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Lamb, Teresa Oral History Interview: Class Projects

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Welcome. Let's begin. What part of Mexico are you from?

I'm from Mexico City, Mexico.

Can you describe your homeland and what it was like to live there?

Let's see. I was living in a big city. I grew up there; I went to school there. I come from a family with a mom and dad, of course, and four brothers and one sister - I'm the youngest. And it was beautiful. Yeah, sometimes it was busy, a lot of traffic and smoke and smog and things like that but I really liked it at that time.

Why did you leave?

Oh I left my country because - first, I came to this country because I wanted to learn English. I was working as a tour guide in a very important museum in downtown Mexico City, and I noticed that there was a lot of people from Canada and the United States - and most of the people from Europe would speak English. I knew a little bit of English. You know, what I would learn at school, in high school, was like, 'open the door, close the window, My name is Lola'. And actually, we did a lot of exercises like with reading comprehension and all that stuff, but it was a totally different thing to speak it. So the first time I came to learn English. I came here from six months, and I went to school and everything. You know, taking night classes, those ESL classes for adults, and then I went back and then I met the person that is my husband now... I met him at the subway. So and then we were back and forth, back and forth and one day he said, 'well you should come and stay here', so that what I did. I decided to come.
CS: What concerns did you have about leaving your home country?

TL: Hmm... Well, I hesitated a lot to come here. You know, he was like 'you should come', and you know he was telling me all the beautiful things about the United States. But, I didn't want to come because all those things that you heard about Imperialism and how easy it is for my people to fall into that buying thing- just consume... just it's ok. Just, work, work, work- buy, buy, buy. And that was one thing that worried me, and I also heard about, you know, racism and all that stuff, so I was afraid of that. But later on he said, 'Ok, you come or relationship is over'. So, I was like, 'ok, I'll go'.

CS: So, it was just the two of you that came to the United States, or did you have other family members, as well?

TL: Oh no, it was just me. Actually, after a couple... well, we had a daughter and I was in my country, and I was hesitating about coming here and later on, you know, he got accepted at UCLA, and then I decided to come for good. I brought my daughter with me, or our daughter.

CS: So you could say that one of the reasons that you choose the United States was to learn English?

TL: Yeah, at first, and then because I didn't have another option because I wanted to be with him. He was part of my life.

CS: Where was the first place you went in the United States?

TL: Oh, Huntington Park! That is in Los Angeles. It was the most interesting place. I mean, it was so different. At the beginning I was happy because my cousins told me that it was
a Mexican.... or not a Mexican barrio, but it was a place where everybody spoke Spanish. So, I thought, 'that's nice- I'd like it. Yeah, I wouldn't feel that bad', but when I went there- when I finally got there- it wasn't fun, it was scary. Yeah, there was a lot of people that spoke Spanish, but it was like a different culture. I just couldn't identify with the people that I thought were my brothers and sisters, you know, because of my culture. It was very different. It was.... I noticed that a lot of people was ashamed of their own culture- or our culture. They didn't want to be from here or from there. Sometimes I would speak in Spanish because they'd look like, you know, they would speak Spanish, and they would act like offended because I was speaking to them in Spanish. I noticed that these people will take advantage of the people that was here now on illegal status- or with no documents, should have said. You know, the houses were different, the streets. The police was constantly around the streets and there were drugs, and a lot of people- a lot of men mainly, would work, work, work, work, work, and they would send their money to Mexico or Guatemala or South America or wherever they came from. And, they would...it was all day dead- work. And on the weekends they would just get drunk, or- it was like so much sadness. The absence of their family really affected them, but seems like they didn't have another choice. It was interesting, but it wasn't fun.

CS: So, was your first impression of the United States rather discouraging?

TL: Well, let me tell you sometime. That was very interesting because that's was when I wanted to learn English, and I went to school and I stayed here for six months in Huntington Park. But, before that I came for vacations, you know, for like two weeks. And, of course, I arrived in a North American neighborhood, and they took me to
Disneyland and they took me out to different places. And, you know, the beach was full of blonde people and beautiful people. I'm serious- and a year later or whatever, I came back and went to the place, to Huntington Park, and it was a totally different thing. And, it was totally the opposite of what I saw at first. And, yeah, it was...how can I say it...it impacted me.

CS: How did you end up in Holland, Michigan?

TL: Well, let's see. Well, we were living in Los Angeles, close to UCLA, and we were living in the marriage student housing of UCLA. It was nice and beautiful. We had a lot of friends but when Jeff finished his Ph.D., it was time for us to move on. So, he applied to fifty different colleges and universities all over Canada and United States, and he had maybe two or three interviews at the MLA. And Grand Valley was one of the options, so we moved here because he got a job here at Grand Valley.

CS: Ok, so he's a professor there?

TL: Yes.

CS: What does he teach?

TL: Ah, Chicano studies. Well, that's what he did his dissertation on, but he also teaches Spanish and literature.

CS: What were your first impressions of Holland?

TL: I loved it. The smell of Holland. We arrived at the end of the summer two and a half years ago. And I just loved it. We were looking for a place to rent and that was a pain because we couldn't find a decent place that we wanted to rent. But, we finally found a winter rental on the lake- on the north side of Lake Macatawa. And, it was right on the
lake, and the Holland State Park was like behind my house. It was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. I loved it.

CS: So you do like being on the lake?

TL: Oh yes. And also, I started working right away. I was working at Zeeland Public Schools. I started working there. So, in my country we say, ‘we came in with the right foot’. We had a house, we had a job. My kids were immediately enrolled at school, and I met a lot of people. It was interesting because they were waiting... ok, let's see... when I got this job at Zeeland School District, I got it before I came here. So, when they interviewed me it was a phone interview. But it was funny because later on the principal of the school, or the guy that I was working for, he told me that he was expecting a short lady, you know, a little big, with a big smile and long braided hair. And he was like, ‘oh wow’, because I told him I was Mexican. So, you know, he laughs about that, but when I think about that it's not funny. You know? Since I've been here, everything has been nice and has been challenging too because I've seen things that... how can I say it.... I've seen things that I thought didn't happen anymore. But also something that had an impact on me was religion. And, so far I've had no bad experiences and I hope with all my heart if keeps being that way. But, I just think it's a beautiful place. I almost feel sorry for the people that is not able to go out of this state and then come back and see how beautiful it is. And, how beautiful- the smell, you know, I have a very sensitive nose so I'm just saying that when I came here, what got me first was the smell and the senses... the air.

CS: Yes, I know what you're saying because I'm from Michigan and I've never went anywhere else really. Michigan is a nice state, and you don't realize it until you leave.
What do you teach at Zeeland? Do you teach?

TL: I was working... no, I didn't teach... well, later on I did, but they hired me as a teacher assistant. I was working with the special Ed students but later on they- after a few months, they noticed that I could help families that were coming in and didn't speak English. So every time a family would come in they would call me, and then later on I started to identify the kids that didn't speak the language or they were having problems with their academics because of language. And they kind of gave me the opportunity to start an ESL program, but I wasn't educated to do that. I did it because of common sense and because I had the energy and the fire in my belly to do it and the support that I needed to do it- so I started something. I contacted a lot of people so they would help me with ideas, or 'how do you start an ESL program?', you know- all that. And because of that I decided to go back to school- because of those kids that I saw in Zeeland and that I used to work with. The first three months I was working as a teacher aid, and then I was just exclusively working with all the kids from kindergarten to twelfth grade- helping them to do... like tutoring in a way. But my contract was for one year and then I went back to school.

CS: Actually, I've been volunteering in Zeeland for the ZEST program and I volunteer tutor with two kids there so I enjoy that. So, it's neat. Can you describe some of the problems you faced adjusting to life here in Holland if there were any?

TL: It was difficult for me, the fact that I would feel like I wanted to go out on Sunday with my family and almost everything is closed. It didn't affect me, but it was surprising that I couldn't buy wine... well, wine because we wouldn't drink beer, on Sundays. The fact that
all of the kids, all of my kids friends, were doing activities at church and we didn't have a
church. And it wasn't affecting me the fact that we didn't have a church- what affected
me was people would be persistent about us going to a church, and I didn't like that at all.
And that's sad because the people that I dealt with about this church thing kind of got me
very defensive- very defensive. And, I consider myself an open person and yes, I want to
learn- the first time I ever heard of Christian Reform Church in my whole life was here.
And, I want to respect that, you know, I really want to respect that. And, people wouldn't
be respectful to me because I didn't have a church. They would act kind of surprised and
I finally said well I'm Catholic. And, one day somebody said, 'well, Catholics will go the
Heaven through the back door'. And I was like, 'ok, great... as long as were all together'.
And I became very, very sarcastic about that. But, on the other hand, a lot of the kids
that I worked with are from this faith, and I really want to respect that. But also, it's
funny, Zeeland can be one of the main... it's a group of people that really want to keep
their traditions going and yes, that's great and I honor that. But, my daughter never had,
ever when she was in eight grade, seventh and eight grade there, she never had a
problem with 'oh, you need to be saved'- never. But, when she started going to Holland
High they organized these concerts, and a lot of the kids are like the hard core rock. And,
it's so amazing to see how they recruit these kids, and how they take away their ability to
be critical thinkers. I mean, my daughter likes to tease with this gothic type of thing.
First of all it's like the opposite. So, there were a few concerts that she went to and all the
kids... it was like a Halloween party or something. The kids were dressed in really weird
stuff and, you know, it was great and yes, I'm one of those advocates for teenagers. But,
one day then after that the band finishes singing- then they started to say, 'well, come to...you need to be saved... blah, blah, blah', and they made circles. And then somebody pulled my daughter- I was waiting for her and she didn't know we were there. Um, they pulled her into the middle of the circle and they asked her if she wanted to be saved. And of course she said yes, you know. And when she said yes everyone was like "oh, welcome!" da da da...and hugs and hugs and more hugs and I was like ugghh! And, it's like a cult. It's almost scary. It's very sad. That's still one of the things that I don't like about this place. It's sad, and I don't know how grown-ups participate in those kind of things- recruiting kids that way. But, I will tell you something. I was living in Los Angeles for several years and we'll go here and there, and I never saw so many kids with the punk or gothic style like the way I see them here- never. I mean, even when my mother-in-law comes to visit- she's from Huntington Beach- and she noticed that too. She came here for a week and a half. And you will see them everywhere, and I have nothing against them but it's interesting. It tells you a little bit about the community- the kids are rebelling.

CS: What you were saying about the church... I kind of understand that because I only live an hour and a half east of here, but I notice a big difference with everything being closed on Sunday and I live by Kalamazoo where everything is open on Sunday. So, when I came here for college it was really different. Anyway, in what ways have you been involved in the community?

TL: Ok, do you see all those folders right there? [laughter] Well, because of Zeeland- I told you about Zeeland- I organized a group of parents. You know, it's interesting because the
school district was thinking, a lot of them were thinking, that a lot of kids were migrant workers or kids of migrant worker parents. But, for the last ten years- I was reading an article about that- there is a phenomenon, if you want to call it that way, that people are staying. Migrant workers are not going from place to places anymore. They are staying in this area and Zeeland, and so these kids would get lost in the system. Sometimes teachers... how can I say it... these kids were treated that way and I'm not saying that the teachers were mean or something on purpose- no, no, no. There's a lot of ignorance, and these kids would get lost in the system. And sometimes the teachers would say, you know, that they wouldn't lower their standards. And that's great- yes, you shouldn't lower your standards, but you need to make some changes if you want this kid to be successful. Of these twenty-five questions, what do you really want him or her to go out of the classroom with? And, of course, the dropouts. They would turn sixteen and they were out and, of course, if you don't feel like you're important in an environment like that you just get out of there as soon as you can. So, I organized a group of parents and I said, 'it's your right, we need to do this, we need to get together'. There were a few things in the district where- I want to say issues- a few issues that needed to be solved and taken care of. Like, a few kids didn't speak English at all, and they were told not to speak Spanish and it was like, 'ok, what will they speak? How do you want me to communicate?' And they would speak in Spanish on the playground and, of course, the concept of the ones that were speaking English were like that English that I learned in high school- the playground English, if you want to call it that way. And, of course, the English in a classroom is different, the terminology is different. So there were a lot of kids that
couldn't get- in middle school they wouldn't get a higher grade than and F all the time. All the time, all the time. So, anyway, I organized this group of parents. We requested an ESL teacher for the next school year because my year was almost over. And, we were working with the administrators. From the beginning they were always very nice and polite. Things took a little while to take place. You know, solutions. But we were working with them and so far we're still working with them. The group in called the Hispanic Parent's of Zeeland--that's how we call ourselves, name ourselves. And, now there is an ESL teacher. They are going to hire a new ESL teacher- a certified ESL teacher. There are four aides. But, for us, these kids need quality of education. I mean, we were very clear about that. We want them to hire people that are educated to work with these kids that knows about methodology, that is not somebody that has good intentions because I have good intentions too. You know, they hired me that way so the Michigan...what's the name of the institution? The one in charge of all the schools in the state of Michigan. Board of Education...the Michigan...well, the boss. They come and they see that something is taking place and they said, 'great, you are doing something at least'. But for me it's like, 'no, if you're going to do something you need to do it right'. These kids.... yes, bilingual programs can be good, but in California after how many years, they realized that you know they just don't work- and if you're going to use a bilingual program you just don't use Spanish. I mean, how many languages? It's just amazing how many languages you can use in a bilingual program, and for me it's also the fact that bilingual programs are a way to keep ESL students down. It's almost like a political agenda, like hidden agenda, to keep minorities down there because if you're
starting a bilingual program when you go to kindergarten—let's say you start in kindergarten in a bilingual program. And when you're in fifth or sixth grade then you start having the immersion in English—by then you're already seven years behind. And, it's just hard to catch up so they need to learn good English—so, that's what we want as parents. So later on, let's see—six months ago, I started a group with the support of the Superintendent, and they named themselves Latino Pride—it's a Latino Pride club. So, I work with six, I mean, with kids from sixth to twelfth grade, and I strongly believe that kids in middle school need to be involved in something. In this place they just tend to do things for high schoolers. They start telling them about college when they are in twelfth grade or eleventh grade. But if you notice in this particular city, gang members are recruiting kids in middle school. Middle school kids are so crazy about the things that are around them and, you know, when they hit high school, when they are in tenth grade they are already involved in alcohol or having sex or pregnant or part of a gang. So you need to grab them in middle school. But, anyway, I'm an advisor of the club. I work very closely with Grand Valley, with Hope College. The idea is just to take them places and expose them to the things that are there. And now the big lectures about, 'oh you need to be good, you don't do that'. No, just take them. Expose them to things. So, I've been doing that. Very soon we are gonna have a newsletter. I also, because of all my work, in Zeeland I met a lot of people here in Holland, and they ask me if I wanted to be the Vice President of LAUP. And I don't know if you're familiar with that. LAUP is an organization—stands for Latin American United for Progress, and it's an organization that started here in Holland thirty years ago and they work with the community and have been
working with the community with immigration things. They are the organizers of Cinco de Mayo fiesta. And, so I'm involved with them and I'm also involved with the West Ottawa school district. Not too long ago I organized a group of Asian students, and I took them to Grand Valley for the Asian Rise conference. Very soon, well September, I'm going to have a conference with eighty Latino girls from Holland High and Zeeland. All this is with the idea, you know, almost like keep track of them because they need to know that there is always the option of higher education. And, it's almost like to be informed is a privilege so all these kids, these girls need to be informed about their options, and so that's the plan in Holland. The plan is West Ottawa is to establish another group, another club, but with the Asian kids because there is already a Latino club. I also started in January, my husband and I, started to read stories in Spanish at the library every Saturday and we have been so successful with that. I mean there are kids red, blue, yellow, green, I mean, they're not just Spanish speakers because that wasn't the idea. The idea is to teach the kids that- speak Spanish to make them feel proud of their language and to tell them and the parents that it's important to keep the language because it's part of your identity and because it's very convenient for the future. And so we have kids that don't speak Spanish, but they are learning Spanish but they are learning Spanish. They are from other ethnic groups, and every Saturday we have at least twenty-five, thirty-between parents and kids and everybody. It's just wonderful- so we started that. We work very hard with the families for Internet access. And, we were in charge...we volunteer ourselves to translating the information in Spanish because I definitely believe that the people in this community- we are what, a Latino community in this city... 30% of the community is
Latino or Latina, and we needed to have a voice. So, we went door by door and was like
'Hey, you need to be informed'. And, that's the idea, that's the idea. I didn't care, well I
did care, but I was not going to convince them to vote for something that I thought it was
right. I was not going to do that- so what I did was, 'it doesn't matter what you do as long
as you make an informed decision. Once you get that information you can decide yes or
no'. And, that's the thing, you know. Everyone was saying pornography and everyone
was oooohhhHH!! But, that wasn't the point. It's happening this way. So, anyway, we
help with that. Everything we do is we target minorities. Everything I do. So, that was
it. With the church, the church invited me- the Catholic church- invited me to talk to the
parents so they can get involved with the school system. So, the idea is also when you
work with students, you need to work with parents too. Because sometimes, yeah, we
carry a lot of things from our own culture. We don't tend to support organizations
because, it's very sad to say and it's a shame, that we can't trust our own government
because there is always some kind of double standard kind of thing in our own
government. So when we come to this country and now someone says, 'come on you
need to be part of LAUP you know, hermano, we need to be strong'. They would say,
'ok, no, what? No'. And, that's my goal. I need to show my people that they can trust me
and you know what, I just remembered telling you that we target minorities but when it's
about kids, I don't care. I don't care. They go first. And, I don't care where they are from
or who their parents are or their faith or their color. Kids are first. Wow, what else do I
do? I think that's it. I'm also part of the Latino Student Union at Grand Valley, and then
the idea is to make the connections here with Hope and Grand Valley. When Hope
College is having events they send information to me. I bring kids from Zeeland, and I send the information to Grand Valley, and that's the idea. And very soon, well we already started a month ago, with West Ottawa and the Superintendent has been very helpful.

Yeah, but the sad part is like sometimes something bad needs to happen so we say, 'ok, we need some attention over there'. But, you know, at least we're starting something. That's how I've been involved with the community.

CS: Well, it sounds like you're really involved and it keeps you busy.

TL: Yeah. Yes.

CS: Increasingly Holland is becoming more culturally diverse. When you see newer immigrants coming into Holland how do you feel?

TL: Oh, sorry! No, just kidding. Ah, I just hope that if they become part of this community for whatever reason- I just hope they don't face bad things. And I also hope they don't get into, you know, just like a parasite kind of thing because sometimes it's kind of sad the stereotypes, you know. And, we tend to do that all the time. It's like that's the way we got into this society and we grow up with them, you know. And, it's very hard not to use them but sometimes we, what is the word that I want to say, it's not that we honor those stereotypes, but sometimes we fulfill those stereotypes and that is sad. That's the part that I don't like. They might say, 'oh Mexicans are dirty'. And it's like, 'No, we are not'. But then, you go to that neighborhood and then you see trash outside, the grass is dead and toys... and I feel like to knock on the door and say, 'Hey, you need some help cleaning up. Come on, let's do it.' You know, and a lot of people think it's the money and they are poor and they don't know better. But no, I don't think so. In Mexico there are a lot of
poor people, and you can see them in the morning sweeping the streets and they say in Mexico, ‘God might decide for you to be poor but he doesn't decided for you to be dirty’.

You know? Something like that. So, I get very, very... almost angry when I see that people are dirty- and more in this country where you have water running and you can... there are a lot of services that you can use. But sometimes, I don't know if it's for a lack a motivation or what- I don't know, but the fact of people being dirty makes me very angry and more when it's my people, because we are not. We are not.

RP: I think more traditional Mexican families are extremely clean because of the tradition of the matriarch and how they take care of them. Because, especially with very low income, and I look at David’s family and nothing but clean. The clothes can be clean even if they're poor.

CS: What are your feelings about the Dutch community in Holland?

TL: Dutch community. Ah, I feel that there is a lot of people, lot of Dutch people, that is trying to honor the fact that this community is very diverse- they are kind of reaching out for an understanding. But there is also... and I don't know if that's because it's the politically correct thing to do or because it comes from their heart. I know there is a lot of people working so that the rest of the Dutch community is more sensitive about minority problems and issues. And, there is another part of my heart that is hurt because they tend to present, even at school with their presentations for Thanksgiving and things like that, they pretend that they were right here and everything was here for them. The reality was that when they arrived the Native Americans were here, and Dutch people didn't assimilate to the Native American culture. And at school, at the museum, you know? I
took a class not too long ago and somebody from the Archives gave us a little talk, and he talked a lot about the Dutch community and he gave us dates and years- and I think he also showed a little video. And, I was bothered by the fact that he didn't talk about, he didn't talk a lot about, the Native Americans. And, kids are taught, Dutch kids specifically, are taught that if they were here, they left because they wanted to do it, right?

When the reality was totally different and yeah, I sometimes have mixed feelings, and now that you mention it, I don't think I have a lot of Dutch friends you know, like Dutch-Dutch, Dutch. No, I don't think so. Maybe my next door neighbors, they're Dutch. They look Dutch. And, even though we are very polite to each other and our kids play together and we talk over the fence, you know, the classic thing. And we always say, 'yeah, yeah, yeah, we'll get together, yeah, we'll do it'- there is never an effort. When I was growing tomatoes I would take them, or we would bake a pie and constantly, but there is never something from the other side to this side.

CS: Why do you think that is?

TL: I don't know. I don't know if it's... I don't know, maybe because they think I'm a crazy Mexican and because of the... I invite them to participate in all the things that I work with or am doing or if I see an article in the newspaper, I call her and say, 'hey, did you read this... how do you feel about it? That is so offensive to women, don't you think?

You should call him and let you know. I already did. You can call this number'. You know. And, she always says, 'yeah, yeah'- but I don't know. I know something. A lot of people can tolerate me more because Jeff. Because my husband. And because people might say whatever they want about racism and prejudice and all that stuff, but I know
they can tolerate me more because Jeff—and also because of the way I carry myself, too. Which I'm very proud of being Mexican and doing what I'm doing. But I can tell that they tolerate me a little bit more because of Jeff.

[end of side 1]

CS: What are you feelings toward Tulip Time?

TL: I think it's beautiful. I really like it. I think it's a time when, you know, a lot of people wait for that event, and kids at school work very hard for that event. I love it. I mean, this is a small community and Tulip Time is a national event, or international event I would say, and it's something that the community looks forward to- to be part of. And, I really like it. I enjoy it. Again, something that I probably didn't mention before… something that I really like about Holland is the sense of community that is very family-oriented. You know, it doesn't matter about the rest of the things, but there are a lot of things where families, families… you can hear that the word community is always welcome, always. The word diversity… well, that's a different thing. But, ah, yes, I think so. This is a great time for everybody in this town.

CS: Do you feel the community celebrates your heritage well?

TL: Let's see. The community at large?

CS: Yes.

TL: No, no. You know, for example, for the Cinco de Mayo fiesta- actually this is going to be the first time when I'm going to be there all the time. But there was something else-we celebrate something else- the Posada, which is a Christmas celebration. And, you know, there's a lot of Latino people at the first and the last Posada that I've been. There
were people from other cultures. You know, I don't want to say race, that's not appropriate, but from other cultures- and they are lucky. And then again it's like the Dutch festival- I see that a lot of kids from a lot of ethnic groups participate in that. You know, you see the kindergartners or the little, you know, Afro-Americans or the Asians with their Dutch dress and the Latino's and Latina's. But I don't see, you know, the other groups participating in that, the fiesta. Well, I'm not going to say I can't see because I haven't been there, but at Posada, for example, it's like- no, I don't think people like to come to those events. And then again, you're not going to teach me about Latino issues, or I'm not going to teach African-Americans about African-American issues. But in all these efforts of Hope College and Grand Valley and Grand Rapids and all those events, it's like for this exhibit. We want all the people to come and see this so they know, so they learn about us. You know, I'm planning to, with the help of Hope College, I'm planning to present movies on September, movies made by Chicano women, on September. And, I already know that the people that is going to be there watching this movies are going to be Latino or Latinas. When the reality is like I would love to, I want to target, groups- all different groups, ethnic groups. Not just Latino's or Latina's- so they learn about us. And vice-versa. You know, I would love to- honestly yes, I would like to go to a Dutch church or Christian Reformed Church Dutch event because I want to know. I want to learn and not that I would look for it though. But, if somebody one day invites me, I'll do it.

CS: Have you experienced any specific cases of discrimination in Holland?

TL: Yes. When I was -not to my face- and I'm telling you again it's because probably the way
I carry myself. And, sometimes it's funny how people react. But, when we were looking for a house, I was reading the newspaper and at the beginning we were looking for a place to rent, and I made several phone calls and left messages—maybe seven or eight different places—and not one of them called me back. No one, no one. And, you know, at the end I just told my husband to make the phone calls because they are not going to call me back, and he wouldn't believe it. He wouldn't... he would say, "No, please." You know, la la la. ‘How can you say that...’ It was real, it happened. And then one day we, again, were looking for a house and we were passing by—we saw a house. And, I told my husband, ‘Oh, let's stop here. Stop right here I want to see I want to see.’ And, by accident or no no no it's not an accident... coincidence, like something happened at the same time. The realtor was coming in and at that time it was just funny. I was wearing, let me tell you, I was wearing a pair of black pants, dressy pants, something like a crew turtleneck, my hair back and I was wearing my Guess prescription glasses, right? So, cause my prescription...my eyes look smaller. So, I looked like a Chinese or Vietnamese women. So, he said, ‘oh please come in... blah, blah, blah’. So, we went upstairs and I was just looking, you know, the first second we just knew that wasn't what we were looking for. So, we went upstairs and it was like a big, big room. It was just really big. So, I was looking out the window and Jeff was talking with the realtor and said, ‘well, it's very nice’. You know, we always wanted to be nice. So, he said, ‘Ah yes, it's nice, lots of light, but it's too small for us. We have three kids’. And he (realtor) said, the guy said, ‘Ah, too small for you guys? You have no idea how many, how many Mexicans will’, you know, something like if I rented to a Mexican family you have no idea how many
something, something, dirty da da da...people would get into just this room. And, I was so...I mean Jeff just looked at me like, 'ok don't say anything'. And I was more than angry. I was so hurt by that. It was so, of course, at first I was hurt and then I just felt the rage coming up. By then Jeff was like...ok, let's go. And I just said, 'Did you hear what he said? Did you just hear what just...?' I mean, I was so, so angry and I was, I think, I was... once I got into the car and the guy just didn't get it. The guy just didn't get it. You know, he just couldn't figure out why we just left the house just like that. And, ah, but I wanted to go back. You know, after I recuperated from all those emotions, I wanted to go back and tell him a few words. And that was it, I mean, so far that was all.

CS: What paths have your children taken?

TL: Carla is fifteen, she's in ninth grade. And she loves fashion design and she goes to school- she takes art classes and that's it. And the little one Amanda is in first grade. She just turned seven not too long ago, like a week ago. She is very smart and it's not just because she's my daughter or anything. Carla's also smart...Carla will struggle at school. You know, right now she's like more interested in taking her art classes than, you know, the classes that are going to help her to go to college and things like that. And in a few months she will...her grades will be here and then wooo (indicating downward noise). But, Amanda, she's in first grade as I was telling you and she reads and writes as a third grade... at a third grade level. So, we are very proud of her. She also takes soccer classes- soccer. I can never pronounce that correctly. Ah, s-o-c-c-e-r classes. And, Nicholas is taking classes too. And, Amanda also takes dance- the folklorical, bailay dance kind of thing. She's also taking those classes so she can dance at the Cinco-de-
CS: Are they interested in your heritage?

TL: Yes. And if they don't then I make them. No, I don't. Yeah, they are. Actually Carla is—she was born in Mexico, and she's whiter than Jeff. Her skin's very fair. But, she's very proud of being Mexican, you know, but because all the things are happening around her, you know, the Mexicans will treat her like a white girl because they wouldn't believe her that's she's Mexican and. The white people wouldn't believe she's Mexican so lately, and I say lately as in the last week, for the first time in all these years she asked me about, you know, about her identity. Like ok, yes I was born in Mexico, yes I'm half-white, half-Mexican, but that makes me less or why I'm not accepted by the Mexicans as a Mexican. And she speaks Spanish and those things. I can see that very soon she's going to start wondering about things even though I have been, or we have been, trying hard to—yes, you come from here and this is what we have and also my mom is a strong piece of this whole thing because my mom, my whole family, is in Mexico city and when we go down there... grandma. I come from a matriarchal, is that a word, just like my mom is the one wearing the pants, you know we say in Spanish in Mexico. But, ah, so she's like Espanol, habla Espanol! You know, talk to me in Espanol because I don't, she doesn't speak English. And, of course, the food and the traditions and all those things that they are. And, of course, Jeff's family too. Their grandma- we are very conscious...? Yeah, very conscientious about that.

CS: Ok, one last question. What would you say to a friend who was considering moving to the United States?
TL: I would, I mean, depends if he or depends if it was female or male- if married or single. And, depends on age- age would be a factor too. If it was a family I would have them, oh wow, I don't know. You know, if they had kids, I would help them to do the paper work for student visa for their kids and that was... you know, thinking about their future when they go to college. Because, you know, immigrants from all over the world come here and they bring their kids. And, of course, kids have no vote on that one- they follow their parents and that's it. You have to live under a stone- that's the way it is. But, this country will educate our kids up to twelfth grade and after that we don't have, I mean, if you don't have the right papers there are not possibilities that you will get into higher education. So, that will keep up right there (motioning hand lower). But, if you have a visa, a student visa, and a lot of money, then you might pursue a higher education, but there is also something that is called... it's called National Identification System. And, that's the way they track minorities and people with who are in this country without papers. And so I don't know, I don't know if really I would encourage them to come and live in this country. I don't know. Dependent of their, you know, if they had a visa or if they were just coming for a venture or I don't know. I don't know how I feel about that. And more if it's my family. Woo, no way! No. No. I wouldn't invite them to come and stay here and make a living or something. It's difficult, and it's difficult when class has to do a lot with this. You know, class is a factor where you have access to things or you don't. That's it. You know, that's it. You have it or not. That's it. And, like if my family, somebody wants to come and they want to start something here, I would recommend them to save, save, save, save. I don't know, twenty thousand dollars, and then they
might come and rent a place and I don't know. I'm just kind of wondering now because I have no idea if I really encourage people to come and live in this country.

CS: Ok, those are the questions I have. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

TL: No, not that I can think of.

CS: (Basic explanation of what will be done with taped interview)

CS: Thank you for your time on doing this. I learned quite a bit!

TL: Well, I hope you get a good grade. You look like the type of person that's pretty outgoing.