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Carvalho, Marcos and Moema Oral History Interview: Class Projects

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Ora l H istory Interview
M ichigan H istory – Spring 2000
I nterviewee: Marcos C arvalho with wife, Moema
I nterviewer: Melanie Lofquist
30 March 2000

ML: We just have to start with the date and I'll say my name and then if you want to go ahead and say your name, probably because I'll mispronounce it so much. Today is March 30, 2000 and I'm Melanie Lofquist and...

MC: I am Marcos Antonio Itaparica de Carvalho, that's my full name.

ML: O.K. And so the first question is what area or what part of Brazil are you from?

MC: I'm from Salvador, it's a city on the coast of Brazil and that is situated on the northeast part of Brazil.

ML: O.K. And can you describe, any way you want, the area you're from? What it was like to live there, what daily life was like, I guess.

MC: The area is very like San Francisco, it's very hilly, and it's right on the coast. We have a bay called Bay of All Saints and I used to live on the peninsular part of the city and it was close to the water, close to the Bay. Daily life there was like daily life in most big cities, public transportation problems, people going to work. I mean, it's a city of two million people so it's like any other major big city.

ML: Since you were a foreign exchange student first, before you actually emigrated, my question would be, what made you decide you to become a foreign exchange student?

MC: Well, most other countries are very interested about life in the United States, most people see the United States nowadays as like they used to see France or England in the past century, like a mecca for culture and wealth and all that. That what decided it for me, most of my interest in the society here. We are exposed to all different types of movies
and TV, so you see all this. You wanted to know personally how it really it is.

ML: Just, going off of that question, was it like you thought it was gonna be, based on what you'd seen in the movies and TV?

MC: It was. It was pretty close, especially Holland. When I came in '81, Holland was still a little smaller community, and we had this suburban type of life where you have your green grass and mowing the yard and everybody goes to work in the morning and come back at 5 and go to church on Sunday. So, exactly like you see in the movies and last year you see a movie made in New York or something like this where it's a little different, it's more like we are a cosmo over there.

ML: What were your first impressions of Holland when you came as a high school student?

MC: It was night, it was Saturday night, or Friday night. It was very cold, that was the only thing. I went to bed, I had my cap on, I had gloves, and boots and everything and my coat. Then in the morning, it was a lot of snow, everything very cold, but I wanted to look around and see. I can't describe the first impression, with everything was so new. I was being bombarded by different things, the cars, the people. I really didn't have a first impression that really stuck to me.

ML: Do you still keep in contact with your host family or any friends that you made while you were here?

MC: Mostly everyday. They've been my family here for as long as I've been here so they're part of our lives just like we are part of their lives also. We're actually family, I mean, that's the way we see our relationship.

ML: When you decided to move back here, did that make it easier?
MC: Yes. That basically was what made the decision for my wife to decide to come because I already knew someone who was willing to help us, kind of sheltering us for the first periods and kind of guide us through that time.

ML: How was your experience in high school in the United States different from your experiences in school in Brazil?

MC: When I came here, one of the things that I came for was to learn English. I was already in college. I went into college when I was sixteen so I was already two years into college but because I was still eighteen, I could go to high school. So, I went to high school to learn English. My impression here was the surroundings was much better than my old high school in Brazil. But, classes were very easy. Even not speaking any English, everything was so easy, so classes were easy.

ML: What are some important things that happened in your life between the time when you returned to Brazil but before you came back here?

MC: I think the most important thing was that I finish my college education. Then, I taught for a couple years and I got married. It was what basically happened in that period.

ML: When you did you begin to think about immigrating to the United States?

MC: When I graduated in '85, I came here to visit, and I thought about it because I knew that economically speaking, the country, Brazil, wasn't doing too well and that was one of the major reasons that I decided to. I started thinking about it right after I graduated.

ML: I know you sort of talked about it a little bit, but what other reasons, or what were the main reasons, that you did finally decide to come back to the United States to live?

MC: I had three different jobs. I was teaching history and political organization in the morning
and in the afternoon I was a physical education teacher. And at night I did work in different health clubs and on the side I had my own business. And I could not make enough money to buy a house or rent a decent apartment. And I had a major nervous breakdown when one of the family members here were visiting and he told me, "why don't you leave everything behind and just move to the States?" That was, "Yep," I said, "Well that sounds like a good plan."

ML: What did Moema think of that or what part did she play in this decision?

MC: I was trying to tell her to come here since a little over two years at that time. Cause we want to get married and we wanted to go on with our life. We didn't want to get married and move with her parents. So, once she saw that the family here were willing to embrace us after our marriage and she met them, she decided that it was o.k. for us to do it and she did it.

Moema: I did mostly for love.

ML: What were some of the concerns you thought of about leaving Brazil behind?

MC: I had no concerns because the situation was, it couldn't get any worse really. But, I was thinking I was going to go back within, you know, maybe at the most after three years. Here it is thirteen years already.

ML: How did you travel to the United States when you came?

MC: By plane.

ML: And who did you travel with?

MC: Moema and my host family.

ML: Now I know that you have brothers and sisters. Are they still all in Brazil?
MC: Yes, all in Brazil.

ML: What were your feelings about leaving them behind or what do you feel now about them being back there?

MC: Well, now more than ever, I feel a need to connect with them because we've been there to visit and I see my nephews, the family structure, and the daily little problems, that I'm not a part of it, I miss that. But before, when we first left, the situation was such that I really was glad to just pack my bags and leave.

ML: Now, I know you talked about this again but the next question is, why did you choose the United States compared to another country?

MC: Basically was because I was exchange student, I made many friends here. In high school because I was involved in sports and I was a good athlete, I was embraced by the high school kids. I still in contact with many of them, even today.

ML: Now what sports did you play?

MC: Track.

ML: So, you just had a big group of friends, like any high school kid?

MC: Yep. So, I thought this is a good network over here.

ML: When you came back to the United States as an immigrant, where did you first go? Did you come right to Holland?

MC: Yeah, right to Holland.

ML: What did you first do when you got here?

MC: I worked with the family, they own a tool and die machine shop. And I did that for three years.
ML: When you came back as an immigrant, what were your first impressions of Holland?

MC: Holland was growing fast. That was my first impression.

ML: What were some of the differences that you noticed right away, in particular?

MC: Well, they were talking about building the mall, the Westshore Mall. And, they had several new gas stations, just the general amount of traffic was different. And that was just in six years. I told my wife that she was not gonna be able to wear her dressing type because in Brazil it is very warm and the way we dress over there, it would be considered a sinful thing over here. But when we got here, things were already different. So yeah, my first impression the second time was that the city was changed rapidly and the community too.

ML: Did you notice any changes in people, in attitudes at all? Behaviors?

MC: I could not tell because I haven't had many incidents here where I could differentiate one person from the other. I believe that, I don't know, the attitude people talk about here is still available to some people but not to others. I don't know.

ML: Could you describe some of the problems that you faced adjusting to life here as an immigrant?

MC: In terms of social change, weather wise?

ML: Anything. Anything. Yeah I have that later. I know that weather has got to be a big difference but anything you want to talk about, about differences.

MC: Well, first I think that most immigrants probably would have a more difficult than what I had as when I came back here because first, I knew how to speak the language and that was very helpful because I could express myself and I could approach people in a manner
that they did not feel threatened. So, I did not experience too many difficulties. Also, because I had friends and family, I mean when I say family, just my host family, they were willing to be there for us. But we were very blessed, not much in terms of difficult. The distance from our family in Brazil, yes. I remember one of my major, I don't know if that was a difficult or that was just a crisis or something, it was when my sister got sick one time and I felt so unable to help. So I think the distance from your family is one of the major difficulties that you face.

ML: How did you end up dealing with that? What have you done to overcome that?

MC: Well, if I was not married to a person from the same country with the same problems that understand the same thing, I don't think that I could deal with it. The only reason that we were able to stay and to get over some of those problems was because we have each other in terms of same background, same culture, so we support each other this way. So, that's the way we cope.

ML: Obviously there's a lot of things different between Holland, Michigan and Brazil, but what are some of the big differences?

MC: The people. People here are very distant, even if they are your friends, they never approach you, never hug you or kiss you or embrace you on the street. They're very good friends but there is always a distance between people. I think that the people here are quite...that the social structure here is very different from where we're from.

ML: Anything else or is that just the main thing?

Moema: The weather.

MC: Well, the weather is major. It's really different. Being closer to the ocean is...
Moema: nicer.

MC: You say you're from Port Huron, so you're in bare wasteland over there, it's very cold isn't it sometimes?

ML: It's a lot like Holland.

MC: Yeah, I mean, it's difficult to describe. You have eight months of real good weather and then four months of so-so. You have a little bit of rain, sun comes out. And it's never below 75, that's winter and people have jackets on and they complain, it's too cold for them.

ML: Did it take you guys a long time to adjust? Are you still adjusting?

Moema: We still have a hard time!

MC: Yeah, I used to cope much better, as a matter of fact, because I used to run every day no matter what. But since I stopped doing this, now my feet get cold, I get really depressed. I have to get my feet warm. So yeah, we're still adjusting.

ML: Do you have a lot of people that you know here?

MC: Yeah.

Moema: From Brazil you mean?

MC: No.

ML: Just in general, I think.

Moema: Oh yeah, we know lots of people.

MC: We probably know half of the town.

ML: I know you talked a little bit about the distance between people, but, I guess this sort of goes along with it a little bit, do you feel as comfortable here in social settings as
you did when you were at home?

MC: Yeah. We have a group of friends, they're very diverse. Most are foreigners from Europe, Africa, a lot of people from Mexico that I play soccer with, from Chile, from Guatemala, Spain, Netherlands, Canada. So, yeah, we're very comfortable. Brazil being a country that was colonized by the Portuguese, some of the customs that they have in Europe is the same we have. And, the way they act is about the same.

ML: You said when you first came over here you worked with your host family in their tool and die shop.

MC: Yes.

ML: What type of jobs did you do after that?

MC: After that, I start to do jewelry work. It's like in mass production type, I'll be my own contractor. And then in between, when there was not enough contract works to be done, I would do landscaping, I'd paint houses. I hate to paint houses, that was really bad. As a matter of fact, this was the first job I got ever as a painter, in this house. That was years ago, and now we ended up living here.

ML: And I know that you told me over the phone, but can you just say again for it to be on tape, what you do now.

MC: Now, I still doing jewelry, it's something that I like to do and I have an internet service provider. I basically buy wholesale internet access and then retail it to households and some business.

ML: Have you ever had any difficulty finding employment here?

MC: No. Oh yeah, I did help Moema for a while, also, cleaning houses. Yeah, so I did
that too. But no, I never really had any difficulty.

ML: Was it at all comparable to your situation in Brazil, of income?

MC: No, income always been more, a lot more. Minimum wage there just went up to $95 a month.

ML: Again I know we talked about this a little bit, but what are some of the ways that the move affected you and your family, whether the two of you or your relationship with anybody back at home?

MC: Well, the relationship part of it, we just miss that. My sister got married, both of them got married, they had kids. My parents and Moema's parents are getting older, her sisters got married, had kids, and we were not able to make any of those weddings. And, I don't know, just things happen that we miss, all related to family, in terms of what happened with the country or with the city and it really doesn't affect us as much.

ML: Has anybody in your family ever come here to visit you?

MC: Yes. My father-in-law and my mom.

Moema: And my sister.

MC: Oh yeah, your sister and nephew.

ML: Have you at all gone back to visit?

MC: Yes.

ML: Just not at the times of weddings or anything?

MC: Yes.

ML: How often have you visited?

MC: We've been back there three times.
ML: Has anybody else in your family or Moema's family ever considered emigrating here?

MC: My brother considered it one time, but I don't think he does anymore.

ML: Why do you think he decided not to?

MC: I don't know. He just decided it'd be best for him over there. I tell him about the cold and he just think it might be too cold.

ML: What are some of the traditions you have brought with you that you still do in your family? If any, I don't know, maybe there aren't any.

MC: There's no really traditions that we brought.

Moema: We like music and dancing.

MC: Yeah, just the carnival, we bring the music of Brazil, we get like CDs and things like that. Music, I think, is more what is still very large part of what we are. That, yeah, music.

ML: How about food at all?

MC: Food, yes. Moema does cook. All the foods that we have there. Some West African, 'cause the city where we are from was the first capital in Brazil and all the slaves that came from Africa went there. So they brought a different type of cuisine. You know Salvador is a different city in Brazil itself, is a totally different culture and the cuisine there is different so Moema did cook that. We manage to find, amazingly, some of the things that we need to prepare the food at Asian stores that are from Laos or Vietnam and they have similar things.

ML: So far, I know you don't have a lot of experience yet, but what has been different about raising a child here from how it would have been in Brazil?
MC: Well, one thing again is the family.
ML: Right.
MC: You don't have Grandma to watch him and over there also because the situation economically is so, like $95 for minimum wage, and you can hire someone to be a twenty-four hour nanny for that amount of money. You know, and then you can...
Moema: And you can hire a cook too.
MC: You can hire someone to cook.
Moema: Someone to cook, someone to clean, and someone to watch your kids.
MC: Then you have to go to work so you can make up and pay them but then you get home and you don't have to. Like right now I have to watch him in the morning 'cause we are gonna to try not to put him in a day care situation. But our income has dropped and that put a lot a stress on, financially. And then Moema also just cut a few of her clients and then she only work part-time also.
ML: Now, what, I don't know if you want to say it or you want to say it, but what do you do?
Moema: I clean houses.
ML: O.K. O.K. I didn't know if you still did that or not. So you just can't do that as much.
Moema: I chose not to. I want to stay with him in the afternoon.
MC: If you had children to do more, then you have to go to the daycare.
Moema: And then you have to watch him the whole day and daycare is not an option right now, it'd be too expensive.
MC: It would be expensive for me to watch him all day.
Moema: That too.

MC: Be very expensive.

Moema: But I think its very important this time that they spend together in the morning, because the bonding between father. Very few people have that, to be able to bond that close with the parents.

MC: So we have to reschedule everything around this and this has been really hard 'cause, when it's time to pay the mortgage, then you have to.

ML: I know it's a common problem, I know a lot of people deal with that.

Moema: Yeah, in Brazil we would hire a full-time babysitter, she lives with you, she sleeps with you in the house. She has her own quarters where she sleeps so right there you have one less problem to worry about.

ML: Right.

Moema: Someone there to be watching your kids. Besides you have your mother there, your aunt there, you always can call for help if you need to. Here it's just the two of us.

ML: I know we sort of already talked about this again, but what were some of your most difficult adjustments now that you look back overall, in the transition, in the move?

MC: Well, first was to the social adjustment in terms of adjust like from being a teacher to go do landscape. I mean in terms of society. Over there, let's say someone who does landscape is someone who has no education or not are able to get job someplace else and the pay is horrible, is $95 a month.

Moema: Same thing with housecleaning.

MC: Yeah, housecleaning too.
Moema: I also have a degree in physical therapy in Brazil. So that's something that you really have to work your mind in.

MC: So, but the society here accept you in a different, as long as you're working and you're doing it legally and you're trying to improve in terms of contribute to society in general. People just don't care, it's a job like any other.

ML: Have you ever considered doing teaching here?

MC: We talk about it but I just think that...I went to a public high school over there but I went to a Catholic middle school and then I went to a Catholic university. And I think, if I had to teach over here, kids have no respect for the teachers and you have no tools to control

Moema: Or discipline them.

MC: Or discipline them.

ML: I'm laughing because I'm going into education but yeah, I totally agree.

MC: And you know, the only thing that's left is you have to try to be friends with the students. And then but you can't be friends to all of them, so you have no recourse to teach them. Without discipline, there's no learning.

ML: I guess we have a little bit of time left on this side still. Overall, how difficult was your transition into the Holland community as an immigrant?

MC: I think, like I said before, we kind of had not experienced the major difficulty that most immigrant faces like prejudice, racism and things like that, because we were able to communicate. Even though maybe some people didn't like us, if we had a chance to talk to them, maybe halfway between the conversation they change their mind. So, I think language was what improved, in terms of us not facing some of those
difficulties. But, I don't know. The difficult was just a major adjustment in what we did, and now we had to do over here.

ML: What were, again you talked about at least the economic ones, but what were some of the opportunities that you've been presented with while in the U.S.?

MC: Well, the opportunity of gaining access to information freely. What I mean information is, if you walk into a factory here and you say, "Well, I'm really curious about what you guys do here, I'd like to have a tour someday, is that possible?" "Oh yes." And you don't have security walking with you or you don't have to sign a ton of paper. Or if you call someone at school, or any college or any researcher and say, "Well, I heard of your doing this work and I'm interested on researching on that." "O.K." There's everything open to you. So in terms of information, oh it's wonderful. I think because people have no stress of worrying about losing their job, they're more willing to share that information, it's totally different from there.

ML: A lot of these questions we've already touched on, but I have to ask them officially. So another one is, why have you stayed in the Holland area?

MC: We create a network of friends and I never moved also from where, in Brazil you just don't move that much like here where you just think, well it's cold here I'll just go to Florida. So once we settled here, I mean I like the area, I like the people here. Yeah it's cold but also you have a nice spring and a good summer. So, yeah, we had no real reason to say, "o.k. we're going to move out of here" because for one thing, like I say, to find work here was never really difficult. So, it been hard work sometime, but hey it pays well, so...
ML: Have you ever considered leaving Holland and going back to Brazil for any reason?

MC: Yes. We considered that. And every time we talk about it is actually the middle of the winter. So, yeah, we talk about it. And every time we go to Brazil and then we come back here, we feel like this a dead town, like we live in the middle of nowhere here. The city is right around the corner. You're lonely and then you go, "oh man I'm just gonna go across the street and talk to my neighbor". You can't. You cannot just say "o.k. I'm gonna visit my friend." I never call, I just walk in there, go visit your friend. Everybody has their own schedule and it's difficult to. So, yeah, this is one of the reasons we think about...

Moema: Everybody here is too uptight, too busy.

MC: Yeah.

ML: So, what was really kept you here, if you've thought about that?

MC: Economics has been number one. I mean, Brazil never came back from the '70s when crisis, economic, just destroyed the whole country. And once you've been here this long... you know, you can't have everything that you want. I hope there's a lot of people who are able to have everything they wanted but unfortunately that's not me. I mean, I wish I had all my family here and had the structure of what the United States now present to whoever lives here, economically, economic development, technology, food here is really reasonable. So, we always talk about this but then we say well, what we going to do over there?

ML: I'm going to stop this...(End of side A)

ML: In what ways have you been involved in the Holland community?
MC: I taught Sunday school, I coached soccer for like nine years, what else? Moema
volunteers at the hospital for awhile, anything else? That's about it.

ML: What did you like about some of those different activities? Why have you done them?

MC: Soccer I did because I like the sport and when, about eleven, twelve years ago when they
start the programs with the kids, they needed people that had some experience. And I
coach the university team there. I was a player and a coach in the senior year. So, I had
some experience coaching and I just thought that I'd love to see this sport growing over
here so I'm glad I did. It's becoming very popular here now. So, it was a good
experience.

ML: And I know we talked about this on the phone again but, do you have a church
affiliation?

MC: No, we don't have an affiliation. We are Catholic, non-practicing and I guess, once
you're born in Brazil you're born a Catholic.

ML: What has influenced your decision to not really follow a church affiliation here?

MC: We went to several different church here and we think it's great the work they do.
But most of the church here they all worry about things that's not very important to
us. They worry about numbers and how many people make the Sunday school and
how much money they collect, sending people to Hell, all this stuff. I don't know,
it's strange to me, I guess.

ML: Obviously like you said, if you're born in Brazil you're Catholic, so what have you
thought of, or what do you see of the enormous variety of religions here?

MC: Well, in Brazil you're either Catholic or Protestant. Right now, I think Protestants are
almost twenty percent of the population. So, I do not differentiate. I know there are
different religions, different lines of thought, but they still are just Protestants in my point
of view. And I do have heated discussions with people about this because they think,
well if you're a Catholic, why don't you go to church over here? Well, the Catholic
Church in the States are very much like the Catholic Church in the States. They wanna be
independent, they don't think very much of the Pope, so I don't know, I think they are
going toward becoming one more of the church of the U.S. And I think the variety here is
just for the reason why someone disagree with the point that they find in the Bible or a
political reason within the church and they break away and then they start their own
church and have no loyalty I guess, I don't know.

ML: Increasingly Holland is becoming more culturally diverse. When you see new
immigrants settling in Holland, how do you feel or what do you think?

MC: That's exactly what I feel, it's like yeah, it's becoming very diverse. Different people, and
I think when I moved, no, when I was an exchange student here, they had African-
Americans were kind of a segregated to the north side, closer to Port Sheldon there, on
136th. And now, they are living within the city limits and there is a population of
Hispanic here as of being overwhelmed. I think some people do not like this but I see this
and I talk to many friends about that throughout these couple centuries in the past now,
the United States happened to be in a situation where they could take advantage of the
economic moves, the world economy had. And then that would be the next one. English
is the major language of business and the Spanish population throughout South
America and Central America is huge. If you have someone who speak both languages,
can learn how to sell and then sell your equipment in countries. Their economy is just starting to bloom right now, I think again they gonna be in the right situation. Where you have bilingual kids all over the place here, I mean they can just switch it between English and Spanish like nothing, this is just one more advantage that this diversity here is going to bring.

ML: You obviously support culture diversity and integration, but I have to ask the next question. What are your feelings about the different communities? In particular, what are your feelings about the Hispanic community and then the Dutch and the Asian community? I don't know if you want to take each one separately or if it doesn't...

MC: I really, see the Dutch community here is, well, they're just Dutch descendent and they kept their beliefs frozen in time, passed from generation. I think it's difficult for you to give in, certain things that you have been taught, that's the right thing and then all of a sudden someone tells you, "no that's not right". The other communities I think that one of the problems is just it's not real integration there, it's not really. I make a point of knowing people throughout my involvement with soccer, I know people from all, Laos, which are Asians, and Vietnam and Thailand and so. They are not any different from me or you, but people just don't take the time to try to talk to them. If they mispronounce a word or something they just, "oh, they're stupid." Friction between groups is totally different from physics where friction is caused by proximity. Friction on society is caused by distance.

ML: I never thought of that before but that's a really good point. Do you see immigrants to this area facing similar problems or opportunities that you've faced?
MC: Well, because the economy is doing so well, I think that people are more acceptant of having people around from different cultures. And I think because they are coming in much larger numbers, then they tend to stay with a group and that sometimes it’s look upon as they don’t want to mix or anything but it’s just because it’s so much easier to be among your own. You can be accepted without no question.

ML: Do you know of any other immigrants from Brazil in this area?

MC: Yeah.

ML: A lot or?

Moema: A lot.

MC: Yeah, we know, within Grand Rapids or within Holland?

Moema: Grand Rapids area too?

ML: It doesn't matter.

MC: Oh yeah, we know at least about eighty.

ML: Wow. See I had no idea of any numbers.

MC: Yeah, in Grand Rapids got a decent sized community and in Holland, probably have ten or fifteen from Brazil in here.

ML: Did they basically come over for the same reasons that you've come over or do you not know?

MC: Yeah, in general. By marrying an American, or because they economically or just because they wanna just get out of the country and experience something new. A little different reason.

ML: How do you feel about the Dutch heritage that Holland has tried to preserve? I know you
talked about it a little bit just a minute ago but…

MC: I feel that's good. We have a Dutch friend and she says, "This is not Dutch heritage." But it is for them. And it should be well preserved. This is something that should be kept and passed on because it was part of a people that broke away. Someday they might be interested and come here and study and find out why and it's nice to have that historical records

Moema: Historical records, that's good.

ML: What do you think about Tulip Time which is obviously the biggest showing of Dutch heritage?

MC: Yeah I think Tulip Time is a good festival. It's good for the city, it's good for everyone.

Moema: I personally like it because there's so many people...

ML: That's what I've heard.

MC: Yeah.

Moema: ...In the city, and we looking forward to going to the Tulip Time this year because of the baby, celebrate. A lot like it because it so busy, Holland is normally not as busy.

MC: But yeah, I like the festival. I don't see this as any type of offense or to other cultures. I see this as, they found this city so I think they have the right. So, it's just as simple as that. In our town, eighty percent, maybe better than eighty percent are black and the traditions that they have their festivals there, everybody join in and everybody likes it. So, I mean, it doesn't offend anybody.

ML: Again, right along the same lines, what are our feelings about the Cinco de Mayo
MC: I think that has, see this is a problem again of distance. They just don't wanna be left out. And this is gonna cause more problems than what could solve, I mean by talking. I mean, I really don't see a...

Moema: It's just another holiday right?

MC: Yeah, Cinco de Mayo is Mexico Independence Day. What about then, seven of September, what about, I don't know...

Moema: Cinco de Mayo...(something in Portuguese)

MC: No, no it's Mexico Independence Day.

Moema: Is it?

MC: Yeah. First of May is, you know, the Russians want to do a big parade, what about them? You know, so, where you gonna stop? You know, I don't see the reasons for the Cinco de Mayo, it's just because...

Moema: Celebrates their community, why not?

MC: Well, because I don't know if it is even a big deal in Mexico at all, anymore. You know, it used to be because under dictatorship there, you know, the Army would go out in the streets and show their guns and stuff. But, in Mexico, it's not a big deal, Cinco de Mayo anymore. Bigger deal with St. Patrick's Day in Mexico now because the Irish were the only people who defected from the U.S. Army to fight, you know, for Mexicans during the Mexican War, you know. So they celebrate.

ML: Have you experienced any discrimination?

MC: One time, yeah. But the guy was very upset and I understood because it was in traffic and
I was upset, he was upset and he told me to go back to home, go back to the slums. And I
told him, "not yet." So yes, but it because he ran out of argument and he just resorts to
that.

ML: When was this?

MC: Oh, I don't know about, eight, nine months ago.

ML: O.k.

MC: Just recently. But you experience more of this, just people see you and they have a
picture of what you are without knowing you. But this is normal. Everybody does
that. It shouldn't be like that, but it is so, yeah.

ML: Have you heard stories from other people you know, of any ethnic background, of
discrimination?

MC: Yeah. Heard stories, I mean, but not very often. I don't think. Don't talk about that very
much, just don't really worry too much about that.

ML: I guess I kind of already know the answer to that question, but it goes right along with it,
do you think discrimination is a problem in this area?

MC: Yeah, it's a problem. And, it's just because, right now I have a problem with the Census
here because I don't know what I am. You try to classify people and once you do that, it's
like a competition, someone has to be the top. And whoever's at the top has the easiest.
So, yeah, I think it's a problem. If we are just, if we don't know, if we just had no idea
where we came from, it'd be best.

ML: I guess I fit in good there, but...Our original question had been about the children, or the
second generation. So, I've tried to change the questions to what you think or what you
hope for your son. So, I know it's obviously know it is really hard because he's so young and you have no idea, but so the first question is, what path do you think or hope he will take in regards to his heritage and his background?

MC: I have not thought about that very much but I think the only thing that I hope for him really is for him to be happy. I think as long as he's happy, he can take any path. It doesn't matter if he stayed here and become a total immersion in this culture and is turned back on his Brazilian heritage. I think I'll be o.k. as long as he's happy with that. So, my hope for him is just for him to be happy, to do what he would be capable of doing well.

ML: Do you plan on raising him to be bilingual?

MC: Yes.

ML: Why?

MC: Because the only family that he will have here is myself and my wife and I think he will be in an advantage over other kids when it's time for him to choose a career in terms of experience, different culture and total capability of immersing himself in two different cultures at the same time would be of great value to him and his future, I think.

Moema: Yeah, but now, in there we also think it's important he learns Portuguese so he can communicate with our relatives back in Brazil when we go down there. I mean they would be really upset...

ML: Right.

Moema: ...if this kid can only speak English because they don't know how to speak English, you know what I mean?
ML: Right. How are you going about teaching him...

Moema: Well, we only speak Portuguese with him.

ML: O.k.

Moema: And he will learn English outside of the home.

ML: Right. That was my guess because that's what I've heard people do. What points will you want to make sure that he knows about his heritage? And I know you talked about whatever he's happy doing, but what would you want to make sure he knew, at least had heard somehow?

MC: I think most of what he's gonna hear is gonna be verbal history of the family, how we lived in terms of how we relate to each other, the city where we came from, about our families, which I knew very little about my heritage in terms of genealogy until I got here and people start questioning me about it. I had no clue so I had to find out. I never really realize about, all this is just because it's important to belong to a group, if you really think that's very tribal, it's not. But, I don't know I just, I hope to take him back to Brazil and have him staying there for at least a year or so, if not more, so he can experience by himself. This'll be better than if I try to tell him what it is.

ML: What relationship do you hope he will have with your family back home?

MC: I hope that he have the same relationship that I had with my cousins, of course it's gonna be difficult because he's gonna be so far away, but if we are able to go there, to have that relationship and to just be another member of the family. The only difference is that he is away, kind of far away.

ML: Before our last question, is there anything else you want to talk about? About your
experiences or anything?

MC: No. I think we pretty much covered it. I had a lot of experiences here but it's all good, more a sense of bad experience. Like I say, we been very blessed, with friends and the ability of communicating with other people and express our feelings in a manner that is not threaten or offensive and being able to understand where other people come from.

ML: So the last question we have in closing is, what would you say to a friend who is considering moving to the United States?

MC: One, it's very important to learn the language because it will facilitate your integration with the society in general. And, that'll be important. If you're planning to stay here for a long time and you're planning to get married, marry someone that will support you no matter what. Even if she is from the U.S. or if he is from the U.S., you have to have a balance because there'll be times there where you'll be so homesick and if someone do not understand that, that could really affect your relationship and then you're thinking about going back.

ML: Well, thank you very much.

MC: O.K.

ML: I'm sorry that it's now ended up going so late into the night for you.

MC: It's no problem.

Moema: That's fine.