was fourteen or fifteen when I came; the decision was made by my dad and my mom and God.

The process of coming to the United States was quite harsh. It was almost forty hours of driving in a bus, arriving at the border, looking for a route through the country, and walking hours and hours and hours through the night. It’s dangerous because you walk at night and thieves can steal what you have from you. In the borders, there are bad people. You walk from seven at night until three or four in the morning—the whole night. Three or more times I had to

101 Interviewed on December 21, 2010 in Green Bay
do this. You don’t know if you’re going to arrive, you don’t know if you’re going to return, but by the grace of God, we’re here still.

I came to the United States with my dad. We went first to California. I lived in Buena Park for seven years and Salinas for six years. When I came to the United States for the first time in Buena Park, I began to work cleaning, counting eggs, and washing dishes. I was young, and when I went to places to look for work they would say to me, “You, go to school. You shouldn’t be here.” But I needed to work; I wanted to keep moving forward. I began to work cleaning and I went to the country where there were three hundred fifty men. I worked at a place where I washed dishes, later at another place where I worked as a busboy, in room service, and later I began to be a waiter, and after a little bit, I went to Salinas, to the fields. Working in the fields, I asked myself, “Why did I come?” It was so hot. My body ached, but I made more money. For ten years I worked irrigating, growing plants, driving a Caterpillar, and as a foreman where a lot of people worked. I was working in the fields with the vegetables and everything. In this time I obtained my green card. It wasn’t a lot of work to get this card because it was easy to get it through the work I had. I worked in the country for ten or eleven years.

The United States

From California I came to Green Bay with one of my wife’s cousins. I came in ‘94 or ‘95 because they told me that it was a good place to live, better than California. I started working at a meatpacking plant and more than ever worked overtime. I started work at four in the morning, left at five in the afternoon, and began to make more money. I opened a store here. My wife left her job and worked at the store when I wasn’t there because I was still working at the meatpacking plant. She would open the store at eight, I would leave the meatpacking plant at three and would go to the store at four and close at ten at night. We did this for two years. On weekends when I didn’t work at the meatpacking plant I would wake up early and go to the store to bring merchandise. It was hard to work two jobs, but after two years, it was a little easier and we began to get ahead. I opened a restaurant, I bought another store and we kept moving forward. We worked a lot and because of this, we didn’t have any time for our kids, we didn’t have any time for our family. I sold two of the businesses and kept one. It’s better like this because there’s time to be at home. It’s a little tiring, but you don’t have anything if you don’t work, and I’m good, thanks be to God; I’m working.

With the work at my store I’m always busy. All the time I’m working, seven days a week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, New Years, Christmas, Thanksgiving—and you get used to it! I only have a week of vacation a year, in September, but I’m content. I like what I do because I do it, it’s mine. We live well. We keep busy and are always working because nothing will come into your hands if you don’t work. Time goes quickly, but we’re content.

When we arrived, we were some of the first Latinos that arrived here. Right now, there’s so many more! Every month or every two weeks or so new families arrive and later people record them. Each month we invite them to church and make food for everyone that’s new; we invite them to eat and welcome them. A lot of the Hispanics in Green Bay attend Mass at St.
Willebrord’s. The church is a second home for the people who arrive here; it’s a place where you can go and talk to someone. You go and you feel comfortable. If you need advice, go to St. Willebrord’s and Fr. Ken and Sr. Melanie. For us, the day that we met these people, they became part of our family. They have all the time in the world to give a helping hand. There are other important organizations as well, but the church has a special place in the hearts of the Latinos.

In the church we are able to continue our traditions, but there are still differences in how we celebrate these holidays. For Christmas in Mexico we make piñatas, we make pozole and we sing to the Baby Jesus, but here the tradition is with dinner and with gifts. In Mexico there are a lot of people and you go out on the street, but here there aren’t that many people, you don’t go out on the street, and the climate is very different. Here, we still always get together and make a family meal for New Year’s and Christmas. New Year’s in Mexico is very similar to New Year’s here, but drinking and such isn’t done. For Thanksgiving we get together as a family. There’s a lot of us, but we always get together: the four kids, my wife, and I. In Mexico, it’s not traditional to eat turkey.

What I like about the United States is the life that I live here. Work is good. I like the opportunities, I like the schools, I like the way of life here because the children are in school. The United States is a Land of Opportunity. It’s a country where if you want, you can get ahead. I’m quite content.

What I miss about Mexico is that there you feel like you’re at home, you’re used to things. Here people don’t treat you badly, but it still isn’t your land. I miss a lot of things from Mexico—friends I have, family I have there, a river where I would go to eat underneath a tree. I miss simple things like this.

I’ve lived here for more than thirty years. I think that’s already halfway through life and I plan to stay here. In Mexico I don’t know where to go. I think that the future is in my children’s hands because they have more opportunities here than in Mexico. We go on vacation to Mexico. We go, we walk around, but we come back—we have our obligations, our work.

Connections

The person who has most influenced my life, first of all, would be my mother and the next person would be my wife. My mother taught me to keep moving forward with my job and my wife taught me to move forward as well, to teach the children what to do, to follow the path of life, to look at life from a different standpoint, and to live. She helped me in the good and the bad that we’ve had. In predicaments we’ve had she has always helped me keep moving forward, always giving me advice and supporting me. We communicate to give our children a good education. My wife tells the children what they shouldn’t do and what they should do. She brings them to school, attends their conferences, and is always with them, which is very important for us.

---

102 A traditional Mexican soup that contains corn, meat, and chili
My dream is for my children to keep studying. I only finished the sixth grade and I want my children to graduate and have their degree. I want them to feel a sense of self-worth and make the most of their studies. It’s more than just my desire; they also want to keep studying. I want my children to have spiritual values, to have courage to face the things that are good as well as the things that are bad. I want them to help others. I want them to be honest, to respect others, and to speak the truth. They shouldn’t meddle in things that aren’t theirs. That is, I want them to know how to live life, to know how to respect others, to live with people, to get along with your family, to know how to minimize their problems, to know many things, to not be negative, and to be positive.

I have good kids and a good wife; I can’t ask for more. My kids value their education. Every week we go to Mass, everyone—from the littlest to the biggest. They’re good kids and we communicate well. The oldest says, “Dad, can I go somewhere?” And someone of that age doesn’t say, “Can I go,” they say, “I’m going.” My children were all born here but they almost never arrive late; all the time I get home at ten at night and they’re all at home at this hour. They go to school, work or elsewhere, but at night they’re at home. A lot of times a kid of twenty or twenty-one years comes home at three or four in the morning drunk or with bad friends, but as for this, we don’t have any worries. We have very good kids.

I’m content with my life here. It’s necessary to work, it’s necessary to make something to pay the bills and to buy food to eat. Life consists of always trying to get ahead. It’s not easy, it’s not easy. Everything has its work, its sacrifice, but if you believe, you can. Don’t say, “I can’t.” You can! The United States has always given us more than in Mexico. Mi family, my wife, my children, my job, my business, my friends, my family, my siblings, my dad, my mom—these are all important. Thanks be to God, we are able to eat every day and keep moving forward. When I get up, it takes my breath away that the sun rose—this is important. I give thanks to open my eyes being able to live another day.
Antonio

**México**

Me llamo Antonio y tengo cuarenta y seis años. Soy de Jalisco, México. Me vine a los Estados Unidos en 1979 cuando tenía los quince años. En México vivía en un pueblo chiquito con unas sesenta mil personas. No era un pueblo grande, pero era bonito. La gente era muy amable; eran buenas personas, como familia. Yo trabajaba cuando era en México. Era muy chico, siete años, y estaba cultivando el maíz. Desde sembrando hasta cosechando, trabajé en el rancho cuando tenía siete años. Mis padres trabajaban también en la labor en el mismo rancho que era yo.

De niño me gustaba hacer muchas cosas. Jugaba con los demás compañeros que se llevó y también nosotros nos gusta mucho ir al río a pescar. Comíamos el pescado, y también lo vendía. Compraba ropa, compraba zapatos y nos traía comida para comer con el dinero que habíamos ganado. Cuando tenía doce o trece años no obtenía mucho tiempo de jugar porque estaba trabajando. Tuve que trabajar para ayudar al papá sacar el dinero para los demos hermanos porque éramos nueve. Yo fui el mayor, y por eso siempre fui la mano fuerte a él.

Mi vida en México era una vida pobre, humilde, pero muy contento. Era una vida buena, sana. Más que nada nosotros éramos gente pobre, pero sacaba para comer. Normalmente mis papás hacían tortillas, frijoles, de vez en cuando carne, pero cada ocho días. Nunca faltamos de comer; la comida era muy buena y natural, del rancho que trabajaba mi papá, de la tierra los huevos de los pollos. No pedimos, como ahora, manos de amistad o eso. Mi papá y mi mamá eran las personas que nos enseñamos a ser personas buenas.

**Transición**

Siempre como todos, vine por el sueño americano de venir a este país. Los Estados Unidos es un país donde si quieres seguir adelante, puedes. Hay muchas oportunidades. Pienso que la razón por qué vine era el mismo: mejorar mi vida, seguir adelante, progresar un poco, ayudar a mi papá y aportar a mis hermanos. La decisión de venir más que nada era por la necesidad—trabajar para sacar más dinero para poder soportar a mi papá y mis hermanos. Yo tenía catorce o quince años cuando me vine; la decisión era de mi papá y mi mamá y de Dios.

El proceso de venir a los Estados Unidos fue bastante duro. Fue casi cuarenta horas de manejando en un autobús, llegar a la frontera, buscar una ruta dentro del país y caminar horas y horas por la noche. Es peligroso porque caminas de noche y ladrones pueden robarte de lo que traes. En las fronteras, la gente mala hay. Caminamos de las siete de la noche hasta las tres o cuatro de la mañana—toda la noche. Por tres veces más o menos así me paso eso. No sabes si vas a venir, no sabes si vas a regresar, pero con la gracia de Dios, estamos todavía.

Vine a los Estados Unidos con mi papá. Primero fuimos a California. Viví en Buena Park por siete años y Salinas por seis años. Cuando entre por primera vez a Estados Unidos en Buena Park, empecé yo limpiando, contando huevos y lavando platos. Estaba chico, y cuando yo fui a lugares para pedir trabajo me dijo, "Tu, a la escuela. Tu no debes estar aquí." Pero yo
tuve la necesidad de trabajar; querría seguir adelante. Empecé a trabajar a limpiar y fui a un campo donde había tres cientos cincuenta hombres. Fui a trabajar a un lugar donde lava platos, luego a otro lugar donde trabajé como bus boy, como servicio de cuarto, y luego empecé a ser un mesero, y después de un poquito, me salí a Salinas, al campo. En el campo me decía, "¿Por qué me vine?" Había un calor bastante. Me dolí mi cuerpo, pero gané más dinero. Por diez años trabajé en el riego, cultivando las plantas, manejando un Caterpillar y como mayordomo donde estaba mucha gente trabajando. Estaba trabajando en el campo con los vegetales y todo. En esta época conseguí mi tarjeta de residencia. No me costó mucho trabajo para sacar esta tarjeta porque bajo el trabajo que tenía, fue muy fácil para mí sacarla. Trabajé en el campo por diez u once años.

Los Estados Unidos

De California, vine a Green Bay con un primo de mi esposa. Vine en ’94 o ’95 porque me decían que aquí es muy bueno, mejor que California. Entré una carnicería y empecé más que nada trabajar bien y trabajar horas extras. Entré a las cuatro de la mañana, salí a las cinco de la tarde y empecé a ganar más dinero. Abrí una tienda aquí. Mi esposa salió de su trabajo y trabajó en la tienda cuando yo no estuve, porque ya estuve trabajando en la carnicería. Ella abrió a las ocho, yo salí de la carnicería a las tres y fui a la tienda a las cuatro y la cerré a las diez de la noche. Lo hicimos por dos años. Los fines de semana cuando no trabajé en la carnicería, me levanté muy temprano y fui a la tienda para traer mercancía. Fui difícil trabajar dos trabajos, pero después de dos años, fue un poco mejor y empecé a seguir adelante. Abrí un restaurante, compré otra tienda y hemos ido para arriba. Trabajamos mucho, y por eso no había tiempo para los niños, no había tiempo para la familia. Los otros dos negocios se vendieron y nos quedamos con una. Es mejor así porque hay tiempo para estar en casa. Es un poquito duro, pero no tienes nada si no trabajas, y estoy bien, gracias a Dios, estoy trabajando.

Con el trabajo en mi tienda estoy ocupado. Todo el tiempo lo hago, siete días de la semana: lunes, martes, miércoles, jueves, Año Nuevo, Christmas, Thanksgiving— ¡y te acostumbras! Solo tengo una semana de vacaciones al año, en septiembre, pero estoy bien contento. Me gusta lo que hago porque lo hago yo; es lo mío. Yo nos da para comer, para pagar cuentas y para pagar los estudios de mis hijos. Vivimos bien. Somos ocupados y siempre trabajando porque no te va a llegar a tus maños si no trabajas. Se va el tiempo rápido, pero somos contentos.

Cuando nosotros venimos, éramos de las primeras personas que venimos aquí. Ahorita, ¡hay muchísimas personas! Cada mes o cada quince días o sea llegaban familias nuevas y luego las anotaba unos. Al mes les invitamos a la iglesia y hacemos una comida para toda la gente que sea nueva; les invitabas a comer y le da bienvenida. Muchos de los hispanos de Green Bay asisten a misa a San Willebrord’s. La iglesia es una segunda casa para la gente que llega aquí; es un lugar donde te vayas y platicues con alguien. Te vayas y te sientas cómoda. Si necesitas un consejo, va a St. Willebrord y Padre Ken y Sister Melanie. Para nosotros, el día que nos conocemos a estas personas, eran una parte de nuestra familia. Tienen todo el tiempo en el mundo para la gente—todo el tiempo en el mundo para escuchar, todo el tiempo en el mundo
para dar la maño. Hay otras organizaciones importantes, también, pero la iglesia tiene un lugar especial en los corazones de los latinos.

En la iglesia podemos continuar muchas tradiciones, pero todavía hay diferencias entre como celebramos los días festivos. Para la Navidad en México, hacemos piñatas, hacemos pozole y cantamos al niño Dios, pero aquí la tradición es con cena y con regalos. En México hay mucha gente y sales de la calle pero aquí no hay mucha gente, no sales de la calle y el clima es muy diferente. Aquí todavía siempre reunimos y hacemos una cena en familia para el Año Nuevo y Navidad. El Año Nuevo en México es muy parecido al Año Nuevo aquí, pero de tomar y eso, no tomamos. El Día de Pavo, de Acción de Gracias, nos juntamos toda la familia. Somos muchos, pero siempre nos juntamos cuatro los hijos, mi esposo y yo. En México comer pavo no es una costumbre.

Lo que me gusta a mí de los Estados Unidos es la vida que vivo aquí. Trabajando es bien. Me gustan las oportunidades, me gustan las escuelas, me gusta el modo de vivir porque los hijos están en las escuelas. Los Estados Unidos es un país de oportunidades. Es un país donde si tu quieres, puedes seguir adelante. Estoy muy contento.

Lo que echo de menos de México es que allá te sientes como en tu casa, te sientes a gusto. Aquí no te tratan mal, pero tampoco es tu tierra. De México extraño a muchas cosas—amigos que tengo, familia que tengo allá, un río donde iba a comer debajo de un árbol. Echo de menos cosas sencillas como así.

Tengo más de treinta años aquí. Pienso que ya es la mitad de la vida y planeamos quedarnos aquí. En México no sé por dónde irme. Yo pienso que el futuro es en las mañas de mis hijos, que cuenten mejor aquí que en México. Vamos de vacaciones allí. Vamos, paseamos, pero regresamos—tenemos nuestra obligación, nuestro trabajo.

Conexiones

La persona que más le ha influenciado mi vida es mi mamá y en segundo lugar es mi esposa. Mi mamá me enseña seguir adelante en la carrera y mi esposa, seguir adelante también, enseñar a los hijos lo que hacer, seguir la vida, mirar la vida en una manera en otra manera y a vivir. Me ayudaba en lo bueno y en lo malo que hemos tenido. En apuros que hemos tenido ella me ayuda siempre seguir adelante, siempre dando lo positivo o apoyándome. Nos comunicamos para sacar a nuestros hijos una buena educación. Mi esposa les dice lo que no deben hacer y lo que deben hacer. Ella les trae a la escuela, asiste a las conferencias, y está siempre con ellos, que es muy importante para nosotros.

Mi sueño para mis hijos es que siguen estudiando. Yo solo terminé el sexto grado y quiero que mis hijos se gradúen y que tengan su título. Quiero que se pueden valora el de ellos y que pueden aprovechar sus estudios es lo que yo quisiera. Pero es más que yo; ellos quieren también seguir estudiando. Quiero que mis hijos tengan valor espiritual, que tengan valor de afrontar las cosas buenas y las cosas que no son buenas. Deseo que ayuden a los demás. Quiero que sean honestos, que respeten y que hablen la verdad. No deben meterse con cosas que no se llaman. Eso es, saber vivir la vida, saber respetar las personas, vivir con la gente, llevarte con tu familia, saber limitar problemas, saber muchas cosas, no ser negativo y ser positivo.
Tengo hijos buenos y una esposa buena; no puedo pedir más. Mis hijos valúan su educación. Cada ocho días nos vamos a misa, todos—desde la más chiquita hasta la más grande. Son buenos hijos, tienen buena comunicación. El mayor dice, "Papá, ¿puedo ir a tal parte?" Y una persona de sus años no dice "Puedo ir," te dice, "Ahorita vengo." Mis hijos son todos nacidos aquí pero casi nunca llegan tardes; todo el tiempo llego yo a las diez de la noche, todo están en la casa a esta hora. Van a la escuela, trabajan o algo como así. Por la noche, siempre estamos en casa. Muchas veces un niño de veinte o veintiún años llega a la casa a las tres o cuatro de la mañana borracho o con malos amigos, pero por esa parte, no tenemos ninguna preocupación. Tenemos muy buenos hijos.

Estoy contento con mi vida aquí. Hay que trabajar, hay que sacar algo para pagar cuentas y para comprar algo para comer. La vida está siempre para arriba, para arriba, para arriba. No es fácil; no es fácil. Todo tiene su trabajo, su sacrificio, pero creyendo uno, se puede. No diga, "No se puede." ¡Si se puede! Los Estados Unidos siempre nos ha dado más que en México. Mi familia, mi esposa, mis hijos, mi trabajo, mi negocio, mis amigos, mi familia, mis hermanos, mi papá, mi mamá—todos son importantes. Gracias a Dios, podemos comer al diario y seguir adelante. Cuando me levanto, me llevo que amaneció—eso es importante. Dio la gracia al abrir los ojos vivir otro día.
My name is Lupe. I’m twenty-one years old and am a junior in college. I’m studying international business at the University of Green Bay. I lived in Mexico for fifteen years and have lived in the United States for six years. I’m from a large city, the city of Guadalajara. It has almost a million people; it’s a big city in comparison to Green Bay. My house in Guadalajara was medium-sized, but there were a lot of us in it. It was a house with three bedrooms, a lower-middle class house. I lived with my family: my parents, my brothers, and my sisters. I helped my parents tend their business of ice cream and ice boxes in our home. For fun I liked to go to parks to play basketball. Other things I liked to do were going shopping at the mall and going to the movies. It was a city life, for the most part, a normal life. Everywhere I went I went in a truck, in a bus, or in a taxi. We didn’t have our own car when we lived in Mexico. Our financial situation was a little complicated. We had our own ice cream and ice box business, so during the winter it was more difficult to have enough money than during the summer. Our meals consisted essentially of tortillas, meat almost every day or every other day, a lot of fruits and vegetables because they were cheaper, and typical Mexican food. We ate everyday food that was made at home. It was very traditional food from the place where we lived.

We celebrated a lot of holidays that I liked. I liked how we celebrated Mother’s Day in Mexico; I liked how we celebrated Mexico’s Independence Day, too, as well as Posadas, Christmas, and Holy Week. For example, we would spend Christmas with our family, the whole night long, with a bonfire outside the house. There was music, a lot of food, and all the kids would play games. There were a lot of presents and a lot of fun. For Holy Week, they had a representation of the Way of the Cross; this is something special that was done in our city since we were little. On Mother’s Day we were accustomed to getting up early in the morning and serenading our mothers, maybe from 2 AM until 7 AM, and then going to the church to sing songs to Our Lady of Guadalupe. For Mexico’s Independence Day, we would go to the center of the city to listen to the traditional shout of independence and afterwards we’d go to a party that usually would have mariachi music or a band; it was music that was traditional in Guadalajara or in Mexico in general.

Transition

My dad moved to the United States four years before we did. He came to the United States to work for short periods, and on one occasion one of my mom’s brothers was in Green Bay and he said there was work here. So, my dad came and was working here. My mom’s

103 Interviewed on December 21, 2010 in Green Bay
brother went back to Mexico and my dad stayed here. He was working at a meatpacking plant in the hamburger section, a cold area, and he saw that it was a little easier to get a job here in comparison with some other places and so he decided to stay. My dad thought that Green Bay was a very pretty place for a family to be. He had been in other parts of the United States and he didn’t like them for raising a family, so he decided that Green Bay was a secure place and it was a really nice place to have a family because there were a lot of green spaces and there wasn’t a lot of contamination or traffic.

Those four years when my dad was in the U.S. and we weren’t were difficult because my mom was the only one there who was the authority at this time. Many of the parties or holidays weren’t the same without my dad. It was hard to be away from him. My dad decided to move the family here because it was easier to have an education. In Mexico to be able to continue studying is a little difficult—you have to continuously take exams. There isn’t enough space for the students. After middle school, you go to high school. There’s less space and fewer spots available, so it’s really difficult to attend the university. Although the public university is a little cheaper, it’s difficult to get accepted. So, we came to study, basically. In the beginning my relatives didn’t support our decision because we had a life already made in Mexico. We were the only family that decided to come. They were really upset.

The trip itself was a little complicated. We had green cards because one of my dad’s goals was to become an American citizen, and this was the way he was able to get our residency. For us, we weren’t involved in any aspect of this process. The trip itself was pretty interesting. We traveled in a minivan—nine people total for three days. We were all really sad because we didn’t know anyone in Green Bay. We didn’t have any relatives here, so we didn’t know anyone, only my dad and each other. We made a lot of stops because there were a lot of us in the car, and when one person wasn’t in the bathroom, someone else was. Arriving here was really shocking because we got here in September, the twenty-second of September to be exact, and for us it was really cold.

**United States**

It was pretty hard for me to adjust in the beginning. My life here is different, but it’s comfortable. My house here is bigger than my house in Mexico. It has more commodities, certainly. It’s in a quiet area, but in the center of the town. I live with my parents and my siblings. I like my life here to a certain extent; it’s more calm and relaxing. Life here is more relaxing than in Mexico because I lived in a big city there. The style of life here is different: you can’t go outside the whole year, there are many months of winter, and the activities you can do aren’t the same. There aren’t a lot of activities when you first arrive here if you’re not involved in activities or sports in general. Because of this, at the beginning it was rough, but I think that it’s easier now. Normally to have fun here I go to the movies, go bowling, or go to the mall. There aren’t a lot of activities, but I go to my brothers’ soccer and basketball games. They’re involved in a lot of things. Concerts, friends’ parties, and other things are what I do now to have fun. In the beginning I had to adjust to the language, too. I think that now the language doesn’t affect me as much; in the beginning it affected me a lot because I didn’t want to go out and I was
afraid that people would ask me something and I wouldn’t know what to answer. Now, I can go wherever I want; language isn’t a barrier.

School is completely different in Mexico. When I arrived, I had my first semester completely in Spanish and the second semester was already in English. It was a very different change, very drastic. Some other things that are really different are that you’re in school for more time here than in Mexico, you don’t wear uniforms, and they provide you food at school, which is something that they don’t do in Mexico. Education here is also guaranteed until you graduate from high school. In Mexico, a lot of times the school day has two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and students just attend one of the sessions. This is really different.

I continue some traditions here, but not all of them. My favorites—Christmas, New Year’s Mother’s Day—these traditions we continue, but there are others, like Mexican Independence Day or the Day of Mexican Revolution, that we don’t continue. And, of course, these traditions are a little different here because there we’re used to getting together as a family. I come from a really big family and my favorite memories are being with my family to celebrate these holidays. Here we only invite some friends and people we know instead of family.

I think that family is more important in Mexico than it is here. Above everything else, it’s a very different practice. In my case, in spite of the fact that I’m over eighteen years old, I’m still living with my parents because it’s part of our tradition. They would take it as an insult if I left home just to study. Maybe now they’d understand it, but for them, it’s more important that, even if I were thirty years old, as long as I didn’t need to leave home or I hadn’t gotten married, I live with them. There’s more of a feeling of closeness than in the families here. All my friends at the university, a group of about fifteen people, the majority of whom are Hispanic, live with their parents despite being over eighteen.

I miss the warm weather and the food from Mexico. In reality, I don’t like the cold here, especially because I’ve lived just in Green Bay. I don’t like that the snow lasts a long time. It’s cold for a long time and you can’t do activities the whole year like in other places. Something else I don’t like about here is that I don’t have family here that I can have fun with. The food definitely tastes different here. Even if they’re just fruits and vegetables, they taste different. We eat here what you could describe as Mexican food. My mom cooks every day, so it’s food that we ate in Mexico, but with a different taste because there are more preservatives here and meat comes differently.

The Hispanics in Green Bay are really friendly. They try to help you start a social life when you just arrive. The Americans in Green Bay are really good, too. There are always some people who don’t like the idea of non-Americans coming. If we don’t speak English they give us a look or say some words that make you feel bad, but the majority of the people are nice.

I’m content with my life in Green Bay now. I like the tranquility that the city gives and it’s easier to achieve a higher education than in Mexico and definitely a better-paying job. There are more opportunities. I used to ask myself every day why I came here. It was really
complicated to understand the language, the culture, and the different traditions. Now, I feel content with my life here.

**Connections**

I stay in touch with my family: with my grandparents, aunts, and uncles. We can keep in touch through Instant Messenger once or twice a week with my aunts and some of my cousins. We also travel to Mexico once a year. This year I spent a month in Mexico. In this way, we’re able to maintain a constant relationship.

In the future, first of all, I would like to finish my studies. Maybe, right away I’ll just finish college and get a good job. After two years of experience, I would like to return to get my masters in international business.

The people who have influenced me the most in my life would be my parents. My dad brought us here to keep studying. My dad especially always told us that the family is the center of our lives. We’re people that are grateful that we always live with our families because it’s very difficult to live with people who aren’t your family. It was he who told us to study, to strive to be someone, to do something with our lives. And my mom was always there supporting us. Although she couldn’t help us with homework, she helped us in everything else: food, safety, warmth, having somewhere warm to sleep, a home. This is why these two people have helped me move my dreams ahead.
Lupe

México

Mi nombre es Lupe. Tengo veintiún años y estoy cursando mi tercer año de universidad. Estoy estudiando negocios internacionales en la Universidad de Green Bay. Viví durante quince años en México y tengo seis años de vivir en los Estados Unidos. Yo provengo de una ciudad muy grande, la ciudad de Guadalajara. Contiene aproximadamente casi millón de habitantes; es una ciudad muy grande a comparación de Green Bay. Mi casa en Guadalajara era una casa de tamaño mediano, pero vivíamos bastante en una casa. Era una casa con tres cuartos, de clase media baja de nivel económico. Vivía con mi familia: mis padres, mis hermanos y hermanas. Yo ayudaba a mis padres atender un negocio de helados y paletas en mi propia casa. Para divertirme, me gustaba ir a parques a jugar basquetbol. Otras de mis diversiones eran ir de compras a centros comerciales e ir al cine. Era una vida de ciudad hasta cierto punto, una vida regular. A todos los lugares donde iba, me transportaba en camión, en autobús o en taxi. No teníamos carro propio cuando vivía en México. La situación económica era un poco complicada. Teníamos nuestro propio negocio de helados y paletas, entonces, durante el tiempo de invierno, era más difícil tener dinero suficiente que en tiempo de calor. Nuestra comida consistía esencialmente de tortilla, carne casi todos los días o cada tercer día, muchas verduras y frutas porque son algo más barato, y comida muy típica de México. Comíamos todos los días hecho en casa. Era comida muy tradicional del lugar donde vivíamos.

Celebrábamos muchos días festivos que me gustaban. Me gustaba como celebraban el Día de las Madres en México; me gustaba como celebraban la independencia de México y también las Posadas, la Navidad y la Semana Santa. Por ejemplo, la Navidad se pasaba con la familia, durante toda la noche, con una fogata fuera de casa. Había música, mucha comida y todos los niños jugaban. Había muchos regalos y mucha diversión. Para Semana Santa, se hacían una representación de la Vía Crucis; ésta era algo muy especial que marcaba en nuestra ciudad desde pequeños. El Día de las Madres acostumbrábamos llevar serenata a todas las mamás que conocíamos desde muy temprano en la madrugada, quizás dos de la mañana hasta las siete de la mañana, y después íbamos a la iglesia a llevar mañañitas también o serenatas a la Virgen de Guadalupe. Para el Día de la Independencia de México íbamos al centro de la ciudad al escuchar al tradicional grito de independencia y después nos íbamos a una fiesta que regularmente tiene mariachi o banda; era música tradicional de Guadalajara y de México en general.

Transición

Mi papá movió cuatro años antes de que yo viniera a los Estados Unidos. El vino a Estados Unidos para trabajar por temporadas cortas, y en una ocasión un hermano de mi mamá estaba en Green Bay, y él le dijo que aquí había trabajo. Entonces, él vino y estuvo trabajando aquí. El hermano de mi mamá se fue a México y mi papá se quedó aquí. Estuvo trabajando en
la carnicería en el área de hamburguesas, un área muy fría, y vio que era un poco fácil conseguir trabajo a comparación de otros lugares y decidió quedarse aquí. Mi papá consideró que Green Bay era un lugar muy bonito para que una familia estuviera aquí. El estuvo en otros partes de los Estados Unidos y no les gustó para la familia, entonces decidió que Green Bay es un lugar seguro y muy bonito para tener una familia aquí porque hay muchas áreas verdes y no hay mucha contaminación ni tráfico.


El viaje en sí fue algo complicado. Tuvimos nuestras tarjetas de residencia porque uno de los propósitos de mi papá fue hacerse ciudadano americano, y fue la manera que consiguio nuestra residencia. Para nosotros, no estuvimos involucrados en este aspecto del proceso. El camino en sí fue muy interesante. Nosotros viajamos en una minivan—nueve personas durante tres días. Hacíamos muchas paradas porque éramos muchos en el carro, y cuando no estaba uno en el baño, estaba otro. Estamos todos muy tristes porque no conocía a nadie en Green Bay. No teníamos familiares aquí, entonces no conociamos a nadie, solamente a mi papá y nosotros. El llegar aquí fue este muy impactante porque llegamos en septiembre, el veintidós de septiembre exactamente, y para nosotros era muy frío.

**Estados Unidos**

Fue muy difícil adaptarme al principio sobre todo. Mi vida aquí es diferente, pero es cómoda. Mi casa aquí es más grande que mi casa en México. Tiene más comodidades, ciertamente. Está en un área muy tranquila, pero en el centro de la ciudad. Vivo con mis padres y hermanos. Me gusta mi vida aquí hasta cierto punto; es más tranquilo, más relajante. La vida es un poco más relajante que en México porque vivía allá en una ciudad muy grande. El estilo de vida aquí es muy diferente: no se puede salir durante todo el año, hay muchos meses de invierno y las actividades no son iguales. No hay muchas actividades cuando uno llega si no está involucrado en actividades o en deportes en general. Entonces, al principio fue muy complicado, pero ahora creo que es más fácil. Regularmente para divertirme voy al cine, al boliche o al centro comercial. No hay muchas actividades, pero asisto a los juegos de futbol y basquetbol de mis hermanos. Ellos están involucrados en varias actividades. Conciertos, fiestas de amigos y otras cosas son lo que hago ahora regularmente para divertirme. En el principio tuve que ajustarme a la lengua, también. Creo que ahora el idioma ya no afecta tanto; en el principio me
afectaba mucho porque no quería salir y tenía mucho miedo de que fuera a preguntar algo y no sabría qué contestar. Ahora, puedo salir adonde quiera; el idioma no es un obstáculo.

La escuela es totalmente diferente en México. Cuando llegué, toda la escuela yo tenía en español primer semestre y el segundo semestre ya fue en ingles. Fue un cambio muy diferente, muy drástico. Algo que es muy diferente es que se va más tiempo a la escuela aquí que en México, no se usa uniforme y le proveen a uno alimentos en la escuela, que es algo que no se hace en México. La educación aquí también está garantizada hasta el nivel de preparatoria. En México, regularmente hay dos turnos por cada escuela, uno por la mañana y uno por la tarde, y los estudiantes sólo asisten a un turno. Entonces, eso es muy diferente.

Continuamos algunas tradiciones, no todas. Las favoritas—la Navidad, Año Nuevo y Día de las Madres—esas tradiciones continuamos, pero hay otras, como el Día de la Independencia o de la Revolución Mexicana, que no continuamos. Y, ciertamente, son un poco diferentes las tradiciones porque allá acostumbramos reunirnos con la familia. Yo vengo de una familia muy grande y mis recuerdos favoritos son de estar con la familia para celebrar los días festivos. Aquí solamente invitamos a unos amigos y conocidos en vez de familia.

Creo que la familia es más importante en México que aquí. Sobre todo, es una tradición muy diferente. En mi caso, a pesar de que yo cumplí mis dieciocho años, sigo viviendo con mis padres porque es parte de la tradición. Ellos tomarían quizás como un insulto que yo me vaya de la casa solo porque quiero estudiar. Quizás ahora lo entenderían, pero para ellos, es muy importante que aunque tenga treinta años, si no necesitan salir de su casa o no se han casado, vivan con ellos. Tienen un sentido más de unidad que en las familias aquí. Todos mis compañeros de la universidad, un grupo de aproximadamente quince personas, la mayoría hispanos, viven con sus padres a pesar de que hayan cumplido los dieciocho años.

Echo de menos el clima cálido y la comida de México. Efectivamente, no me gusta el frío aquí, específicamente porque he vivido solamente en Green Bay. No me gusta que dure mucho tiempo la nieve. Es mucho tiempo que está haciendo frío y no se puede hacer actividades durante todo el año como en otros lugares. Otra de las cosas que no me gusta es que no tengo familia aquí para salir a divertirme con ellos. La comida ciertamente sabe muy diferente. Aunque sean frutas y verduras, saben algo diferente. Comimos aquí lo que se puede describir como comida mexicana. Mi mamá cocina todos los días, entonces es comida que comiéramos en México, pero con un sabor diferente porque aquí tienen más conservadores y las carnes vienen diferentes.

Los hispanos en Green Bay son muy amables. Tratan de que uno empiece a llevar más vida social cuando uno acaba de llegar. La gente americana de Green Bay es muy buena, también. Siempre hay unas personas que no les parece la idea que vengan personas que no son americanas. Si no hablamos inglés, nos dan quizás una mirada o algunas palabras que hacen sentir mal uno, pero la mayoría de las personas son muy amables.

Ahora estoy contenta con mi vida en Green Bay. Me gusta la tranquilidad que está da, y que es más fácil conseguir una educación más avanzada que en México y ciertamente un trabajo mejor pagado. Hay más oportunidades. Antes todos los días me preguntaba por qué había
venido. Era muy complicado para mí entender el idioma, las culturas y las tradiciones diferentes. Ahora, me siento contenta con mi vida aquí.

Conexiones

Mantengo relaciones con mis familiares: abuelos y tíos. Procuramos comunicarnos por Messenger una vez a la semana o dos con mis tíos y con algunos de mis primos. También viajamos una vez al año a México. Este año viajé durante de un mes a México. Entonces, tenemos una relación constante.

En el futuro, primeramente, me gustaría terminar mis estudios. Quizás, por lo pronto, solo quiero terminar la universidad y obtener un buen trabajo. Después de dos años de experiencia, me gustaría regresar a hacer mi maestría en negocios internacionales.

Las personas que más influenciaron mi vida serían mis padres. Mi papá nos trajo aquí a seguirnos estudiando. Mi padre en específico siempre nos dice que la familia es el centro de nuestras vidas. Somos una persona que somos agradecidas que convivimos constantemente con la familia, que es muy difícil vivir con gente fuera de la familia. Fue él que dijo que tuvimos que estudiar, alcanzar algo, hacer algo en la vida. Y mi mamá siempre estuvo allá apoyándonos. Aunque no nos ayudara con la tarea, ella nos ayudara en todo lo demás: comida, segura, calentita, tener un lugar donde llegar a dormir calentito, un hogar. Entonces, son las dos personas que han influenciado a que yo siga mis sueños adelante.
4. Francisco

Mexico

My name is Francisco. I am forty-eight years old, an old man. I’ve lived in this country since 1979 and since 1980 in Green Bay. My town in Mexico was very small, about thirty houses, and was in the state of Jalisco. The people were country folk. Corn and beans was what they knew because this was what the ranch grew. I also worked on this ranch. My house in Mexico was small and ugly. It was made of adobe with a large room where there were three or four beds, a small kitchen, and a small patio. I lived with my family—my dad, my mom, and my siblings. I have ten siblings and I’m the second oldest. The two youngest ones were born when I was already in the United States.

I didn’t have a lot of time to have fun, but with the free time I had, I liked to play soccer with the boys on the ranch. My life in Mexico was, in a sense, nice because there was a lot of freedom, but in a sense it was sad because there wasn’t any money. Sometimes there wasn’t money to buy salt or beans or sugar. I never saw a telephone and I never saw a television; they didn’t have these things on the ranch. There was more poverty in the country than in the city.

The traditions that I liked more were the religious events. Around the celebrations there were soccer tournaments, and this was a lot of fun. Some of the holidays were the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Christmas, and Holy Week. In May there were special days like Mother’s Day. Father’s Day wasn’t celebrated; it was a day just like any other. We always celebrated these days with music and a variety of foods. People would set out these foods and you would go to choose whatever you wanted. We had fun with piñatas at Christmastime; they were essential. We would collect a lot of candy and oranges for the piñatas. These holidays were special days. We always ate chicken or pork. The days when it wasn’t a holiday we at beans, rice, and pastas—our routine.

Transition

I came to the United States when I was sixteen years old. I decided to come to look for a better life, which, for me, meant earning more money to send to my dad and mom so that my siblings could have better food, shoes, and clothes. My parents didn’t want me to go because they knew they would miss me, but because of the economic situation they accepted that although I was small, I would come to fight and to risk everything to arrive in this country. I came to the United States alone.

The process of coming to the United States was sad and difficult because I had to arrive at the border and look for a coyote to help me pass. There were a lot of risks. I remember a saying of Pancho Villa—“It’s better to die on your feet than live on your knees.” You know there are a lot of risks. The trip was three days on a bus from Guadalajara to Tijuana and a week

104 Interviewed on November 25, 2010 in Green Bay
105 A coyote is a person who smuggles immigrants across the border.
in Tijuana looking for the connection to come to Los Angeles, because my brother was already in California. In Los Angeles I worked in a restaurant, a Big Boy; cleaning tables and cleaning floors is how I began. I lived with my brother in Long Beach. There were a lot of people from the same ranches that lived in Los Angeles. One day my cousins arrived from Mexico and they wanted to go to Green Bay; my brother-in-law was already here. They said to me, “Would you like to go to Green Bay? You make only $2.90 in Los Angeles and the cost of living is really high. In Green Bay you would start earning $5.45 and rent is really cheap.” I decided, “I want to better myself. I’m going to Green Bay.” With the amnesty of Ronald Regan, I obtained my permanent residency, and afterwards, when I had the opportunity, I obtained my citizenship. It was a long and costly process, but I think it’s worth the while.

United States

In 1984 I married my wife. My wife is from Mexico too, from the same ranch where I’m from. We had known each other since we were little. I went to Mexico for us to get married and then we came back here. My wife didn’t want to come back at first because she wanted to be with her family and she didn’t know anyone here in Green Bay.

It was difficult to adjust myself to the lifestyle here in the United States because the culture and the environment you live in are very different. It takes time to adjust to this. In the beginning the language was difficult; now it’s better. If I understand, it’s good, if not, I ask. At home with my wife I speak Spanish and with my children I speak English; my children speak more English than Spanish. It was also difficult to adjust to the time here. Here, time is a slave for people. I always say that we have to be with the clock, and in Mexico the clock doesn’t matter. We work with by the sun and nothing else, so there’s more freedom.

I’m content with my life in the United States. My house here, compared with the one in Mexico, is a palace. It’s a four-bedroom house with a basement and a two-car garage in a fairly good part of Green Bay. I work in a high position, but I don’t have a lot of free time. Although I’m old, playing soccer is what I like to do for fun, and I like to go fishing in the summer, too. I like that in the United States there’s a lot of opportunities. There are jobs here, because in Mexico there aren’t any jobs and there aren’t any salaries. On a ranch you can’t better yourself like you can here.

What I don’t like about the United States is always being away from your home country, from your parents, and from your brothers and sisters. There’s a division of families. I talk on the phone with my brothers and sisters that I have in Mexico. We talk every two weeks, three weeks, or month, depending. They always say, “Why don’t you call more often?” And my response is, “Oh, in the meantime you’re all ok.” I have a lot of siblings here in Green Bay, so I talk with them. I normally visit my family once a year.

I continue my Mexican traditions by eating a lot of chili and cooking Mexican food. In my house, we normally eat Mexican food. There are many, many varieties of Mexican food—pozole, birria, taquitos—a lot. My wife prefers Mexican food but my kids like both. They sometimes want Mexican food, like Mexican soup, and they don’t like anything else better.
There are always elements of discrimination. Once someone told me that I couldn’t be a person of God because we had broken the laws; another time someone told me that if I wanted to talk in my language, I should go back to Mexico. Another incident was when someone told me, “You’re illegal; go home. Leave us. We’re the owners of this country.” And I’ve always said that the whites and the Mexicans aren’t from this country, only the Indians, and it’s a pity that families that come from other countries but are already in the second or third generation want to have the power. This has always bothered me.

We celebrate all the holidays that are celebrated here. Thanksgiving Day has a good feeling for me. We celebrate this day at home, watching football and eating Mexican food. We don’t eat turkey. We celebrate the Fourth of July just like anyone else: we go to the park, get together with families. We’ve adapted ourselves to the culture of the United States.

Connections

The person who has influenced me most in life was my dad. He always fought in many ways to try to make for us a life, a normal life, a spiritual life. This is what has inspired me most about my dad. People respected him a lot. He went to live in a town, and when he lived in a large town, everyone knew him and everyone would visit him. When my father died, the tradition in Mexico is that the whole night there are people there with the dead person and the next day this person is taken to the tomb. There aren’t funerals like there are here in the United States; it’s completely different. I remember that he died at seven at night and at one in the morning there were eleven priests there. There weren’t other people; they didn’t know yet. But later at the funeral Mass, a priest said, “Today it seems like we’re at a town party” because there were so many people. It was in the plaza because there wasn’t enough room at church for so many people. The priest said, “I’ve never seen so many people at a funeral as I have today.” And someone else said, “It’s because he knew so many people and they all followed him.” Today, if someone asks me for a favor, “Will you help me do this?” I try to never say no. I think this is something that came from my dad, that I saw his great example and always wanted to be very social. I like to make jokes; I like to be equal—I don’t like feeling superior to other people. I want to be equal with everyone else, and I think this comes from my dad as well.

I don’t have many memories from Mexico because I don’t have many experiences there. I never went to Mexico City. I never went to a beach in Mexico. I didn’t go to very many cities. Today, the times that I go to Mexico, I want to be with my family. I’ve lived over half my life in Green Bay so I have more memories from here. My favorite memory was when we found a church; at St. Willebrord’s Church there were open doors for our community. I am a spiritual person, and this is a happiness I’m never going to forget.
Francisco

México


No había mucho tiempo para divertirme, pero con el tiempo libre me gustaba jugar futbol con los niños del rancho. Mi vida en México era, en un sentido, bonita porque hay mucha libertad, pero era muy triste porque no había dinero. A veces no había dinero para comprar sal o frijoles o azúcar. Yo no conocía un teléfono; yo no conocía un televisor; no había eso en el rancho. Había más pobreza en el campo que en las ciudades.

Las tradiciones que me gustaron más eran los eventos religiosos. Alrededor de las fiestas había torneos de futbol, y eso era muy divertido. Unos días festivos eran la Virgen de Guadalupe, Navidad y la Semana Santa. Había en mayo días especiales como el día de las madres. El día del papá, no, ese no contado, un día cualquiera. Siempre celebrábamos esas días con música y varias comidas. La gente ponía estas comidas, y uno iba a escoger lo que querría comer. Nos divertíamos con las piñatas para Navidad, eso era muy esencial. Juntábamos muchos dulces y naranjas para las piñatas. Estos días festivos eran días muy especiales. Siempre había pollo o cerdo. Los días no festivos, comíamos frijoles, arroz y pastas—la rutina de siempre.

Transición

Vine a los Estados Unidos cuando tuve diecisiete años. Decidí venir para buscar una mejor vida, que, para mí, significaba ganar dólares para llegar a mi papá y a mi mamá para que mis hermanos puedan tener una mejor comida, mejor calzado y vestido. Mis papás dijeron de corazón no, pero la situación aceptaron sí, aunque fuera yo muy pequeño, que vine a luchar y a arriesgar como llegar a este país. Vino a los Estados Unidos solo.

El proceso de venir a los Estados Unidos fue triste y difícil porque tuve que venir a la frontera y buscar un coyote para pasar. Había muchos riesgos. Recuerdo un dicho de Pancho Villa—“Más morir de pie que vivir de rodillas.” Uno sabe que hay muchos riesgos. Fueron tres días de camino en el autobús de Guadalajara a Tijuana y una semana en Tijuana para buscar la conexión como pasar a Los Ángeles porque mi hermano ya estaba en California. En Los Ángeles trabajé en un restaurante, un Big Boy; limpiando mesas y limpiando pisos es como comencé. Vivía con mi hermano en Long Beach. Había muchas personas de los mismos ranchos que vivían en Los Ángeles. Un día llegó mis primos de México y ellos querían venir a
Green Bay; ya estaba mi cuñado allá. Me dijeron, “¿Te gusta venirte a Green Bay? Tú ganas solo $2.90 en Los Ángeles, y la costa de vida es muy cara. Allá en Green Bay tú vas a comenzar ganando $5.45 y la renta es muy barata.” Yo decidí, “Quiero superarme. Yo me voy a Green Bay.” Con la amnistía de Ronald Regan, me hice residente permanente, y después, en cuanto tuve la oportunidad, obtuve la ciudadanía. Era un proceso largo y costoso pero creo que vale la pena.

**Estados Unidos**

En 1984 me casé con mi esposo. Mi esposa es de México también, del mismo rancho donde soy. Nos conocemos desde pequeños. Fui a México y nos casamos y nos venimos. Ella no querría venir aquí porque querría estar con su familia y ella no conocía a nadie aquí en Green Bay.

Fue muy difícil adaptarme al estilo de vida aquí en los Estados Unidos porque la cultura y el ambiente en que se vive son muy diferentes. Se necesita el tiempo para adaptarse. En el principio el idioma era difícil; hoy es mejor. Si entiendo, está bien, si no, pregunto. En mi casa con la esposa hablo español y con los hijos, hablo inglés; mis hijos hablan más inglés que español. También era difícil adaptarme al tiempo aquí. Aquí, el reloj es un esclavo para uno. Siempre digo, tenemos que ser con el reloj, y en México el reloj no contaba. Trabajábamos con el sol con más libertad.

Estoy contento con mi vida en los Estados Unidos. Mi casa aquí, comparada con la de México, es un palacio. Es una casa de cuatro cuartos con su sótano y su garaje para dos carros en una área más o menos bien en el este de Green Bay. Trabajo en una posición alta, pero no hay mucho tiempo para divertirme. Aunque ya estoy viejo, fútbol es lo que me gustaba a mí para entretenimiento, y me gusta pescar en el verano también. Me gusta que en los Estados Unidos haya muchas oportunidades. Hay trabajos, porque en México no hay; no hay trabajos y no hay sueldos. Pues en un rancho no puede uno superarse como aquí.

Lo que no me gusta es estar lejos siempre uno de su patria, de sus papás y de sus hermanos. Hay división de familias. Hablo por teléfono con mis hermanos y hermanas que tengo ya en México. Comunicamos cada dos semanas, tres semanas o un mes, depende. Siempre dicen mis hermanos, “¿Por qué no habla más en seguido?” Y mi respuesta es, “Oh, mientras estén bien.” Tengo muchos hermanos aquí en Green Bay, pues yo hablan con ellos. Normalmente visito a mi familia una vez al año.

Continúo mis tradiciones mexicanas por comer mucho chile y cocinar comida mexicana. En mi casa, normalmente se come la comida mexicana. Hay muchas, muchas variedades de comida mexicana—el pozole, la birria, los taquitos—hay muchas. Mi esposa prefiere la comida mexicana pero a mis hijos les gustan los dos. Ellos a veces quieren comida mexicana, como una sopa mexicana, y a ellos no les quieren mejor otra cosa.

Siempre hay elementos de discriminación. Una vez una persona me dijo que yo no podía ser persona de Dios porque quebrábamos las leyes; otra vez me dijo que si yo quería hablar en mi idioma que me fuera en México. Otro incidente era cuando alguien me dijo, “Tú eres ilegal;
vete a tu tierra. Déjenos. Nosotros somos los dueños de este país.” Y yo siempre he dicho que los blancos y los mexicanos no somos de este país, solo los indios, y es una lástima que familias que vinieron de otros países ya en la segunda o tercera generación quieren tener el poder. Eso siempre me molesta mucho.


Conexiones

La persona que más me ha influenciado en mi vida era mi papá. El siempre luchó con muchas maneras de tratar de crearnos a nosotros en una vida, una vida normal, una vida espiritual. Eso es lo que me ha inspirado más de mi papá. La gente respetó mucho a mi papá. El se fue a vivir en el pueblo, y cuando le vivía en el pueblo grande, toda la gente conocía a él y toda la gente iba a visitarlo. Cuando murió mi papá, la tradición de México es que toda la noche hay personas allí con él, y otro día al sepulcro. No hay funerales como aquí en los Estados Unidos; es totalmente diferente. Recuerdo que él murió a las siete de la noche y a la una de la mañana, había once sacerdotes allí. No era gente; toda la gente no sabía. Pero otro día en la misa de funeral, un sacerdote dijo, “Hoy parece que estamos en la fiesta del pueblo” porque había muchas personas. Estaba en la plaza porque en la iglesia no había espacio para tanta gente. Dijo el sacerdote, “Yo nunca había visto en un funeral tanta gente como hoy.” Y dijo otra persona, “Es porque él conocía a mucha gente y todos los seguían a él mucho.” Hoy en día, si alguien me pide un favor, “¿Me ayudas a hacer esto?” trato nunca decirle no. Yo pienso que es algo que ya viene de mi papá, que yo lo vi este ejemplo grande y yo siempre me he gustado ser muy social. Me gusta hacer chistoso; me gusta ser igual—no me gusta sentirme yo más superior que otra persona. Yo quiero ser igual con todo el mundo, y pienso que eso viene de mi papá también.

No tengo muchas memorias de México porque no tuve muchas experiencias allá. Yo nunca conocí la Ciudad. Yo no conozco una playa en México. Yo no conozco muchas ciudades de México. Yo no conozco nada de México. Hoy, a veces que he ido a México, quiero estar con mi familia. He vivido más de la mitad de mi vida aquí en Green Bay, así pues tengo más memorias de aquí. Mi memoria favorita de aquí era cuando encontramos una iglesia; a la iglesia de St. Willebrord hubo puertas abiertas para nuestra comunidad. Yo soy una persona muy espiritual, y esa es una alegría que yo nunca voy a olvidar.
Mexico
My name is Isabel and I am thirty-two years old. I am from Zacatecas, Mexico. I came to the United States about ten years ago. I lived in Mexico City first, but my mom moved us to a smaller city in the province of Zacatecas. In this city there was less danger, less people, less traffic, and more trust in people. We lived in a small house. It wasn’t finished, with a dirt floor and without windows still. I lived with my family: three brothers, two sisters, my mom, and my dad. My dad was a plumber; my mom didn’t work. For fun, I was part of a youth group and we had parties and sang at Mass and did a variety of activities. My life was calm, with school, work, and a bit of something fun.

The economic situation was difficult for my family because my dad had a hard time finding work and my mom didn’t work, so my siblings and I had to work when we were kids to be able to pay for our schoolbooks. I worked when I was in grade school cleaning houses and babysitting to be able to pay for my books. Sometimes at home we had to wait for my dad to come home so we could eat because we didn’t have anything in the house. My dad would work and they’d pay him, so then he’d be able to go to the market and buy something for us to eat, like beans, tortillas, and sometimes vegetables or meat.

Transition
I came to the United States because I wanted to enter a religious community. I went to Texas first. I had to learn English. Going to school made me afraid. It was difficult because I couldn’t communicate. I was scared they would call on me in English and I wouldn’t know the answer, but when I found out that the teacher knew a little Spanish, it made me feel more comfortable. Little by little I learned, and other people helped me. I came to Green Bay from there to learn English better.

United States
I had to adjust to the style of life in the United States when I arrived. The Hispanic community in Texas is older and larger. It’s also a little more Americanized; the community here still follows Hispanic traditions. The community in Texas has lost many traditional values, especially during the time when they were prohibited from speaking Spanish in the schools. I know people in their 40’s, 50’s, and 60’s who don’t speak Spanish well because when they went to school as children they were prohibited from speaking Spanish. When Mexico lost its land, they forced the Mexicans to not speak Spanish and they punished them in school. In reality, those Hispanics were Mexicans, but when Santa Ana sold these lands, all the people living there were no longer Mexican. Because of this, they didn’t belong any longer to Mexico, but they
couldn’t adjust completely. Since they weren’t allowed to speak Spanish, they lost a lot of the Hispanic culture. Now what happens is that they don’t work on their English, they learn it by force, and Spanish they don’t know well either. They’ve already lost a lot of their cultures. They aren’t Mexicans, but they aren’t Americans. They have a separate community. It’s sad this history we have.

It was difficult to live here in the beginning because I missed my family. My family is the most important thing for me. My mom is the person who has influenced me the most in life. When I was young, sometimes my mom didn’t have anything to eat, but she wouldn’t ask. She’s always been very strong in these things. She suffered a lot as a child, but she always stayed strong. My mom visits me every year; my dad, brothers, and sisters come sometimes, but the rest of my family doesn’t have papers. I stay in touch with them by using the internet or the phone. I can call my family and friends or sometimes I send Christmas or greeting cards.

My life here in general is busy with work, a lot of work. I work at an elementary school with the children who don’t understand English. I translate what the teacher says and help in the office with the parents who don’t understand English either. During the summer I’m free, but I sometimes find another job to keep moving forward. I enjoy helping Hispanics who come to Green Bay and don’t understand English. I don’t want them to feel like I felt when I was learning English. I want them to feel like someone spoke Spanish there to help welcome them. I help out at church a lot in my free time as well. For fun, I like to listen to music. I like instrumental music and there are sometimes opportunities for me to listen to it. There are choirs here, too.

There are ways to continue my Mexican traditions. When my mom comes, she cooks for me. She makes tacos, enchiladas, and all these things because when I’m alone, I don’t cook like this because I simply don’t have time. At church too there are many traditions that we’ve been continuing here, like Posadas, the Virgin of Guadalupe and a lot of activities like Children’s Day. These activities that we have help people feel like they have a family here even if their family lives in Mexico. I’ve felt welcomed by both the Hispanics and non-Hispanics in Green Bay.

I think of myself as Mexican, but I think of myself as American as well. I identify more with my Mexican nationality, but when I have the opportunity to defend my rights, I feel like an American. I have my American citizenship as well, so I’m able to vote and determine the rights of immigrants in this respect. I don’t like the situation of immigrants in this country. Immigrants are treated badly, such as being rejected in stores or other places, because they’re a darker color. A lot of times they don’t show the bad things that happen to immigrants on TV here, but when you go to Mexico, they show all the videos. You see how they are treated like animals instead of people. I like that I can vote to change these things as well as the other opportunities I have here.

Connections

True wealth for me consists of giving. When someone gives, he or she receives even more. At the parish here, people come and ask for a sandwich. When I lived in the community
in El Paso, there were people that would come to ask for a taco because they didn’t have anything to eat. And it’s beautiful because when you give to someone who needs it, you feel full of peace. Now that I know English, I can help those people who don’t know it yet. I can welcome them and they won’t feel afraid like I did. I think this is the richness people need: to feel good inside by helping others.
Isabel

México

Me llamo Isabel y tengo treinta y dos años. Soy de Zacatecas, México. Como hace los diez años llegué a los Estados Unidos. Yo viví en la Ciudad en México primero, pero mi mamá nos mudó a una ciudad más pequeña en la provincia de Zacatecas. Allí había menos peligro, menos gente, menos tráfico y más confianza con gente. Vivíamos en una casa pequeña. Estaba en construcción con un piso de tierra y sin ventanas todavía. Vivía con mi familia: somos tres hermanos y tres hermanas, mi mamá y mi papá. Mi papá era plomero; mi mamá no trabajaba. Para divertirme, me juntaba con el grupo de jóvenes y teníamos fiestas y cantábamos en la misa y teníamos varias actividades. Mi vida era una vida tranquila, con escuela, trabajo y algo de diversión.

La situación económica había sido difícil para mi familia porque mi papá no encontraba trabajo y mi mamá no trabajaba, pues nosotros teníamos que trabajar chicos para poder pagar los libros en la escuela. Trabajé cuando estaba en la primaria limpiando casas y cuidando niños para poder pagar mis libros en la escuela. A veces teníamos que esperar a mi papá para comer porque no teníamos nada en la casa. Papá trabajaba y le pagaba, entonces él pasaba por el mercado y compraba algo, como frijoles, tortillas y a veces verduras o carne.

Transición

Vine a los Estados Unidos porque querría entramarme en una comunidad religiosa. Fui a Texas primero. Tuve que aprender inglés. Ir a la escuela era de dar miedo. Era difícil porque uno no se podía comunicar. Tuve miedo cuando me iban a preguntar en inglés y yo no sabía, pero cuando supe que la maestra sabía un poquito español, me atrae más fácil. Poco a poco aprendí y otras personas también me ayudaron. Vine a Green Bay de allá para aprender inglés mejor.

Estados Unidos

Tuve que adaptarme a Green Bay cuando llegué. La comunidad hispana en Texas es más grande y más antigua. Ya es un poco más americana, y la comunidad aquí todavía sigue las costumbres hispanas. La comunidad de Texas ha perdido muchos valores, especialmente cuando ellos les prohibían hablar español en las escuelas. Yo conozco personas en los cuarenta, cincuenta, sesenta años que no hablan muy bien español porque ellos cuando iban a la escuela pequeños les prohibían hablar español en las escuelas. Cuando México perdió las tierras, ellos obligaron a que no podían hablar el español, les castigaban en las escuelas. Entonces, sí, perdieron mucho de la cultura hispana. Ahora lo que pasa es que ya no tuvieron su inglés, lo aprendieron a fuerzas, y el español ya no saben muy bien tampoco. Ya perdieron mucho de las culturas. No son ni mexicanos ni americanos. Tienen como otra comunidad diferente. En realidad, esos hispanos eran mexicanos, pero cuando Santa Ana vendió esas tierras, lo perdió.
con toda la gente. Entonces, ellos no pertenecen ya a México, no se puede acostumbrar. Es triste sus historias que tenemos.

Al principio vivir aquí fue difícil porque extrañaba la familia. Mi familia es lo más importante para mí. Mi mamá es la persona que más me ha influenciado en la vida. Cuando era joven, a veces mi mamá no tenía que comer, pero no pedía. Mi mamá siempre ha sido muy fuerte en estas cosas. Ella ha sufrido mucho de niña, pero ella ha sido muy fuerte. Mi mamá me visita cada año; mi papá y mis hermanos vienen a veces, pero los demás no tienen papeles. Mantengo relaciones con ellos por la media de Internet o por medio de teléfono. Puedo hablar con mi familia y mis amigos o, a veces, mandando tarjetas de Navidad o cartas.

Mi vida aquí en general es ocupada con trabajo, mucho trabajo. Trabajo en una escuela con los niños que no saben inglés. Traduzco lo que la maestra dice y ayudo en oficina con los padres que no entienden también inglés. Durante el verano estoy libre, pero a veces consigo otro trabajo para poder seguir adelante. Me gusta ayudar a los hispanos que llegan a Green Bay y no entienden inglés. No quiero que sientan como yo sentía cuando estaba aprendiendo el inglés. Yo quiero que sientan como que alguien habla español allí para poderles dar bienvenida. Ayudo en la parroquia en mi tiempo libre también. Para divertirme, me gusta oír música. Me gusta música instrumental y a veces hay oportunidades de poner música. Aquí hay coros.

Hay maneras para continuar mis tradiciones mexicanas. Cuando mi mamá viene, ella cocina para mí. Hace tacos, enchiladas y todas estas cosas porque cuando estoy sola, no cocino así porque simplemente no tengo tiempo. En la parroquia también tenemos muchas tradiciones que hemos estado siguiendo aquí, como las Posadas, la Virgen de Guadalupe y muchas actividades como el Día del Niño. Estas actividades hacen sentir a la gente estar en familia, aunque su familia viva en México. He sentido bienvenido por los hispanos y no hispanos en Green Bay.

Pienso a mí mismo como mexicana, pero como americana también. Identifico más con mi nacionalidad mexicana, pero cuando uno tiene la oportunidad de defender los derechos, siento como americana. Ya me hice ciudadana americana también, así que puedo votar y determinar los derechos de los inmigrantes en este aspecto. No me gusta la situación de los inmigrantes en este país. Se tratan a los inmigrantes mal, como con una rechaza en las tiendas o algunas partes, por ser de color oscuro. Muchas veces no se enseña cosas malas en la televisión aquí, pero cuando uno va a México, enseña todos los videos como los tratan como animales, no como personas. Me gusta que puedo votar para cambiar estas cosas además de las otras oportunidades que tengo aquí.

**Conexiones**

La riqueza verdadera para mí es en dar. Cuando uno da, recibe más. En la parroquia aquí, vienen personas a pedir un sándwich. Cuando vivía en la comunidad de El Paso, había personas que venía a pedir un taco porque no tenía que comer. Y es bonito porque cuando tú das a una persona que necesita, te sientes llena de paz. Ahora que yo sé inglés, puedo ayudar a las personas que ya no lo saben. Puedo dar a la persona bienvenida y ellos no sentirán lleno de
miedo, como yo sentí. Creo yo que eso es la riqueza que uno necesita: sentirse bien por adentro por ayudar a los demás.
6. Agustin

Mexico

My name is Agustin and I am sixty years old. I am from the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, but the neighborhood where I lived had about six or seven thousand people. The majority of my family lives in this region; this is where most of my fourteen children were born. I lived with my wife and my children in a small house with a few bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. I worked in the countryside as a day laborer. Although we were poor, we had a lot of conversation.

My life in Mexico was the life of a worker, but I had fun, too. I liked to play soccer and played it for fifteen years. We also celebrated many religious traditions. We celebrated these holidays with games, celebrations at church, Mass, the Rosary, pilgrimages, and many other things.

In the country in general, the economic situation for the poor was critical, and the majority of the people were poor. For my wife and me, our economic situation was bad because we were very poor. The salary that I earned was not very much and we couldn’t get ahead. I began to work when I was five years old. I worked on the farms, helping to care for the cows, sleeping in the barn—this is how my life was as a boy. Because of this, I never had the opportunity to study. I only finished grade school. This is why I said, “When I’m married and have a family, I’m going to make it possible for them to study.” I wanted my children’s lives to be better than mine. Because of this, I decided to come to the United States: to bring my children so that they could study and have a better life.

Transitions

I came for the first time in 1973. I had to enter California illegally. I came alone and without any relatives. I arrived to work as a migrant worker in California on the farms where workers had to live, where they give you food and everything and pick you up and take you to work. I would work here seasonally and then return to Mexico. In California I worked like this, about six or seven months, for twenty years, sometimes in the country or in construction and other times in a restaurant or a factory. I helped my family with what I earned and we began to live a little better.

I decided to move from California to Green Bay because they told me that it was calmer here than in California. There weren’t as many gangs and one could live better. And I decided to get to know it, and so I came and saw that it was calm and decided to bring my family, but I couldn’t do that for a few years. In ’93, I worked here about six months and returned to Mexico and returned again in ’94. In 1995 or 1996 I finally brought part of the family. I had gotten my citizenship, and for this reason I was able to get a green card for my wife and later for some of

107 Interviewed on December 26, 2010 in Green Bay
my children. Right now I have a part of the children that can’t get a green card. It’s being processed, but they can’t get it. They’re in Mexico. I have some children in Mexico.

My relatives from Mexico didn’t support our decision to come because in our culture, in the Latino culture, the most important thing is staying close to your family and in communication, and when there’s separation, there’s an imbalance. My relatives that were here supported the decision because it was better economically regarding jobs; jobs pay a little more and later there are more opportunities for the children to study.

United States

I obtained a job in a meat packing company and I still work there. We live in a house that is larger than the one in Mexico, with a part upstairs and a basement downstairs as well. It has everything. There’s enough space for my wife and I and our kids that still live with us.

I had to adapt to the style of life in the United States when I arrived here. We eat different foods here. There, every day we eat tortillas: tortillas with beans or with meat or with soup, but always tortilla. Here, sometimes we ate tortillas, but not daily. Here we also eat bread or sandwiches sometimes, but it’s something different. When you go to eat at fast food places in Mexico, you eat tacos, pozole, enchiladas with tamales, and things like this. Here, you eat hamburgers, pizza, or chicken—it’s different. I like these things, but I prefer Mexican food. My wife also prefers Mexican food, but my kids don’t have a preference about one or the other.

In the beginning it was difficult to adjust to the style of life in the United States because we bring other traditions. You realize this when you come for the first time, you come across something that is really different that you don’t know. In the first place, you come across differences in language, customs, and some other things that make the people different. There’s a lot of customs that are different, above everything else, the jobs. Jobs here are by hour; in Mexico they’re by days. The salaries there are by week; here they’re by minutes or by hours.

Something else, relating to religion, there they ring the bells for Mass, three times to go; here no, here it is the clock, the clock for everything. Here we have to be conscious of the clock because the clock is for everything.

We bring other customs, other foundations, and another way of life. We’re more welcoming to people, and that is what I see here: a little bit of coldness in families. There, you go down the road—a lot of people walk there—and there’s more friendship between people. If you live in a house, everyone around you, you know; you talk to one another, you greet one another. And here, no. Here there are many people we don’t know. Who we know are people from church and at home a neighbor or two, no more. In the traditions that we bring from Mexico, the foundations that we bring, the family raises the children at home until they get married. And when they marry, they live close by and come by the house to see their parents, and later the grandkids with the grandparents.

It’s a little different raising children in the United States because you have to have the foundations to teach them not to leave the traditions of their home countries, because here primarily the customs are different. When children turn 18, they move out of the house to live somewhere else, and this doesn’t happen with Latinos. The children live with their families until
they get married. And they marry for life. They don’t marry for one year, for two, or for three; they marry for life. This is a little difficult. Sometimes in the high schools they start to have conversations with friends and it could be about how people live somewhere else and they want sometimes to grab these customs that are easier for them, but in the end, they’re more harmful. What they do is separate the children from their parents and then these children get hold of the idea of being with someone without being married and it begins to unravel their lives. This isn’t for us. All my grandchildren come here. They get together here and say, “Gramps! Grandpa! Dad!” and this is beautiful for us because we have a lot of love for our children and our sons- and daughters-in-law. We depend on one another.

I’m not planning on staying in the United States permanently because the weather is very different than ours and it’s difficult at my age. Also, without working here, I have no way of making a living, and there are a lot of years I’d have to work yet. I’ve decided to return to Mexico, probably just my wife and I. I think that my children will stay here because they’ll all have careers and I think they can already live a little better. I’m sixty years old but I keep working because the majority of my kids are still studying.

For fun here, I go to church; I’m a catechist. In the summer, we get together with our family in the yard. Sometimes we go to parks. I like to watch soccer because the other sports I don’t understand very much. Sometimes I watch them, but they’re not as important to me because I don’t understand them. I support Mexico and the United States when the soccer games are international. I watch football games, too. I’m a Packer fan. I like to watch the games, but I’ve never been to one. Basketball and baseball I like a little, but I don’t understand them. I don’t know the rules, and this is why they’re not as important to me. I also like to watch westerns, either Mexican or from the United States, but from the ‘40’s and ‘50’s. Westerns in the United States and Mexican westerns are different because they give people a different understanding. The ones from Mexico always talk about war, politics, destruction, or things like that. Sometimes the ones from the United States, the few times that I’ve seen them, talk about when people kill someone, the best gun, and things like that. Above everything else, I like to watch the news, in truth almost all week. I watch Mexican news, and the news from here, the little that I understand.

I understand a little bit of English, but not a lot. When I arrived here, I normally worked with jobs where there were interpreters or with Latinos. In the time that I worked with Americans, we made ourselves understand each other. I’ve worked a lot of time too with Americans that sometimes don’t know Spanish and I don’t know English, but we get used to it and get along. I’ve experienced discrimination sometimes because of my inability to speak English. People reject you a little and treat you differently. You can tell this.

Connections

In my sixty years of life, I have gotten to know many people, many kinds of people. It’s good to know a lot and live a lot. What I like about the United States is that the government supports the person that wants to prepare. For example, the youth want to prepare themselves and the government opens the doors with the help that they want. In addition, the salaries here
are a little better so that people can live better than in their country of origin. I want my children to prepare the way and to study. In this world, the one who doesn’t prepare doesn’t get ahead. God wants people prepared for eternal life and the government wants people prepared so they don’t give problems. There are a lot of problems with people who aren’t prepared. The one who isn’t prepared leaves the path and takes hold of vice, and this isn’t what I want. I want my family to study, to prepare themselves, and that they’re soldiers of the country and God.

The most important thing for me is God and the things of God. True wealth for me consists in living of life of dignity, a life that serves others. We are here to be servants of God and servants of the public, to give help in what we can and to live without causing problems for others.
Agustín

México

Me llamo Agustín y tengo sesenta años. Soy de Guadalajara, México, pero la colonia donde vivía tenía alrededor de seis o siete mil habitantes. La mayoría de mi familia vive en esta región; allá es donde nacieron la mayoría de mis catorce hijos. Vivía con mi esposa y mis hijos en una casa pequeña, con unas habitaciones, una sala, una cocina y un baño. Trabajaba en el campo como jornalero. Aunque estábamos pobres, teníamos mucho dialogo.

Mi vida en México era una vida de trabajador, pero me divertía también. Me gustaba jugar fútbol y lo jugué por quince años. También celebrábamos muchas tradiciones religiosas. Celebrábamos estos días festivos con juegos, celebraciones dentro de la iglesia, misa, rosarios, peregrinaciones y muchas cosas.

En el país en general, la situación económica para los pobres era crítica, y la mayoría de la gente es pobre. Para mi esposa y mi, nuestra situación económica era un poco mala porque éramos muy pobres. El salario que ganaba yo era muy poco y no alcanzábamos. Yo empecé a trabajar cuando tenía cinco años de vida. Trabajaba en los ranchos, ayudando a cuidar las vacas, durmiendo en el estable—esa era mi vida de chico. Por eso, nunca tuve la oportunidad de estudiar. Yo solamente cumplí la primaria. Por esa un día dije, “cuando yo me case y tenga mi familia, voy a hacer lo posible para que ellos estudien.” Yo querría que las vidas de mis hijos fueran mejor que la mía. Por eso, decidí venirme a los Estados Unidos: para traer a mis hijos para que estudien y mejoren las vidas.

Transición

Vine la primera vez en 1973. Tuve que entrar ilegalmente a California. Vine solo y sin tener familiares. Llegaba de contratado a California a los campos donde tienen que vivir uno, donde le da comida y todo y lo llevan uno y lo traen a trabajar. Trabajaba temporalmente aquí y después me regresaba a México. En California trabajaba como así, unos seis o siete meses, por veinte años, unos tiempos en el campo o construcción, otros tiempos en el restaurante o la fábrica. Ayudaba a mi familia con lo que ganaba y empezamos a vivir un poco mejor.

Decidí mudarme de California a Green Bay porque me dijeron que aquí era más tranquilo que en California. No había tanto pandillerismo y uno podía vivir mejor. Decidí conocerla, y pues la conocí y vi que era tranquila y decidí traerme a la familia, pero no podía hacerlo por unos años. El ’93, trabajé aquí como seis meses y regresé a México y volví otra vez el ’94. El 1995 o 1996 finalmente me traje una parte de la familia. Yo he agarrado la ciudadanía, por eso podía agarrar la residencia primero a mi esposa y luego a una parte de los hijos. Y ahorita tengo una parte de hijos que no les podían arreglar. Están en trámites, pero no les podía arreglar. Están en México. Tengo una parte en México de hijos.

Mis familiares de allá no apoyaron la decisión de venirnos mucho porque en las tradiciones de nosotros, los latinos, lo principal es mantenerse uno unido o estar en comunicación, y cuando hay una separación, se hay un poco de desequilibrio. Pero mis
familiares que eran aquí apoyaron la decisión porque era económicamente mejor en cuestión de trabajo. Rinde un poco más, y luego, hay más oportunidades para que los hijos estudien.

**Los Estados Unidos**

Yo conseguí un trabajo en una carnicería y todavía trabajo allí. Vivimos en una casa que es más grande que la de México con una parte arriba y un sótano abajo también. Tiene todo. Hay suficiente espacio para mi esposa y yo nuestros hijos que ya viven con nosotros.

Tuve que adaptarme al estilo de vida en los Estados Unidos cuando llegué aquí. Comimos comidas diferentes aquí. Allá, todos los días comíamos la tortilla: la tortilla con frijoles o con carne o sopas, pero siempre la tortilla. Aquí a veces comimos la tortilla, pero no a diario. Aquí también comimos a veces pan o sándwiches, pero es algo diferente. Si va uno a comer a los puestos de comida rápida en México, comes los tacos, el pozole, las enchiladas con los tamales y eso. Aquí, comes las hamburguesas, la pizza o el pollo—es diferente. Me gustan estas cosas, pero prefiero la comida mexicana. Mi esposa también prefiere la comida mexicana, pero a mis hijos les da igual comer la una o comer la otra.

Al principio fue muy difícil adaptarme al estilo de vida en los Estados Unidos porque trae uno otras costumbres. Hace de cuenta cuando llega uno a este país por primera vez, hace de cuenta que se topa uno algo muy diferente que no sabe uno. En primer lugar, se topa uno con la diferencia en el idioma, por las costumbres, y algunas cosas más que hace la gente diferente. Son muchas las costumbres que son diferentes, sobre todo los trabajos. Los trabajos aquí son por horas; en México son por días. Los salarios allá son por semana; aquí son por minutos o por horas. Otra, en cuestión de la religión, allá tocan las campanas para la misa, tres veces para ir; aquí no, aquí el reloj, para todo el reloj. Aquí, tenemos que hacer caso al reloj porque el reloj es de todas cosas.

Traemos otras costumbres, otros cimientos y otro modo de vivir. Somos más acogedores a las personas, y eso es lo que veo aquí, un poco de frialdad en las familias. Allá, vas por la calle—allá mucha gente camina—y hay más amistad entre la gente. Si vives en una casa, todo lo que está rodeado así son conocidos; se hablan, se saludan. Y aquí no. Aquí hay muchas que no conocemos. Lo que nos conocemos es de la iglesia y en casa, un vecino, dos, nada más. En las tradiciones que traemos de México, los cimientos que traemos, la familia se crían los hijos de la casa hasta que se casan. Y cuando ya se casan, se viven por allí cercas y acuden a la casa con los padres, y después los nietos con los abuelos.

Es un poco diferente crecer a hijos en los Estados Unidos porque hay que tener uno los cimientos para enseñarles que no dejen las tradiciones de sus países, porque aquí en primer lugar las costumbres son otras. Cuando llega a una edad mayor, se va de su casa a vivir en otra parte, y eso entre los latinos, no. Los hijos viven con sus familias hasta que se case. Y se casa para toda la vida. No se casa para un año, para dos o para tres; se casa para toda la vida. Eso es un poco difícil. A veces en los colegios empiezan a tener conversaciones con compañeros y se puede tratar de cómo se vive en una parte y otra y quieren a veces agarrar las costumbres más fáciles para ellos, pero las últimas, más perjudiciales para ellos. Lo que hace es separarlos de los padres y agarrar juntarse con otra persona sin casarse, y empieza a descontrolar su vida. Eso no
es para nosotros. Vienen a mi casa todos los nietos. Se reúnen aquí y se dicen, “¡Mi abuelito! ¡Mi abuelo! ¡Mi papá!” y eso se nos hace bonito porque tenemos mucho amor a los hijos y a los yernos, a las nueras. Todos convivimos.

Yo no planeo quedarme aquí en los Estados Unidos porque el tiempo es muy diferente al clima de nosotros y es difícil a mis años. También, sin trabajo aquí, no se me hace vida, y ya son muchos años para trabajar. He decidido mejor retornar a México, a lo mejor, no más mi esposa y yo. Yo pienso que mis hijos van a quedarse aquí porque ya todos están agarrando carrera y yo pienso que ya pueden vivir un poco mejor. Tengo sesenta años pero sigue trabajando porque la mayor parte de los hijos están estudiando.

Para divertirme aquí, me voy a la iglesia; soy catequista. En el tiempo de verano, nos reunimos con la familia aquí en el jardín. A veces vamos a los parques. Me gusta mirar el futbol porque los demás deportes no los entiendo muy bien. A veces los miro, pero no los tomo tanta importancia porque no los comprendo. Apoyo México y Estados Unidos cuando los juegos de futbol son mundiales. Miro los partidos de futbol americano también. Apoyo los Packers. Me gusta verlos, pero nunca he ido a un partido. El basquetbol y el béisbol me gustan un poco, pero no los comprendo. No conozco las reglas; por eso, no toman tanta importancia. Me gusta ver las películas de rancheras de México o de Estados Unidos, pero rancheras del tiempo de las cuarenta, las cincuenta. Las rancheras de los Estados Unidos y las rancheras de México son muy diferentes porque tienen otro modo de hacerlas, de dar el entendimiento a la gente. Las de México siempre habla de guerra, de política, de destrucción, así de cosas esas. A veces en los Estados Unidos, de las pocas que he visto, hablan de cuando se matan uno con otros, el rey del revólver, así. Sobre todo, me gusta ver mucha las noticias, de hecho casi toda la semana. Veo las noticias de México y de aquí, lo poco que entiendo.

Entiendo un poco de inglés, pero no mucho. Cuando llegué aquí por lo regular trabajé con puros trabajos donde hay intérpretes o con gente latina. En el tiempo que he trabajado con americanos, nos hacemos entender. He trabajado mucho tiempo también con americanos que a veces ellos no saben hablar español ni yo sé inglés, pero nos vamos acostumbrando al trato y convivimos. A veces sufro discriminación por el idioma. La gente te rechaza un poquito y su trato es diferente. Eso se nota.

Aunque no hablo inglés, me identifico como americano. Soy americano y soy mexicano. Me identifico como los dos porque de hecho pertenezco a los dos países. Tengo ciudadanía americana y tengo ciudadanía mexicana. Y me siento acogida tanto allá como aquí.

Conexiones

En mis sesenta años que tengo de vida, he conocido a muchas gentes, muchas personas. Es bueno conocer mucho y vivir mucho. Lo que me gusta de los Estados Unidos es lo que el gobierno apoya a la persona que quiere prepararse. Por ejemplo, la juventud quiere prepararse y el gobierno les abre las puertas con la ayuda que les quieren. Además, el salario está un poco más hecho, para que pueda vivir uno un poco mejor que en su país de origen. Quiero que mis hijos se preparen bien el camino y que estudien. En este mundo, él que no se prepara, no sale adelante. Dios quiere personas preparadas para la vida eterna, y el gobierno quiere personas...
preparadas para que no le den problemas. Hay muchos problemas con la gente que no esté preparada. El que no está preparado, se desvía del camino y agarra otros vicios y eso es lo que no quiero. Quiero que mi familia estudie, se prepare, para que sean soldados de la patria y de Dios.

Lo más importante para mí es Dios y las cosas de Dios. La riqueza verdadera para mi consiste en vivir una vida digna, una vida que le sirva a uno. Venimos a ser servidores de Dios y servidores del pueblo, ayudar en lo que pueda a la gente y vivir sin darle problemas al pueblo.
My name is Carmen. I am thirty-eight years old and am from Toluca, Mexico. I have lived in the United States for eighteen years. Toluca is a large city with a lot of people, people who are poor and people who are humble. There’s money, but money only for a few, and many of the people are farmers. My house was one of the poor ones, but thanks to God, not one of the poorest. It was humble, but we never went hungry. Thanks to God there was enough to eat. In Toluca, there were and still are many people who were business people; they sell everything. And more than anything else, this was what my parents did when I was a child. They sold in the markets and in the plazas.

When I was little, there weren’t a lot of ways to amuse myself, just doing things with my friends, playing jobs, or having fun or something like that. For adults, the only thing that there was at times were parties. If there was a wedding or a quinceaños you could go without being invited and no one would say anything to you. Sometimes we’d say, “Let’s go to the dance” and we’d go to the dance and it was fun, going to dance more than anything else.

We celebrated a lot of holidays. We didn’t have Santa Claus but rather the Three Kings, and the sixth of January we’d celebrate the Feast of the Three Kings. I remember that my mom and dad would say to me, “Write your letter,” and there the children would put their shoes by the door the night of the fifth and the sixth in the morning you’d wake up and your toys would be on top of your shoes. The sixth of January we had Kings’ Cake. Whoever had Baby Jesus in their piece would be the godfather or godmother of the baby for the year. So, if you were the godparent, you would have to dress him the second of February, Calendar Day, and you have to bring him to Mass because you’re the godparent. You buy him clothes and dress him however you want. We also celebrated Easter, although we experienced it more profoundly, with a faith that was more intense, with a more powerful meaning and with more power. Easter began with Holy Week. We celebrated Holy Week with live reenactments. People from one town would get together and practice and put them on in the town square. They would do the whole representation of what is the Last Supper, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. On Friday we wouldn’t watch TV or listen to music; it was silent. There was meditation, a lot of meditation.

We celebrated Holy Saturday with water. The whole world got wet. And whatever happened, you could get your mom wet and she wouldn’t get mad at you.

We celebrated other important holidays, too. Mother’s Day was special. Anywhere at night, you could listen to serenades because a lot of people would go and serenade their mothers. We would buy a rose and we’d go to sing serenades to our moms. The Day of the Dead was another important celebration; it was when we remembered the dead. My mom said to me, “Oh, your grandmother died, and she liked this food,” and you’d have to make that food and put it on

---

108 Interviewed on December 26, 2010 in Green Bay
a special table in the house. We would go to the cemetery and put flowers down. The night before first you would stay there the whole night with the deceased, sitting there next to the tomb of your loved ones with a candle and a blanket because sometimes you’d fall asleep. On this day you wouldn’t be afraid of the cemetery because they were lit by huge candles and there were tons of people and flowers everywhere. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was also very important. We never missed going to give our thanks and love. We were lucky enough to live close, not extremely close but close enough, to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Because of this, our parents took us there since we were young. We would go to see the Virgin and this was extremely powerful. On this day we always went there.

How did we celebrate Christmas? With Posadas. The first Posada takes place the sixteenth of December. The twenty-fourth of December, Christmas Eve, my mom always prepared our dinner. We would eat fish or mole\(^{109}\) or a traditional salad, Christmas Eve Salad, which is made with vegetables and fruit, and a punch that was like a tea with a lot of fruit as well. This is how we would start at about seven on the night of the Posada. A lot of people would get together and we would almost always get together with candles and sing carols and Christmas songs. We would make the Posada and afterwards say the Rosary, and after that drink hot chocolate and play with the piñatas. Afterwards, even later on the twenty-fourth, we would have bonfires because Toluca is a little higher in the mountains and so at night the temperature cools down. The houses weren’t very big, and so we’d have bonfires outside and the older people would cook sausage, steak, potatoes, and a little bit of everything there. Whoever wanted to brought something and because the whole world brought different things, we had a little of everything and we’d share it. We wouldn’t go to sleep until four in the morning. We would sing to Baby Jesus when we’d put him in the manger, we’d share and we’d eat a lot, but at midnight we’d all give each other hugs and say Merry Christmas.

In Mexico, there was a lot of good food. We would eat a lot of vegetables because meat was very expensive. Sometimes we’d buy meat on special days, like Christmas. We ate a lot of fruit. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner—there wasn’t anything special for each meal, just what we had. I remember once when I was with my sister-in-law and there wasn’t anything to eat. There wasn’t anything more than some chilies and a few tomatoes. We made a salsa and ate tacos and salsa. We almost didn’t get tortillas either; it was a hard time.

I attended school, but in Mexico no one makes you finish high school. There almost the whole world finishes middle school. After that you go to high school and then on to college. It’s really difficult to get into high school. There are a lot of tests and if you don’t pass them, your education stops there, which is really quite sad. Unfortunately, I remember that when I went to take my exam to enter high school, my mom and I had to get in line outside school at two in the morning to register and take the exams. If you don’t pass the exam, there isn’t a second chance. I did pass the test and I began high school, but I never finished it. I had a baby when I was sixteen and because of this I wasn’t able to finish.

\(^{109}\) Mole is a type of sauce used in Mexican cooking
My life in general went from being a girl to being the mother of a family. Although my boyfriend and I got married, with a baby at sixteen, it was a child having a child, and it was really difficult. We didn’t have enough money. Unfortunately, in Toluca, influence is really important in getting a job. For example, if I want to get a certain job, and there is someone to help me with recommendations or something like that, I’ll get in. If there isn’t anyone, I won’t. If I’m better educated but the other person was recommended, although they don’t have the education, they’re the person that’s going to get the job. This was a disadvantage for a lot of people. In most cases it was like this. It was difficult and because of this, my husband went to the United States. He arrived in Illinois and was working there for two years. My daughter and I were living with the parents of my husband. After a while, he didn’t send me money anymore, so I had to begin cleaning and later working in a factory assembling computers. I remember once my daughter, who was about two years old, asked me for a lollipop. I wanted to buy it for her, but I didn’t have the money. The economic situation was harsh, not for everyone, but in my situation it was.

Transition

When my husband left, my daughter and I missed him a lot. I didn’t want to be away from him, and because of this he told me, “Come with me. If we both work, we’ll earn money more quickly and come back.” I went with him, but I had to leave my daughter with her grandparents. My idea was to be gone for a year and then return, and a year seemed like a long time. Neither my husband nor I knew anyone in Green Bay before moving here. My husband had worked in Illinois first. He had a friend who lived and worked in Milwaukee who told us, “Listen to me. They’re going to open a new restaurant in Green Bay” and because of this we came here. I had never imagined how it would be here until I arrived. Everything was different! The language, the climate, the people, the food, the customs—I came here in November and it was already cold in the beginning of November. My first year here was really sad because I was away from my family at Christmastime. At this time I was nineteen years old. There weren’t Hispanic stores and I didn’t know the church was here. We were some of the only Hispanics that there were. Because of this, we didn’t know anyone to talk to; I missed my daughter a lot. At Christmastime we were working. On New Year’s we were working. It was different, completely different, and I was very, very sad. I didn’t like it.

After a year, I stayed. We didn’t return because we hadn’t saved enough money and besides this, we saw that this kind of life, besides being very different, was better. I saw the schools, I saw the children and I saw the possibility that with what I made, I could get ahead. Because of this, I went to get my daughter so we could stay here. We had left her when she was two years old and I went to get her when she was four. In the beginning, my family and friends didn’t support my decision. My mom began to cry and tried to convince me to stay. Besides being far away, the other reason that she worried a lot was because I was going to cross the border. It’s really dangerous. There are people who murder and people who rape women. It cost us a lot of work to cross, but thanks be to God we crossed and we crossed safely. My husband and I had two more children, but unfortunately, our marriage didn’t work and we
separated. In the beginning, I didn’t want to stay here permanently, only for a few years to earn enough money and return to Mexico, but after nineteen years, here I am.

I obtained my residency, but it was very difficult to get it. Many people asked me, “Why didn’t you get your papers?” It’s not easy—it takes years and years and there are a lot of obstacles. I had been working for a few years in a restaurant when immigration arrived there. They asked us if we had permission to work or papers to work. We didn’t want to lie, we said, “No, we don’t have them.” They handcuffed all of us and took us to the police office. There was fingerprinting and from head to toe, they took our photographs from every angle. It was in this way that I got my residency, with my deportation. When they arrested us, they told us we didn’t have permission to work, but we also didn’t have permission to leave the country. By doing this, they put us in a very critical position, because how are you going to pay the rent and buy food if you can’t work? We didn’t have anything. We went to Salvation Army and they gave us a bit of food and I had to go to different churches to ask for some help to be able to pay that month’s rent. I was without work for three months. I began the process of applying for my residency, but it’s a long process. After three months, I said, “Yes, they arrested me, but I have to work. If they arrest me again, my only crime will be that I have three kids and I have to give them something to eat,” and so I looked for work in the same way I looked for it the first time—illegally. I began to work again because imagine if I had waited—I didn’t obtain my residency until four years later. What would I have done for four years?

United States

In general, I think my life here is just like everyone else’s. I consider my way of living to be more like the way of life here than the way of life in Mexico. I live like everyone else with my job and with my family. My house has all the modern conveniences, it seems. It’s a house where you can live comfortably. I don’t know how to describe it; it’s like any other house in the United States with everything you need to have. It’s finished; a lot of the houses in Mexico aren’t finished. I enjoy being at home; I’m really a homebody. I like to be with my family, but to have fun, from time to time I like to go to dance. I like to go out to eat or in summertime, we like to go fishing. I like to go fishing or go to the boat launch, but more than anything, go fishing and be in the water. We have a cottage and so we go fishing there or in the lake or in Shawano.

I work at home and in a restaurant, and this is hard. It’s tiring, but I’m used to it. The difference from Mexico is that here I have a car and in Mexico I didn’t. Here, you have a washer and a dryer and there you don’t, either. There you wash clothes by hand. Here, if you want to heat up something to eat, you have a microwave. There you have to turn on the stove and heat it up. Here if you don’t want to cook, you go to a restaurant to eat and there you have to prepare your food. So, it can be hard in either place, I believe, although I’m used to it because I’ve always worked and cared for my family. Being a single mom is tough because you have to have two jobs and take care of the kids and with my salary, it was difficult to support them. It’s easier now because I’m not alone anymore and I have someone who can help me.

One of the things I like about the United States is its people. At least in Green Bay, the people are very warm. They’re kind and friendly and I like this. I like that there are more
opportunities here, not just in life but in the workplace; this is what I like. I like that when there are hard times of any kind, there’s a way to live. In Mexico during hard times, you eat and don’t know what you’ll have to eat tomorrow, and thanks to God, here we’ve always had something to put on the table. Here in Green Bay I like that the town looks finished. Everything is more modern when compared to Mexico; there the streets are from dirt or there aren’t any roads at all.

What I miss the most is my family. It’s very difficult to be far away. For a better life, the price has been very great, very costly. For a life, for a house, for a car, for what we have to say that we have a better life for our kids, we’ve also paid a lot because being far away, me from my parents, and my kids from their grandparents, from our traditions, and from our families, has been a very great price. More than anything else in the life of an immigrant, in the way I put it, we’ve been living in a golden cage—in a golden cage because it’s so pretty, but we’re jailed inside because we can’t go to see our loved ones. It’s difficult.

I maintain relationships with my family through telephone and only by telephone. About four years ago my mom got a phone in Mexico because the phone line was passing right next to her house. They attached the line, but before that I didn’t have any way to communicate. We sometimes went months without talking. Thanks to God, my mom and dad had the opportunity to come to visit us because they had a Visa. This is how we’ve been able to see each other, but for example my sister, my grandmother—all of these people I haven’t seen. My communication with them is nothing more than asking my mom how they are. From time to time I can talk to my mom or sister on the telephone, but this is the only way that we can communicate because there isn’t any other way.

It was difficult to adjust to the style of life here. I had to learn English. The lifestyle is different in every sense: language, traditions, climate, and all this. All this I had to turn around in order to adapt. It cost me a lot of time and a lot of rejection by other people. They would look at me like a strange bug, especially when they would talk to me and I wouldn’t answer back. I didn’t answer not because I didn’t want to, but because I wasn’t able to. I didn’t know how. Not knowing English in this country is like being a deaf-mute because you don’t understand and you can’t speak. I can sympathize with the deaf-mutes because when people would talk to me, I wouldn’t understand, and when I tried to express myself, they wouldn’t understand. I started learning English because a woman accused me of stealing her money. I didn’t do it, but I couldn’t defend myself because I didn’t speak English. Now I can speak English better, but reading a newspaper is still a little difficult for me. There are a few words that are pretty big, but the majority of things, I understand.

I think of myself as Mexican and American. Mexican I continue to be and will always remain. I’m very proud to be it. There have been times when people have looked down on me and I felt bad for being Mexican because they made me feel less. After a while, it came to me to ask why. And I said, “Why is it like this? We’re people who work. Our only crime is that we weren’t born in a rich nation or that we don’t have money. Although we don’t have money, we’re honest people and we’re people that like to work. We have feet and hands and black hair and dark eyes, but we’re people.” And now when someone asks me where I’m from, I say that
I’m Mexico and I love it. I identify with the American people because they’re warm and good people; I have had friends that have helped me a lot. In the beginning, adjusting to life in the United States was like having to make the leap to another world from my world over there. Now, who knows how, but it’s as though my two worlds have connected. I can be in both and in both I am comfortable. In both, I feel at home.

Connections

I believe that there are two people who have influenced me and they are my parents. How I am and how I grew is because of them. My parents have always been very hardworking. My mom said to me, “Don’t wait for things to come to you, daughter. If you’re going to be something, look for it and work.” And my dad would say, “Be honest and respectful. Respect your elders and be respectful of people. Be honest in all this, in who you are.” This is what they’ve taught me, what has to do with being kind, being a good person, helping people if you are able to, being respectful, and working to be able to have what you want. In short, they’ve influenced me in how I am as a person in every part of my being.

My family is important to me. I have good memories of my childhood. In Mexico there is a lot of male chauvinism, but I didn’t grow up with this. My dad was always a man that respected my mom. He cared for her and helped her and washed dishes and gave us baths. One of my favorite memories was when I was little and my sisters and I were at home, my mom and dad were cooking in the kitchen, and my dad was helping us with homework at the same time. We were all there together; we were a happy family. I’d like my children to have as good of memories, too. I love being with my kids. There are times when they drive me crazy, there are times when they make me upset, but I’m always checking to make sure that they’re ok and if they’re ok, I’m ok.

My dream has always been that my children study. I didn’t finish school. My school was really poor; my education was very simple. For this reason, education has always been very important to me. For me, the American Dream is that my children are good people. I always tell them, “Kids, I want you to have a family where you have something to offer them. I want you to finish school so that you can be somebody, good people, people of life for your family and for your community.” This is my dream, that they are good people, people that are hardworking where they can take part of doing something and making something, that they have a family, and that their family is happy.

I’m content. We Hispanics always come to better our lives and a better life is based on money, but we realize, like I have realized, that money isn’t everything. It isn’t happiness. Happiness is family. I believe that if you have your family, if they’re united, and if you respect your parents and have them still, you should appreciate them. Care for them, love them, and respect them because it won’t always be this way. That my family is always close—more than anything else, this would be my true wealth, in spite of money, comfort, or a better way of life. With those who are yours, life will be even richer yet—I think this is what I want to say.
Carmen

México

Mi nombre es Carmen. Tengo treinta y ocho años y soy de Toluca, México. Hace dieciocho años que he vivido en los Estados Unidos. Toluca es una ciudad grande con mucha gente, gente pobre y gente humilde. Hay dinero, pero dinero solamente para algunas, y muchas de las personas son campesinos. Mi casa era una de las pobres, pero gracias a Dios, no una de las tan pobres. Era humilde, pero sin pasar hambre. Gracias a Dios sí hay que comer pero mis papás deben que trabajar mucho para tener esto. Allá en Toluca, había (y todavía hay) mucha gente que es comerciante; vende de todo. Y es más que nada lo que mis padres hacían cuando era niña. Ellos vendían en los mercados y en las plazas.

Cuando estaba chiquilla, no había mucho con que divertirme, simplemente con mis amigos, jugando las carreras o diversión o algo así. Para adultos, lo único que había a veces era las fiestas. Si había una boda o unos quinceaños tú podías ir sin ser invitado y nadie te decía nada. A veces nos decíamos, “Vamos al baile” y nos íbamos al baile y era una diversión, ir a bailar más que nada.

Celebrábamos muchos días festivos. No tenemos Santa Claus sino los Santos Reyes, y el seis de enero celebrábamos el Día de los Reyes Magos. Recuerdo que mi mamá y mi papá me decían, “Hazte tu carta” y allá los niños ponían sus zapatos junto a la puerta el cinco en la noche y el seis en la mañana te levantabas y tus juguetes ya estaban encima de tus zapatos. El seis de enero teníamos la rosca de reyes. Quien tenía Baby Jesus en la rosca, se convertía en el padrino del bebé del año. Entonces, si tú eras el padrino, tú tenías que vestirle el dos de febrero, el Día de la Candelaria, y tenías que llevarlo a misa porque tú eras el padrino. Entonces, le comprabas ropita y lo vestías en lo que tú quisieras. También celebrábamos la Pascua, aunque lo sentía más profundo, con una fe más intensa, con un significado más poderoso y con más poder. La Pascua empezaba con la Semana Santa. La Semana Santa lo celebrábamos en vivo. Gente del mismo pueblo se reunía y practicaba y lo hacían en la plaza del pueblo. Hacían toda la representación de lo que es la última cena, el viernes santo y el sábado de gloria. El viernes no mirábamos la televisión ni escuchábamos música; había silencio. Era meditación, mucha meditación. El sábado de gloria celebrábamos con agua. Todo el mundo se mojaba. Y pasa lo que pasa, tú podías mojar a tu mamá y no se enojara contigo.

Había otros días festivos importantes, también. El Día de la Madre era especial. Por dondequiera por la noche, escucha serenata porque muchísima gente va y le da serenata a su mamá. Comprábamos una rosa e íbamos a cantarles serenata a nuestras mamás. El Día de los Muertos era otra celebración importante; era cuando celebras a tus muertos. Mi mamá me dijo, “Ah, tu abuela murió, y le gustó esta de comida,” y había que hacer esta comida y ponerle en una mesa especial en la casa. Íbamos al cementerio y poníamos flores. El primero por la noche te quedaba allí toda la noche con tus muertos, sentado allí junto a la tumba de tus seres queridos con una vela y con una cobija allí porque a veces nos quedábamos dormidos. Ese día los cementerios no te daban miedo porque estaban aprendidos por grandísimas velas y muchísima
gente y flores por donde quiera. También la fiesta del Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe era muy importante. No faltábamos ir a darle las gracias y a darle nuestro respeto y nuestro amor. Teníamos la suerte que vivíamos no cerca, pero tampoco muy lejos de la Basílica de Guadalupe. Entonces, mis papás nos llevaban de chiquillas. Nos llevaban de ver la Virgen y eso nos daba emoción tremenda. En este día siempre estábamos allí.

¿Cómo celebrábamos la Navidad? Con las Posadas. La primera Posada es el dieciséis de diciembre. El día veinticuatro de diciembre, la Nochebuena, siempre mi mamá estaba preparando la comida para la cena. Comíamos pescado o mole o ensalada tradicional, ensalada de Nochebuena, que es con vegetales y fruta, y un ponche, que es como un té con mucha fruta también. Así empezábamos como a las siete de la noche con la Virgen. Teníamos la suerte que vivíamos no cerca, pero tampoco muy lejos de la Basílica de Guadalupe. Entonces, mis papás nos llevaban de ver la Virgen y eso nos daba emoción tremenda. En este día siempre estábamos allí.

En México, había muchas cosas ricas. Comíamos mucha verdura porque la carne era muy cara. A veces comparábamos carne en días especiales, como la Navidad. Comíamos mucha fruta. Desayuno, almuerzo y cena—no había nada así especial, solo lo poco que había. Recuerdo una vez cuando yo estaba con mi cuñada y no teníamos que comer. No habíamos nada más que unos chiles y unos cuantos tomates. Hicimos una salsa y comimos tacos y salsa. Casi no alcanzábamos tortillas tampoco; fue duro.

Asistí a la escuela, pero en México nadie te obliga a terminar la preparatoria. Allá casi todo el mundo termina la secundaria. Después te vas a la preparatoria y después al colegio. Es muy difícil para entrar a la preparatoria. Hay muchos exámenes, y si tú no los pasas, hasta allí llegó tu educación, que es muy triste. Desafortunadamente, yo recuerdo que cuando fui a hacer mi examen para entrar a la preparatoria, mi mamá y yo tuvimos que hacer una fila fuera de la escuela a las dos de la mañana para poder inscribirme y tomar el examen. Y si no lo pasas el examen, no hay otro chance de exámenes. Yo sí pasé el examen y empecé a la preparatoria, pero no la terminé. Tuve un bebé a los dieciséis años y por eso no podía terminar.

Mi vida en general era de pasar de niña a ser madre de familia. Aunque mi novio y yo nos casamos, con un bebé a los dieciséis años, era una niña teniendo una niña, y fue muy difícil. No teníamos dinero suficiente. Desafortunadamente, allá en Toluca hay mucha de las palancas. Por ejemplo, si yo quiero entrar este trabajo, y hay alguien que me ayude con recomendaciones o algo como así, yo entro. Y si no, no entro. Si yo tengo una educación mejor, y la otra persona fue recomendada, aunque no tenga la educación, esa persona es la que va a entrar. Entonces, era
la desventaja de mucha gente. Más que nada es como así. Fue difícil y por eso, mi esposo se fue a los Estados Unidos. El llegó a Illinois y estuvo trabajando allí por dos años. Mi hija y yo estuvimos viviendo con los padres de mi esposo. Después de un rato, él no me mandó dinero; entonces, tuve que trabajar limpiando y después en una fábrica ensamblando computadoras. Yo me acuerdo cuando llegó una vez que mi niña, en este tiempo la niña ya tenía como dos años, me pidió una paleta de dulce. Y yo sí la querría comprar, pero no tenía dinero para comprársela. La situación económica era dura, no para todos, pero en mi situación personal sí lo fue.

Transición

Cuando mi esposo se fue, mi hija y yo le extrañamos muchísimo. No querría estar lejos de él, y por eso él me dijo, “Vente conmigo. Si trabajamos los dos, nos juntamos dinero más pronto y nos regresamos.” Me vine con él, pero tuve que dejar a mi hija con sus abuelos. Mi idea fue venirme por un año y después regresar, y un año lo siguió muy largo. Ni yo ni mi esposo conocía a alguien en Green Bay antes de mudarnos aquí. Mi esposo trabajaba en Illinois primero. Conocía a un amigo que vivía y trabajaba en Milwaukee que le dije, “Pues, escuche, que abrió un nuevo restaurante en Green Bay” y por eso nos fuimos par acá. Nunca me imaginé como era aquí hasta que llegué aquí. ¡Todo era diferente! El idioma, el clima, la gente, las comidas, las costumbres—yo me vine aquí en noviembre y ya hacía frío a los principios de noviembre. Mi primer año aquí fue muy triste porque estaba fuera de mi familia en el tiempo que celebra la Navidad. En este tiempo tenía diecinueve años. No había tiendas hispanas y no sabía que estaba la iglesia. Fuimos unas de los cuantos hispanos que había. Entonces, no había con quién platicar; extrañé a mi hija muchísimo. En tiempo de Navidad estuvimos trabajando. En tiempo de Año Nuevo estuvimos trabajando. Fue completamente diferente y fui muy, muy triste. No me gustó.

Pero después de este año me quedé. No regresamos porque no juntamos dinero y aparte de eso, decimos, bueno, lo que vimos es que el tipo de vida, a pesar de que era muy diferente, era mejor. Yo vi las escuelas, vi los niños y vi la posibilidad que con lo que yo gané, podía alcanzar. Entonces, fui por ella para quedarnos. La dejamos cuando tenía dos años y fui a traerla cuando ella tenía cuatro. En el principio mis familiares y amigos no apoyaron mi decisión. Mi mamá se puso a llorar mucho y trató de convencerme a quedarme. Además de estar lejos, la otra razón por la que ella se preocupó mucho era que iba a cruzar la frontera. Es bien peligroso. Hay gente que matan y gente que viola a las mujeres. Y nos costó trabajo para pasarme, pero gracias a Dios pasamos y pasamos bien. Mi esposo y yo tuvimos dos hijos más, pero desafortunadamente, mi matrimonio no funcionó y nos separamos. En el principio yo no quería quedarme aquí permanentemente, solo por unos años para ganar suficiente dinero y regresar a México, pero después de diecinueve años, ya estoy.

Conseguí mi tarjeta de residencia, pero fue muy difícil conseguirla. Mucha gente me dijo, “¿por qué no sacan sus papeles?” No es fácil—son años y años y hay muchos obstáculos. Hace unos años estuve trabajando en un restaurante e inmigración llegó allí. Nos preguntaron si tuvimos permiso para trabajar o papeles para trabajar. No queríamos mentir; les decimos, “No,
no tenemos.” Nos esposaron a todas y nos llevaron a la oficina de policía. Había huellas digitales, y en todo de arriba abajo, fotografías de todos los ángulos. Fue así como tuve mi tarjeta, con la deportación. Cuando nos agarraron, nos dijeron que no teníamos permiso de trabajar, pero tampoco permiso de salir del país. Entonces, nos pusieron en situación muy crítica porque ¿de dónde vas a pagar renta y comprar comida si no trabajas? No teníamos. Fuimos a Salvation Army y sí nos dieron un poco de comida y tuve que ir a diferentes iglesias para pedir un poco de ayuda para poder pagar ese mes de renta. Estuve sin trabajar por tres meses. Empecé el proceso de conseguir mi residencia, pero el proceso es muy largo. Después de tres meses, dije, “Sí, me agarraron, pero tengo que trabajar. Y si me agarraron otra vez, mi único delito es que tengo tres hijos y tengo que darles de comer” y me busqué trabajo en la misma manera que lo busqué la primera vez—ilegal. Y me puse a trabajar otra vez porque imaginas si yo hubiera esperado—no me vino los papeles hasta cuatro años después. ¿Qué iba a hacer por cuatro años?

Estados Unidos

En general, yo creo que mi vida es como la vida de todos los demás. La considero mi vida más al modo de vivir aquí que la vida de allá. Vivo como todos los demás con el trabajo y con la familia. Mi casa tiene todas las comodidades modernas, me parece. Es una casa donde se puede vivir con comodidad. No sé cómo la describo; es como cualquier otra casa de los Estados Unidos con toda lo que necesita tener. Está terminada; muchas de las casas en México no son terminadas. Me gusta mucha estar en la casa; soy muy casera. Me gusta estar con mi familia, pero para divertirme, de vez en cuando voy a bailar. Me gusta ir a cenar o en tiempo de verano, nos gusta mucho ir a pescar. Me gusta ir a pescar o ir a la lancha, pero más que nada, pescar y estar en el agua. Tenemos una cabaña e ir a pescar allá o al lago o a Shawano.

Trabajo en la casa y el restaurante, y eso es difícil. Es pesado, pero ya me acostumbré. La diferencia de México aquí es que aquí tengo carro, y en México, no. Aquí, tienes lavadora y secadora y allá, no tampoco. Allá lavas a mano. Aquí, quieres calentar algo, tienes un microonda. Allá tienes que prender la estufa y calendarlo. Aquí sí no quieres cocinar, te vas a un restaurante para comer y allá tienes que preparar la comida. Entonces, es difícil en los dos lados, yo creo, aunque ya me acostumbré porque siempre he trabajado y cuidado a la familia. Ser madre soltera es muy difícil porque hay que tener dos trabajos y cuidar de chiquillos y con mi salario, era muy difícil mantenerlos. Es más fácil ahora porque ya no estoy sola y tengo un compañero que pueda ayudarme.

Una de las cosas que me gusta de los Estados Unidos es su gente. Por lo menos aquí en Green Bay, la gente es más calurosa. Es amable y amigable y me gusta de esto. Me gusta de aquí que hay más oportunidades, no solo de vida pero en el trabajo; ésta es lo que me gusta. Me gusta que cuando hay tiempos difíciles de cualquier manera, hay una manera de vivir. Allá en los tiempos difíciles, comías y no sabías lo que mañana vas a tener que comer, y gracias a Dios, aquí siempre he tenido algo para poner en la mesa. Aquí de Green Bay me gusta que el pueblo se vea terminado. Todo es más moderno comparado con México; allá las calles son tierra o no hay calles.
Lo que echo más de menos es mi familia. Es muy difícil estar lejos. Por una vida mejor, el precio ha sido muy grande, muy caro. Por una vida, por una casa, por un carro, por lo que tenemos para decir una vida mejor para nuestros hijos, también hemos pagado mucho porque el estar lejos, yo de mis padres y mis hijos de sus abuelos, de nuestras tradiciones y de nuestras familias, ha sido un precio muy caro. Y más que nada en la vida de inmigrante, en la manera que lo pongo, es que hemos estado viviendo en una jaula de oro, en una jaula de oro porque es tan bonito, pero estamos encerrados porque no podemos ir a ver a los nuestros. Es difícil.

Mantengo relaciones con mi familia por teléfono, por teléfono solamente. Hace como unos cuatro años que mamá puso teléfono en México porque la línea de teléfono pasó junto a la casa. Entonces ató línea, pero antes, no había cómo comunicarnos. A veces íbamos meses sin hablar. Y gracias a Dios, mi mamá y mi papá tuvieron una oportunidad de venir a visitarnos porque tenían visa. Eso es como hemos podido ver. Pero por ejemplo mi hermana, mi abuelita—todos ellos no hemos visto. Mi comunicación con ellos es nada más de preguntar a mi mamá cómo están. De vez en cuando hablo con mi mamá o mi hermana en el teléfono, pero es la única manera que podemos comunicarnos porque no hay otra manera.

Fue difícil adaptarme al estilo de vida aquí. Tuve que aprender inglés. El estilo de vida es diferente en todos los sentidos: idioma, tradiciones, clima y todo eso. Todo eso, se tuve que dar vuelta a adaptarme. Me costó mucho tiempo y mucho desprecio de la gente. Me veían como bicho raro, y especialmente cuando me hablaban y no me contestaba. No contestaba porque no quería, pero porque no podía. No sabía. El no saber inglés en este país es como si fuera sordo muda porque ni entiendo ni puedo hablar. Así entiendo a los sordomudos porque cuando me hablan, no entiendo, y para expresarme, no me entienden. Yo empezó a aprender el inglés porque una señora me acusó de robarle el dinero. Yo no lo hice, pero no podía defenderme porque no hablaba inglés. Ahora puedo entender inglés mejor, pero leer el periódico todavía es difícil para mí. Hay algunas palabras que son muy grandes, pero la mayoría de las cosas, sí las entiendo.

Pienso a mí misma como mexicana y americana. Mexicana sigo siendo y siempre seré. Estoy muy orgullosa de serlo. Hay veces que gente me ve con malos ojos y me sentí mal por un tiempo de serlo porque me hicieron sentir menos. Después de un tiempo, me dio cuenta de preguntar por qué. Y dije, “¿Por qué es como así? Somos gente que trabajamos. Nuestro único delito es que no nacimos en una nación rica o que no tenemos dinero. Aunque no tengamos dinero, somos gente honesta y somos gente que nos gusta trabajar. Tenemos pies y manos y pelo negro y ojos oscuros, pero somos gente.” Y ahora cuando me pregunta de dónde soy, digo que soy mexicana y me encanta. Identifico con la gente americana porque la gente es cariñosa y hay muy buena gente; he tenido amigos que me ayudaron muchísimo. Al principio, ajustarme a la vida en los Estados Unidos era como darme brincar a otro mundo de mi mundo acá. Ahora, quien sabe cómo, pero los dos se conectaron. Puedo estar en los dos y en los dos estoy cómoda. En los dos, me siento en lugar.
Conexiones

Yo creo que hay dos personas que me han influenciado y ellos son mis padres. Como yo soy y como yo crecí es por ellos. Mis papás siempre fueron muy trabajadores. Mi mamá me decía, “No espérese que te llegue, mi hija. Si vas a estar algo, busca y trabaja.” Y mi papá decía, “Sé honrada y respeta. Respeta a tus mayores y respeta a la gente. Sé muy honrada en todo eso y en quien eres.” Eso es lo que me ha enseñado, en lo que ser amable, ser buena persona, poder ayudar a la gente si puedes ayudar, respetar y trabajar para poder tener lo que tú quieres. Eso es, me han influenciado en como soy como persona en cada parte de mi ser.

Mi familia es importante para mí. Tengo buenas memorias de mi niñez. En México hay muchos hombres machistas, pero yo no crecí con esto. Mi papá fue siempre un hombre que respetó a mi mamá. La cuidó y la ayudó y él llevaba trastes y él nos bañaba y todo. Uno de mis memorias favoritas era cuando era niña y mis hermanas y yo estábamos allí en la casa, mi mamá y mi papá cocinando allí en la cocina, y mi papá mientras ayudándonos con la tarea. Todos éramos juntos; éramos una familia feliz. Yo quiero que mis hijos tengan memorias tan buenas también. Me encanta estar con mis hijos. Hay veces que me vuelven loca, hay veces que me enojar, pero siempre estoy viendo que ellos estén bien y que ellos estoy bien, yo estoy bien.

Mi sueño siempre ha sido que todos mis hijos estudien. Yo no terminé la escuela. Mi escuela fue muy pobre; mi educación fue muy sencilla. Entonces, para mí eso es muy importante. Para mí, el sueño americano es que ellos sean gente de bien. A ellos siempre les digo, “Mis hijos, que tengan una familia donde hay algo que ofrecerles. Y que termine la escuela para que sean algo, gente de bien, gente de vida para su familia y para su comunidad.” Eso es mi sueño, que sean gente de bien, gente de provecho donde sea parte de hacer y de construir, que tengan una familia y que sean felices sus familias.

Estoy contenta. Siempre nos venimos por el estar mejor y el estar mejor es base de dinero, pero nos dimos cuenta, como me di cuenta yo, que el dinero no lo es todo. No es la felicidad. La felicidad es la familia. Yo creo que si tienes tu familia, si la tienes unida, y si respetas a tus padres y los tienes, que los aprecies. Cuídalo, ámalos y respétalos porque no será así para siempre. Que mi familia siempre esté unida—más que nada, eso sería mi riqueza mejor, a pesar del dinero, la comodidad y el mejor estilo de vida. Con los tuyos, la vida va a ser más rica todavía—creo que eso es lo que quiero decir.
Conclusions
Introduction

The interviews with the Mexican immigrants in Green Bay shed insight on many current issues relating to immigration. While each story is unique, there are many parallels that exist between them because of experiences they have shared in common, which serve to exemplify many of the concepts proposed in the first section. Upon reflection, we can come to realize that the lives of these individuals are very similar to those of other individuals living in Green Bay and provide meaning that can be applied to our lives. In this third and final section of the book, I would like to highlight the similarities between the interviews, connect the personal stories with the factual information presented in the first part of the book, and draw connections between the immigrant community and the larger Green Bay community.
1. Common Themes

The Mexican immigrants interviewed manifested a great amount of diversity in their life experiences. Half of the interviewees had lived in the country or in small towns while the other half came from large cities. Their backgrounds differed with respect to the level of education they achieved, from only attending primary school to receiving a college degree. The work that they or their parents had done in Mexico was primarily farming, although trades, factory work, small businesses, and managerial work supplied employment as well. The majority of individuals came to the United States because they wanted to, although a few came more reluctantly because of a family member’s decision.

Although all of the individuals interviewed came from different backgrounds, their experiences shared common themes. All of the interviewees came to the United States to achieve the American Dream: to have a better life for themselves and their children. Higher-paying jobs allowed these immigrants to live better and provide for the needs of their families. Some individuals expanded their definition of a better life to include caring for their families still remaining in Mexico as well. One of the opportunities drawing immigrants to the United States was the chance for better schooling. The opportunity to continue studying at better schools fueled several immigrants’ decisions to come to or remain in the United States. Green Bay was specifically chosen by several interviewees because of the style of life here. Aside from being able to earn a good wage in Green Bay, individuals mentioned that they also found in this area a sense of safety and tranquility that they had not found in others.

Although the interviewees enjoyed the opportunities that life in the United States afforded them, there were several things that they did not like. One common dislike was the cold. Coming from costal states in Mexico, these immigrants were accustomed to warmer weather; consequently, the snow and ice of Wisconsin winters were not something they enjoyed. Instances of discrimination also made adjusting to life in Green Bay difficult for certain individuals. The most common hardship in Green Bay, however, was being far from home and family. Although they enjoyed their new lives here, these immigrants missed the things they had left behind, which made the transition somewhat bittersweet.
2. Connecting the Data and the Stories

Why Immigration Occurs

As illustrated by the interviews, immigration most commonly occurs because of financial reasons. Underemployment and low wages compel immigrants to come to the United States. In the case of Green Bay, many individuals came because of jobs in the meatpacking industry. Some of the immigrants first came to the United States as migrant workers, laboring seasonally in the United States and then returning to their families in Mexico. Some individuals come to the United States for a few years, sending money home to their families in Mexico. Of the immigration experiences mentioned here, it was most common for individuals (the men) to come over first and then for spouses and families to come over later. This allowed the men to earn some money and establish a life here to ease the adjustment of their loved ones.

Demographics

The individuals interviewed fit with the statistic that the majority of Hispanic immigrants have come to the country since 1990. The average age of 25 for Mexicans in the United States does not fit with the average age of the individuals interviewed, who represent a wider span of ages. These immigrants were, however, all younger that the average age of the U.S. population (36 years old) when they arrived in the United States from Mexico. In addition, these individuals show varying abilities to speak English, and although no formal tests were done to be able to conclude their level of proficiency, all of the immigrants reported understanding English well enough to get by, although they did experience language-related problems at least occasionally.

Issues facing Mexican Immigrants

Cultural Identities: All of the immigrants interviewed found ways to maintain their cultural identities. Personal names, language, foods, and celebrations allowed them to create connections between the United States and Mexico. In addition, faith was important to many of the interviewees, and, as such, church played a central role in many of their lives and allowed them to maintain connections with their cultural heritage. These individuals did vary regarding the extent that they had assimilated to live in the United States and adopted American culture. The older immigrants tended to hold more tightly to their cultural traditions while the younger ones found ways to mix language, food, and celebrations from Mexico and the United States. These interviewees also varied as to the nationality with which they identified themselves. Some individuals identified themselves as only Mexican, stating as reasons their cultural heritage, skin color, and language, while others identified themselves as both Mexican and American because of living in the United States and the privileges afforded here.

Family Structure: The Mexican immigrants interviewed continued to place a high importance on family, with several of them naming family as the most important thing in their lives. Celebrating with large extended families and living at home until they married were two ways that Mexican immigrants continued to maintain their family ties. It was more difficult to
stay connected with their families; however, when separated by a national boundary and thousands of miles, as was the case with the individuals who still had family in Mexico. Telephone, email, letters, and visits provided the way for immigrants to maintain these connections. The interviews did not reveal, however, that a change in gender roles had taken place.

Language Barriers: Language barriers affected all the interviewees, regardless of whether or not they had studied English previous to coming to the United States. Some individuals took a more active stance to learning the language and are thus able to speak and understand it more easily today. Knowing English was identified by several immigrants as being an important preparation for coming to the United States. All of these individuals maintained their knowledge of the Spanish language, as shown by their ability to speak it for the interview. Interviewees varied regarding when they spoke Spanish and when they spoke English and often noted speaking different languages in the home, at work, in the community, or with friends. In the interviews, interviewees also occasionally displayed a mixing of Spanish and English. Conjunctions such as “so” were occasionally used in Spanish sentences and English nouns were sporadically applied if the Spanish word was unknown or if the English word fit better or was more readily understood.

Reception

All of the immigrants knew of examples of racism. Some individuals said they had never personally suffered an act of racism, while others had been deeply affected by certain experiences. Strange looks and avoidance were two means through which discrimination frequently occurred. Appearance and language were cited as two of the most common reasons why individuals experienced this racism.

Legal versus Illegal Immigration

Individuals also varied regarding whether they had entered the country first legally or illegally. Those who entered illegally experienced many hardships, both on the journey and once they were living in the United States. Despite the time and effort it required, all these immigrants are now citizens or legal permanent residents of the United States and are therefore contributing members of society. Hardships were not limited to those who entered illegally, however, because the immigrants who entered legally experienced difficulties in this country as well.
3. Ties with the Larger Community

The lives that these immigrants described are similar to the lives of individuals in Green Bay in a variety of ways. Many interviewees described themselves as being interested in traveling, spending time outside, reading, listening to music, fishing, watching sports, and cheering for the Packers, pastimes which people born and raised in Green Bay also enjoy. Having a spiritual life and belonging to a church were also important for many of the individuals and they were actively involved in religious organizations. Many of the interviewees identified their parents as the people who had most influenced their lives. They told stories of sacrifices that their parents made for them and character traits that they both share. All of these immigrants care deeply about their families and those who are married have high hopes for their children. Work or school and their families occupy most of their time. Having adopted the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and other American holidays as days that they celebrate, these immigrants show that their lives are, as Carmen puts it, are “como la vida de todos los demás.”

Although these immigrants bring differences to the community, their culture is one that can enrich and strengthen our community and American society, adding to the richness and diversity of this nation of immigrants.

110 “Like the lives of everyone else”
Appendix
Appendix A: Discussion Questions

For non-immigrants:

- How much did you know about Mexican immigration before reading this book?
- Have your views on Mexican immigration changed since reading this book? If so, how?
- Was there anything that shocked or surprised you in this book? If so, what was it? Why did you react this way?
- With which interviewee did you relate most? Why?
- Do you know anyone who is an immigrant?
- Were your ancestors immigrants? If so, where did they come from? Why did they leave their home country? When did they arrive in the United States? Do you know any difficulties they experienced?
- Did your ancestors speak a language other than English that has been lost in your family? What other losses go along with the loss of a language?
- Do you speak a second language? If yes, which? If no, why not?
- Have you seen, heard of, or experienced discrimination? If so, what happened? What was the cause?
- Which values do these immigrants hold that are similar to yours? Which values are different?
- What experiences have you had with the immigrant population?
- How can or does the immigrant community enrich the larger community in Green Bay?
- What are some other problems that face Mexican immigrants in Green Bay at this time?
- How are immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, portrayed in the media? In the news?
- How well are Mexicans represented in the local government? In other leadership positions? In civic organizations?
- How do you see stereotypes affecting the Mexican immigrant population in Green Bay?
- How does negative treatment of immigrants adversely affect the Green Bay population at large?
- To what extent do you believe a negative experience with an individual Mexican immigrant affects people’s perceptions of the immigrant community as a whole?
- What resources, programs, or changes do you feel could benefit the immigrant community?

---

For immigrants:

- In what ways did the stories you read resonate with your own experiences?
- Why did you or your family decide to come to the United States? To Green Bay?
- How was your journey to the United States?
- What was difficult about adjusting to life in the United States?
- In what ways is Green Bay different from or similar to your hometown?
- What is one thing you wish you had known about life in the United States before coming to live here?
- Have you felt welcomed in the United States, either by the immigrant or non-immigrant communities?
- In what ways have you or your life changed since being in the United States?
- Is it difficult to maintain relationships with family members and friends who are still in your country of birth? How are you able to do so?
- Have your cultural traditions changed since you have been in the United States? If so, how?
- What do you miss most about your home country?
- Is it difficult to maintain your cultural identity? How are you able to do so?
- In what ways does language affect your daily life? Do you still speak your mother tongue? If so, where or when? With whom?
- With what nationality or nationalities would you identify yourself? Why?
- In what ways does being an immigrant and of a different ethnic group enrich your life? In what ways does it make your life more challenging?
- What resources, programs, or changes do you feel could benefit the immigrant community?
Para los inmigrantes:

- ¿De qué maneras resuenan las historias que usted leyó con sus propias experiencias?
- ¿Por qué Ud. O su familia decidieron venirse Ud. a los EE.UU.? ¿Y a Green Bay?
- ¿Cómo fue el viaje a los EE.UU.?
- ¿Qué fue lo más difícil para ajustarse a la vida en los EE.UU.?
- ¿De qué maneras es Green Bay diferente o semejante a su pueblo natal?
- ¿Qué hubiera deseado saber acerca de la vida en los EE.UU. antes de venir a vivir aquí?
- ¿Se ha sentido bienvenido/a Ud. en los EE.UU. por la comunidad hispánica o por la comunidad no-hispánica?
- ¿De qué maneras ha cambiado Ud. o su vida después de llegar a los EE.UU.?
- ¿Es difícil mantener relaciones con familiares o amigos que todavía están en su tierra natal? ¿Cómo puede hacerlo?
- ¿Han cambiado sus tradiciones culturales después de llegar en los EE.UU.? ¿Cómo?
- ¿Qué es lo que echa más de menos de su tierra natal?
- ¿Es difícil mantener su identidad cultural? ¿Cómo puede hacerlo?
- ¿De qué maneras afecta el idioma su vida diaria? ¿Sigue hablando su lengua materna? ¿Dónde o cuándo? ¿Con quién/es?
- ¿Con qué nacionalidad o nacionalidades se identifica? ¿Por qué?
- ¿De qué maneras ha sido enriquecida su vida por ser inmigrante o pertenecer a otro grupo étnico? ¿De qué maneras esto ha sido más difícil?
- ¿Qué recursos, programas o cambios piensa Ud. que beneficiarían la comunidad inmigrante?
Appendix B: Works Cited


Who Are My Sisters and Brothers?: Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees. USCCB, 1996.


Appendix C: Letter to Possible Interviewees

Hola,

Me llamo Katie Ebben y asisto el College of St. Benedict en St. Joseph, MN, pero vivo en Kaukauna, WI. Este verano trabajé a la parroquia de St. Willebrord’s con la Hermana Melanie.

Antes de graduarme de la universidad, tengo que hacer un proyecto que tiene de ver con mis especializaciones, Español y Estudios de la Paz. Lo que quiero hacer es crear un libro acerca de la inmigración mexicana en Green Bay. Este libro tendrá información acerca de México, las causas de la inmigración y el proceso de adaptarse a los Estados Unidos. Este libro también incluirá entrevistas con inmigrantes mexicanas en Green Bay porque quiero aprender sobre sus experiencias personales. Se dará este libro a varias organizaciones en Green Bay, como la biblioteca, YWCA, Hispanic Community Resource Center, Multicultural Center, la Iglesia de San Willebrord y otras organizaciones. El propósito de publicar esta información es para que los ciudadanos de Green Bay puedan aprender más sobre la inmigración mexicana y las experiencias de ser un inmigrante.

Escribo esta carta a usted a ver si accedería estar entrevistado. La Hermana Melanie me dio su nombre porque me dijo que a lo mejor usted estará dispuesto a ayudarme. Necesito entrevistar a personas de 18 o 19 años, a personas en los 20, a personas que están trabajando y a personas que ya están jubiladas.

El proceso de entrevistar durará más o menos una hora. Las entrevistas serán en español y sus respuestas serán grabadas. Una traducción de partes de las entrevistas será publicada en un libro, pero se puede publicarla de forma anónima. Hay una copia de las preguntas también en este sobre. Las entrevistas ocurrirán entre el 20 y el 24 de diciembre a San Willebrord’s, con la posibilidad de ocurrir entre el 26 y el 31 si es necesario. Le llamaré este fin de semana para hablar con usted y ver si está de acuerdo a ayudarme en este proyecto.

Gracias por su ayuda y que tenga una buena Navidad,

Katie Ebben
Appendix D: Interview Questions

English version:

Demographics

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
- What is your religion?
- What country are you from?
- How long did you live in this country?
- How long have you lived in the U.S.?
- How long have you lived in Green Bay?
- Are you married?
- Do you have kids?
- How many people live in your household?

Mexico

- How would you describe your city/town (# people, etc)?
- How would you describe your house?
- Who lived with you in Mexico?
- How many people did you live with?
- Where did you work?
- What did you like to do for fun?
- Generally speaking, what was your life like in Mexico?
- What was the economic situation like in your country when you were living there?
- What were some traditions from your home country that you like?
- What were some festivals from your home country that you like?
- What type of food did you eat?

Transition

- Why did you decide to come to the U.S.?
- Did your family and friends support your decision?
- Are you planning on staying in the United States permanently?
- What was the process like of coming to the U.S.?
- Do you have a green card?
- Was it difficult to get a green card?
• Did you know anyone in Green Bay before you arrived?
• Did you come to the U.S. by yourself or with family or friends?
• Have you lived anywhere in the U.S. before Green Bay?
• Why did you come to Green Bay?

United States

• Describe your house.
• Who lives with you?
• Where do you work?
• What do you do there?
• What do you like to do for fun?
• Generally speaking, what is your life like here?
• What do you like about the U.S.?
• What do you dislike about the U.S.?
• Do you continue traditions from Mexico?
• What do you miss most about your home country?
• Do you eat the same kind of food you ate in Mexico?
• Do you like American food?
• Do you think of yourself as Mexican?
• Do you think of yourself as American?
• With which nationality do you relate to more?
• Have you suffered from acts of discrimination in the U.S.?
• Was it difficult for you to adjust to the style of life in the U.S.?
• How does language affect your daily life?
• Do you understand English well enough to read an English newspaper?
• Do you maintain relationships with people in Mexico?
• Have you felt welcome in Green Bay by the Hispanic community?
• Have you felt welcome in Green Bay by the non-Hispanic community?
• Are you content with your life in Green Bay?

Connections

• What holidays do you celebrate?
• How do you celebrate these holidays?
• What is your favorite memory from when you were in Mexico?
• Who is the person who has influenced you most in your life?
• What dreams or plans do you have for your family?
• What is important to you?
• What does true wealth consist of for you?
Información demográfica

- ¿Cómo se llama?
- ¿Cuántos años tiene?
- ¿Qué nivel de educación ha obtenido Ud.?
- ¿Cuál es su religión?
- ¿De qué país es Ud.?
- ¿Hace cuánto tiempo vivía en este país?
- ¿Hace cuánto tiempo vive en los EE.UU.?
- ¿Hace cuánto tiempo vive en Green Bay?
- ¿Es Ud. casado/a?
- ¿Tiene hijos?
- ¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa?

México

- ¿Cómo se describe su ciudad o pueblo (número de personas, etc.)?
- ¿Cómo se describe su casa?
- ¿Quién vivía con Ud. en México?
- ¿Con cuántas personas vivía?
- ¿Dónde trabajaba?
- ¿Qué le gustaba hacer para divertirse?
- ¿En general, cómo era su vida en México?
- ¿Cómo era la situación económica en su país cuando vivía allá?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas de las tradiciones en su país que le gusta?
- ¿Cuáles son algunos de los días festivos en su país que le gusta?
- ¿Qué comía usualmente en su país?

Transición

- ¿Por qué decidió venirse a los EE.UU.?
- ¿Sus familiares y amigos, apoyaron su decisión de venirse?
- ¿Planea quedarse aquí permanentemente?
- ¿Cómo fue el proceso de venir a los EE.UU.?
- ¿Tiene tarjeta de residencia?
- ¿Fue difícil conseguir una tarjeta de residencia?
- ¿Conocía a alguien en Green Bay antes de mudarse aquí?
- ¿Vino a los EEE.UU. sólo/a o con familiares o amigos?
- ¿Había vivido en los EE.UU. antes de llegar a Green Bay?
- ¿Por qué vino a Green Bay?
Los Estados Unidos

- Describa su casa.
- ¿Quién vive con Ud.?
- ¿Dónde trabaja?
- ¿Qué hace allí?
- ¿Qué le gusta hacer para divertirse?
- En general, ¿cómo es su vida aquí?
- ¿Qué le gusta de los Estados Unidos?
- ¿Qué no le gusta de los Estados Unidos?
- ¿Continúa sus tradiciones mexicanas?
- ¿Qué es lo que echa más de menos de su tierra natal?
- ¿Come el mismo tipo de comida que comía en México?
- ¿Le gusta la comida americana?
- ¿Se piensa a sí mismo como mexicano/a?
- ¿Se piensa a sí mismo como americano/a?
- ¿Con qué nacionalidad se identifica más?
- ¿Ha sufrido algún acto de discriminación en los EE.UU.?
- ¿Fue difícil adaptarse al estilo de vida en los EE.UU.?
- ¿Cómo afecta el idioma su vida diaria?
- ¿Puede entender inglés suficientemente para poder leer un periódico?
- ¿Mantiene relaciones con personas en México?
- ¿Se ha sentido bienvenido por la comunidad hispánica en Green Bay?
- ¿Se ha sentido bienvenido por la comunidad no-hispánica en Green Bay?
- ¿Está contento/a con su vida en Green Bay?

Lazos/ Conexiones

- ¿Cuáles días festivos celebra?
- ¿Cómo celebra estos días festivos?
- ¿Cuál es su recuerdo favorito de cuando era Ud. en México?
- ¿Quién es la persona que más le ha influenciado en su vida?
- ¿Qué sueños o planes tiene para su familia?
- ¿Qué es importante para Ud.?
- ¿En qué consiste la riqueza verdadera para Ud.?
Hola,

Le escribo acerca del proyecto que estoy haciendo y la entrevista que tuve con Ud. hace unos meses. Transcribí la entrevista y la puse en una forma narrativa.

De acuerdo con lo que le escribí antes, voy a imprimir su entrevista con otras seis en un libro con información acerca de la inmigración mexicana y distribuirlo en Green Bay para que la comunidad no-hispana aprenda más sobre la vida de los inmigrantes. En este sobre le incluyo una copia en forma narrativa de su entrevista en inglés y en español. Quiero que la lea para que me diga si está de acuerdo con esta información antes de imprimirla. Para proteger su identidad y su confidencialidad, cambié su nombre. Por favor, digame si me equivoqué en partes de la narrativa y también si hay partes que prefiere que yo no incluya.

Lo llimaré en unos días para hablar con Ud. acerca de su opinión sobre la narrativa.

¡Gracias y que Dios lo bendiga!

Katie Ebben