

Interview with Mario Alba

Annie: My name is Annie, and this is Eva, and we're from Century High School, and we're here to interview you, Mario Alba, about our AP History project.

Annie: To start off with, our first question is, have you been involved with the Hillsboro School District's Hispanic population?

Mario: Yes, in many different facets, of course as a principal, like for example, just now, I was able to converse with one of our parents whose child hasn't arrived home from school yet. I get involved with parents, in you know, in speaking their own language. I'm involved with the school district with a group of Hispanic administrators and teachers. It's a union so to speak, not a union, per say, like a labor union, but just a group of people that get together at least once a month, where we can collaborate, share ideas, share information, and more than anything, just be with people of your own culture to see what the needs are and to support each other, so that's the kind of involvement I've been in.

Annie: Okay, you guys put out a newsletter, right? Union America, right? Because I think I've... we have a copy of that. So what exactly is the purpose of, like, that newsletter? Like, what does it help the community with?

Mario: Well, not so much the community...that particular newsletter is for educators to let them know that we are here for support, that we are here for the progress or... I'm thinking in Spanish, sorry...to help them in the progress towards achieving whatever needs they have in education, whether to just become a teacher, or become a better teacher, or become a counselor or administrator, more than anything, to support each other and lift each other up. So that's the purpose of the newsletter, and to communicate what it is that we're doing in our meetings, and what kind of advocacy groups we're forming to let people know that we're here. In terms of the community, that particular Union America, we have gone over to... the correct term is market, the flea market or something like that they have in the summer... and last year we put out hundreds and hundreds of pencils, papers for school, school supplies that were donated by many of the merchants here in Hillsboro, and we had our Hillsboro banner out there, so people knew that here were a bunch of teachers and administrators, educators, so to speak, that care about the community and letting people know we're here. And this is what we're about.

Eva: What are the goals of the Hillsboro School District regarding Hispanic students?

Mario: Well, if you talk about the dropout rate, the dropout rate is huge. Not just in Hillsboro, but throughout the whole state of Oregon, and nationally. For Hispanics,

its huge, we're probably the biggest minority in terms of how the drop-out rate affects us. For whatever reason or other . . . I know the reason. The reasons are in the Hispanic population. Family is huge, like in most cultures, but in this particular culture, many many of the children grow up thinking family first, individual second, so under the circumstances, economic circumstances that they find themselves in, a lot of kids by the time they get in high school they feel the need to help out the family with the economy. So they drop out of high school to get a job to help the family out. And for example, my own personal example growing up, all the money that I made, my paycheck, even when I was 24, 25, living at home, went to my family. I never kept any for myself. Now I'm not a rarity. I think it's a common thing for Hispanic families, where everybody pitches in for the good of the whole.

Having said that, the goals I think are for the Hillsboro School District to learn to understand, find ways to understand the Hispanic culture and how it affects kids in learning. Because, for most Hispanic families, all Hispanic families, learning is very important, but they also know that family is very important. So children find themselves in a paradox here. Do I work and help the family for immediate needs, or do I stay in school, get a good education, and get a better chance to get a better job with a degree, whether it be with mechanics, engineering, whatever degree they choose to go in? The immediate goal is, the immediate needs of the family, like food, shelter, energy, all those things, versus investing for the future. Our goal is to let the kids know that they can invest in their future, that it's okay to work only in the summer if possible, and stay in school and get their education, but when you see that need, that immediate need oftentimes that overtakes anything, or any long term goal. I don't know if that makes sense. So they find themselves in a real pickle so to speak, about what to do. We're trying to educate the Hispanic population that schooling is important in that aspect of, even if you don't see the returns right away, in the future, you will see great returns

Annie: Talking about your childhood, and your working and giving your money to your family, did you grow up in Oregon?

Mario: I grew up in Mexico until I was 10 years old, I'm a child, one of eight living children of my mom and dad. My mom attended 1st grade only, my dad 3rd grade only, we immigrated to the United States back in 1962, when I was 10 years old, and I learned how to speak English without any ESL help, because there weren't any programs at that point. So yeah, this is where I grew up, I grew up in Idaho, in a small town in Idaho, and in Salt Lake city, South Salt Lake area, that's where I did my middle school and high school and my college work at Brigham Young University.

Annie: So do you think that ESL programs would have helped you learn English easier than when you were on your own?

Mario: An effective ESL program, many of our ESL programs, some of ours aren't effective, an effective Esl program is good, because when I went to school, because of the language deficiency that I faced, my peers were receiving instruction from the teacher like you are listening to me talk, whereas I sat there like Charlie Brown, and often heard the sounds of "wah wah wah wah wah." It didn't make any sense to me, so I missed out on critical developmental years of instruction in language, in mathematics, in reading, in history, all those things. It took me about two years, give or take two years, where I could feel comfortable with the language, to the point where I was understanding pretty much everything, because I was totally immersed in the language here in the United States. At that point, I had felt that I was two years behind my peers in instruction, and when I got to high school, when we all got to high school, when they were taking Algebra, Geometry, Trig, Calculus, and I was still struggling in beginning pre-algebra, because I lost two and a half years of instruction. So yeah, I think ESL programs are effective if taught correctly, it really really gives children a level playing field if you will. But having experienced no ESL in my case, I feel I did okay, but I did it pretty much on my own, in terms of no federally funded programs.

Annie: Could you explain the main problems and provisions that the Hillsboro School District has created to respond to the needs of the Hispanic community in last 30 years?

Mario: Well having been, this is my eighth year here in Hillsboro, so I can only speak from 1996 on, since I have been here, we the school district, and people of the community have developed a strategic plan, which we are in our fifth year now. Entering our fifth year. In that strategic plan, specifically, we designated one strand if you will, where we are targeting how we as educators can address the needs of the Hispanic community. By creating a Hispanic outreach program, one of the ladies from Century, Olga Ocuna, who runs that program now, it has been the result of this plan. We have made concentrated efforts, we the district, in hiring bilingual, bicultural individuals, in particular of Hispanic descent to help the kids achieve and provide role models for the kids. So yeah, I think that they're been concentrated efforts in specifically addressing the Hispanic problem. Now, was the other part of the question? Conflict?

Annie: Would you explain the main problems and the main provisions of the Hillsboro School District...

Mario: Oh, I hope that answered your question.

Annie: You talked about hiring Hispanic staff? How do you retain them after you've hired them?

Mario: That is specifically why we started Union America. When we started recruiting out of states and even in Portland, specifically out of states, people would ask us, well what kind of support do you have in the district for Hispanic or Latino educators? We didn't have anything. When I first came here in '96, myself and deputy superintendents, Carlos Perez, were the only Hispanic administrators at that time. Prior to me coming, he was the only Hispanic administrator in the district. So since then, there are about 5 Hispanic administrators now, there are more teachers, so what we're doing is, we're going out and letting people know that we do have this collaborative group that gets together, this group of educators that meet, and we talk, and discuss how we can be of support to you, the Latino teacher, and what we can do to help them be successful. Within Union America, it is not like a competition for us, but its more of a lifting up of each other, and improving ourselves so that we can better serve not only our Latino population, but our education as a whole. So I think we're doing a good job in strengthening the ranks of our educators that we have.

Annie: How successful do you think we are in working with Hispanic students' parents?

Mario: Not very successful, many of my staff, and I can only speak for my staff, but I can say the general feeling in education amongst teachers, that the Latino population of parents and guardians aren't interested in their children's' education, because they don't show up for parent conferences, they don't show up for meetings, they don't show up for whatever. So that is then, the assumption is made hence that they're not interested in education, but that's not true. I don't think we've done a very good job, myself included, in creating an atmosphere where people can feel very comfortable in coming in, I shouldn't say myself included, in certain aspects, I haven't done that, but just by having a person that is bicultural, bilingual, really makes a difference. Like for example, a parent came in concerned about her child, if it'd only been my secretary, and the other teacher, who are not bilingual or do not speak Spanish, the lady would've gone home very frustrated and not knowing where her child was. With me being here, I was able to help her, calm her down, let her know we'll do everything, I left my phone number with her to let me know, I don't care what time it is, I need to know that she's okay. So that type of level of service really calms down and helps the Hispanic population quite a bit, so in terms of getting them into school, by not having people that are bilingual, specifically bilingual, people feel left out, so they're not going to make an effort to come to school for conferences, or meetings with counselors, or to speak with teachers to talk about their children's' either successes or failures. So we leave a big void in there, that we create a void, I should say, that Hispanic parents have a difficult time overcoming of breaching just to get to our school.

Eva: What are some problems that the district has faced in providing for the needs of Hispanic students?

Mario: Money. Budget problems, I think that's a big one. Because if we had the money, I think we could really provide some high quality programs for Hispanic students and parents. We could get more people like Ms. Acuna, who I said is the Hispanic Outreach coordinator, to help her out, because she's only one person, working in essence for all the schools. Twenty plus elementary, four middle schools, four high schools, and yet, she is responsible for the whole outreach program? She's working day and night literally, and that's a shame, because she's an incredible worker and an individual, but she doesn't have the time. So yeah, money to me is the big issue.

Annie: Do you have a history with issues of money... have you been involved in trying to get more money for schools...

Mario: You know, we can write grants, we can try to lobby the state for more money, but budget all the way around, not just for Hispanic programs, but for school and education is limited. Many people see that we do have a lot of, or think that the millions of dollars earmarked for education should be enough, but I really truly don't feel like it is. I don't think, I don't believe in putting a quantity for a child's education should be done, because I don't think we can put enough money into a child's education, because, each child learns differently. We can't say that we're going to give 5000 dollars or 3000 dollars for each child, it shouldn't happen. To me, it's a travesty, because you learn different (points), you learn different (points), and I learn differently, but yet we're expected to function within a certain number. And to me that doesn't make sense.

Eva: And so did you experience the same problems in your secondary education like when you went to college, like was there discrimination, or was it...

Mario: Yeah, yeah, when I was going, one experience I will never forget is when I was going to, from 9th grade up, because back then, it was 7th, 8th, 9th in junior high, we didn't have 9th grade in high school. I remember when, this is only one of many, when the high school coach came and

spoke to us about activities and his football program in particular. I was really excited. My friends... we heard about it, we were going to go to the meeting after school. I showed up and I sat at the very top of the bleachers, you know the first strand of bleachers, and I listened to his talk... his pep talk about how we could be a support and be a player for him and so forth, and I was very, very excited. But growing up under my poor conditions, I never played any organized football at all, like a lot of my peers, because 1) I never had enough money for the uniform, I didn't have money for equipment and on, and on, and on... anyway, as the paper came around to sign up, put my name on it with my address, phone number, and what position I wanted to play, I was the last one on the list to fill it out, and I handed it down to my PE teacher, this is 1967, and when I handed it down to him, he looked at it,

looked at my name, looked up at me, and he started chuckling, and I just looked at him like... okay, did I do something wrong? And he said, "Are you going to play football?" and I said with pride, "Yes." And his next comment was, "Mexicans don't play football." That was the attitude that was the norm for many people at that time. Because as you know, for a few years prior to that, the civil rights movement was really happening... Martin Luther King...but still there were many, there continued to be many, many pockets, deep pockets at that point, of racism and bias against people of color. That was only one. My junior year in high school, I was inspired to run for office, student body president, and I did, and it was a wonderful experience, I mean, tons of friends doing that, and I got to know a whole different aspect of school that I never would've been involved in unless I would've done it. But in the middle of my campaign, another teacher came to me and said, "You shouldn't be running for office, because Mexicans aren't leaders." So, those are just some, just two examples of what many of my peers and myself faced growing up in the '60s, it made it difficult for, it would've made it difficult for any child to be told, "You can't do this," as we often hear sometimes even now in your own age group, and you know the obstacles and fences that we put up when those things happen. Now imagine throwing it into your face, I mean being pretty blatant about... that you shouldn't be doing those things, because of who you are. Your background, your culture, your race, whatever. And that made it really difficult, but thanks to a lot of very, very caring educators, progressive educators, if you will, that saw beyond color, and saw beyond the shell of a human body, and said, "You have potential. You can be whatever you want to be." Thanks to those individuals, I am where I am right now, because...it was from their inspiration that allowed me, along with my family's support and help, to become what I am.

Annie: Do you think that students in the district right now face discrimination, like the situations you described in your childhood?

Mario: Maybe not so blatant, but yes, they do face discrimination... um, different kinds... not different kinds, different levels of discrimination. I think sometimes, we as educators often look at the individuals and judge them, not just educators, people judge people for what they look like, and how they dress and their appearances. Oftentimes, we put labels on those individuals instead of just accepting people as they are; I think a lot of people feel judged...individuals. Interesting enough, even within the Hispanic population, what we're facing right now in the district is that many of the newcomers, many of the ones that are just coming from Latin America or whatever Spanish-speaking country they come from, when they come here, now they're being put down by their own culture that have been raised here, or that have had more years here. So its almost like if the majority culture, or

the Anglo-culture, puts other races down or other cultures down, they in turn, and I can only speak for the Hispanics, are now doing the same thing to those who are new to the country. Which doesn't make sense to me, because we're just you know... the cycle continues, so to speak, and we need to put a stop to that.

Annie: In your opinion, how successful have the Hillsboro School District's ESL and migrant education programs been?

Mario: Oh boy, that's a tough one, especially as an administrator, because I want to say

they're successful, because all programs are successful. But I still see many children that have been in the ESL program since kindergarten, and they're still in it right now. That to me raises that question, well wait a minute, you've been in ESL for seven years, so to speak, and you still have to be here in the program? Why? If it took me two years, in total immersion, to be able to understand fluently about 7...80% if not 90% of what was being discussed around me, and I did it in two years, so why hasn't that happened for you in 7 years with all this "help." Put that in quotations, "help." So that to me is, I don't know, it's a mystery, I don't know why. So that, in that aspect, I don't think it's been successful. Have there been children that have taken advantage of it and have graduated from the ESL classes and got into mainstream and become pretty successful? Yes. So if you look at those individuals, you can say, "Well yeah, the program has been successful." So it's almost like a 50/50 thing, yes for those that succeed and move on, no it hasn't been successful for those that are still in it.

Annie: Do you think anything can be done to help improve the program so that more people succeed?

Mario: Um... I think the district is doing a good job of looking at different models of teaching... sheltered instruction, as its called, is one model that we utilize. I think, I don't think we can do enough, again, to find out how students learn, because again you know, we think that one mold fits all... it doesn't. I can say, I keep going back... look at your learning styles, you know, you may be a visual learner, you may be a kinesthetic learner, I may be more of a dreamer, whatever, and we all learn differently. And yet, we teach one way and hope that we reach everybody. So, within the program itself, the ESL program, we need to look at different ways to reach those individuals... those children, and if it means going outside the box, you know, lets find ways to do it.

Eva: How do those solutions fit into the current plan for the near future of the Hillsboro

School District?

Mario: Again, if we're looking to improve programs, I think that again, the district
is

doing the right, we're going in the right direction of looking for different models, because obviously what we have, we've had in place in the past and in my opinion, I don't think it's been completely effective. Again, for some it has, but for the majority, I don't think it has, so we need to look at programs and implement those programs so that we can make our ESL program much more efficient.

Annie: Do you have any data from your school personally? Like, how Hispanic students
are achieving in ESL classes and stuff like that?

Mario: I don't have it with me right now, but I can tell you that I have been here 8
years

ago, we have increased the number of students in honor roll, because again, we made a concentrated effort to make sure that somehow or another... for some reason the Hispanic students were being left out. I don't want to say left out... they weren't being included... they weren't in honor roll. So, I think because of the work that I've been able to do here, its not you know, something that I'm heady about, or extremely proud of, or whatever, because my teachers have done it, but I think by bringing in a different way of learning and explaining things and me becoming a teacher to my teachers, of how Hispanics operate and Hispanic-Latino students think and cultural norms, and cultural awareness, I think my teachers have improved, hence improving the students' chances for success. So data, hard data, I can only say, we have now more Hispanic surnames in the honor roll list that we used to six, seven years ago, and I wish I could give you the hard data of what percentage it is, but I don't have it with me right now, but I can provide it for you.

Annie: I understand that you took the Understanding Racism Foundation course...
how
did that affect you?

Mario: It affected me in a way that... I have always felt that I was a very accepting
and
understanding person of different cultures and races, but by going through the course itself, it helped me open up to biases that I had, and that I continue to battle, and maybe some of those are biases from growing up, of how I was treated, so I created my own biases. You know, you being to hate the racial tension and biases that people threw on you, but yet you end up

creating some to overcome those biases... I don't know if that makes sense. So the class helped me to explore my own feelings, it helped me to look at ways, to look at things different within the way... to become even more accepting than I thought I was. It made me more aware about things in the work place and in society, so that helped me.

Annie: What schools in the district, do you think has had the most progress, or has had the most success in programs for Hispanic students?

Mario: Gosh, I wouldn't know. Because I'm so focused at my own school that I'd even hate to venture out and say Hilhi or Century or Liberty or Glencoe, because I don't know what the district has done. I'm sure that if they're as concerned as we are here, they've done some wonderful things. I know at Century for example, because I've been involved with it, they have The Night of Bohemians, I think, where Hispanic students read poetry, they dance, it becomes a kind of fine arts type of presentation one evening. I don't know if they still do it. About three years ago, I went to the first one. Ms. Olga Acuna put it together, so I know that they're making an effort to branch out and to reach out, but I don't know what specific programs they have done.

Annie: So what specific programs are here at Thomas?

Mario: To help the Hispanic student? Well, of course we have the ESL student classes, we have some classes for...not a study hall, but a... study habits class, and a lot of Hispanic students are taking that, so we help them with their homework, we help them about... we talk to them about leadership, we include our Hispanic kids as much as possible to try out for leadership, to be included in student council, to be part of the leadership team. We try to integrate as much as possible. Get kids, not only in ESL classes, but to move out into the mainstream and to learn and to branch out into... to experience it and not feel like, you know, they're sent out to the sharks. So we make efforts to help students as much as possible feel at home wherever they are.

Annie: Can you tell me more about the Latino Administration Association?

Mario: Uh huh, I think you're referring to OALA, O-A-L-A.

Annie: Um, it just says Union America, Latino Administration Association.

Mario: Okay, that particular association started because my predecessor, Carlos Perez, who is the deputy superintendent, and I, would get together for breakfast, and we would often... I found that by using him as my mentor, because this was his

building before I took over for him, he left for the district office and I became the principal here. I felt that there was a really strong connection between us right away, because we were from the same culture. We could open up with each other and really talk openly about things that were bothering me and things that were bothering him. Eventually, we grew, as I said, to another administrator, and then we started just talking about, if we're feeling this way, there must be other Latino administrators feeling the same frustrations as we are, or Latino teachers. So sure enough, when we decided to form a group, you know, the first meeting, we had like about 40 people there, and they were all voicing frustrations about their teaching, about schools, about administrators. And it became like a purging, if you will, of things that were bothering them all this time, and yet were unable to share with anyone in their building for fear of being looked at as troublemakers, or unhappy people of color... you know how people are judged, so they didn't want to say that, so by doing that, we created a forum, a place for them to feel comfortable, a place where they can be themselves and not feel like they were going to be ridiculed or put down. From that, we also created a statewide program for Latino administrators, and that was called OALA, or O-A-L-A, which is the Organization of Administrators...Leadership...and um, Oregon Association of Leadership of... Oregon Association of Latino Administrators, thank you... (laughs) I knew I'd get it eventually. And we are branching out and find... the same things, the first time we met together, it was the same thing that we felt here, like all of a sudden these people were going, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe it, I can be myself, I can say things, and this is really bugging me about my district, and my superintendent did this, and I can't believe my teachers are doing this," and all of a sudden everybody was opening up, and it became, I don't want to say like an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, you know people literally felt comfortable in sharing ideas, and feelings, and frustrations and stuff. Out of that, we're becoming a very proactive group, because now we're being heard at the state level, because we're being invited to participate in summits with the superintendents of education, we're being invited to go out in different districts and let them... they're inviting us to talk to them to see what it is that we're doing here in Hillsboro to retain Latino educators. So, to, not only to retain, but to bring them in, to recruit and retain, so I think it's a model for other people from different states.

Annie: Are you involved in any other programs, besides the Union America...

Mario: I am, uh, a facilitator for the URF, I was trained for that. Now I'm also on a committee to look at the URF curriculum, to see if we can improve it or make changes. Those are some of my involvements in education. I also present as um, an Oregon Latino Institute, OLI, uh, that is run through OCHA, which is another organization... all these acronyms, which is another Hispanic organization to help the advancement of Hispanic students. They run a leadership program out of the community college here, Rock Creek, so I will present to the leadership kids and

talk to them about leadership, and advancement and so forth. So those are some of the involvements I have in professional circles.

Annie: I think that's all the questions...

Eva: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Mario: Um, no, I think... well, what I would like to say is, I think it's a wonderful thing you guys are doing, because you're really getting to the root of the problem, not a problem... the situation, that has been, for years in my opinion, gone... ignored. Answers... or questions have not been asked, because, after all, if we don't stir it up, it won't smell. If we leave it alone, it'll be okay; it'll go away. But its to the point that the Latino population nationwide is growing as you know, its going to be probably the largest minority, if not already largest minority in the United States, and we're not prepared. It was something that I thought... I think people felt like, I said, it won't last; it'll go away. But now everywhere you look, there is somehow, for some reason or another, Latino culture, and its very evident in language, in restaurants, in whatever. And if we don't find answers on how to educate the Latino people, and educate them effectively, then I don't know what will happen. I really don't even want to look into the future that far to see what the possibilities... negative possibilities, or outcomes will be for individuals, and so for you guys to look at them and study them, I'm interested to see what kind of suggestions or recommendations you will make, because truly you guys are the future. You know, I'm 51 years old, I've had my shot, its not like I'm old, old, old, but I've had my opportunity, and I see in you the standard being carried that I thought, I would be the only one to carry the burden when I was growing up in the '60s, so if you guys take this opportunity to really explore and to search the feelings of people and individuals like I think you're doing with me, hopefully the answers and the responses you get will help you formulate an opinion, an idea, that will help you help us, because we truly need answers. If you guys can do that, you guys will truly be millionaires... (laughs) that would nice, if you have my voice recorded, please send some royalties over...no, that's all I have to say. Any other questions you guys have that you would like to ask personal, on the record, off the record, whatever?

Eva: Why is there such an immigration of Hispanics... I'm just wondering why are they leaving Mexico... I mean, I know its not a dictator, but is it like the government is bad over there? Or is... what's going on?

Mario: You know, the waves of migration, or immigration that we're seeing know is what we saw back in the 1700s from Europe into the Americas. You know, the European came back then, and oftentimes they're the first ones to label us, like you guys don't belong here. But yet they're the ones that crossed the whole stinkin' ocean (laughs), we only crossed the river you know, in search of liberty, in search of whatever. The economy is not the best in Latin America. The government here is

way better... I think you guys are history students... you will learn that... I'm sure you read *Animal Farm* already, if you think about *Animal Farm*, how one overtakes the other, and how the animals overtook the humans, and then it was four legs good, and then it was no, only two legs good, and it evolved... that's what happened to a lot of governments in my opinion. My opinion, because I'm an old US history teacher, in my opinion, that is a cyclical thing in government, and it happens in a lot of democracies or a lot of governments where a lot of dictators come and take over. If you think about that book, absolute power is not good. Now, here in the United States, with all the falls and easy pickings that we can look at the President and the government and the Constitution and so forth, if you think about it, very few amendments have been done... you know, have been put into the Constitution. That speaks a lot, and not because we're a bunch of dummies that do not care about the government and the Constitution, it is because, in my opinion, that the body and spirit that was established by the founding fathers... they truly did a heck of a job, to the point where it allows opportunity for you and I to be speaking freely here without the Gestapo or anyone else coming in and taking over and saying, "Ah, you're speaking against the government." In many Latin American countries, it's not that way... power rules. As much as they want to call it a democracy, still, power rules. If you're rich, it's very class-ist over there, if you're rich, you'll have it made. If you're a poor peasant, you'll never make it. It's just the way life is. So then, you see America, where people say, "you can become whatever you want to become." Now if you think about it, if you guys were in a lower class in Latin America, if I was living in Mexico, I wouldn't be a principal right now. I think I would be a laborer, because 1) my family was very, very poor, and like I told you guys before, I would have to go to work to support the family, so, no education for me. Not because I'm not an intelligent person, but it's just circumstances called, "I have to work to support the family." Then eventually, I'll get married and have my own children, who can't finish maybe middle school, or maybe like my dad, 3rd or 4th grade, I don't know. So, people are looking for improvement for their own families and children, so they come to America, the United States, where they might stay in hopes that that will happen for them. But when they come here, they face the language barrier, the discrimination, immigration laws, all these things that make it impossible, not impossible, difficult, for them to come here and work. And if you think about it, and you hear the old saying, "Yeah, they're just here taking our jobs," what jobs? The jobs they're doing are jobs that most Anglos don't want to do. And if you think about it, there's a book called *A Day Without Hispanics*, and this book totally shook kids at the community college. Just imagine a day without Hispanics, if they one day, just stopped buying at Target, at Winco, and McDonalds, at Wendy's, the gas station, food, travel, whatever... what would that do to the economy? Just one day. It would plummet. So that's how powerful this group is, but yet, we're not powerful enough, because we're not educated, or we're not to the point where we can help ourselves.

Eva: You're being neglected by society?

Mario: There you go. So when people say, "But yeah, they're using up welfare," what welfare? They're working here illegally, a lot of them. And they're putting into the Social Security, because a lot of them have fake Social Security numbers, and their... every paycheck, so much goes into Social Security, so much goes to the taxes, so much goes to the... this, but they will never get their benefits, and yet they're still willing to do that, because the money that they make here is way better than they would make in Latin America. I mean, it's a struggle, and it will be a never-ending, in my opinion, problem for immigration and for the people that migrate to the United States, so stay tuned, hopefully someday it will be taken care of, but I doubt it.

Annie: Why did you personally come to America?

Mario: Um, jobs. Like I said, we lived in a home of two rooms, I slept on the floor next to my mom and dad, my mom and dad had the bed, and the children pretty much slept on the floor. We came because a man offered us... to provide legal papers for us to come and become US residents in exchange for, almost like an indentured servitude, because my dad contracted with him that he and my brothers would work for him for three years and he had poultry farms in Idaho, he was a poultry farmer, chickens would lay eggs and we would pick eggs... pick eggs... *collect* eggs, gather the eggs, and it was a big company, and it was almost like indentured servitude, but they got paid for it, and after three years, that's when we moved from Idaho to Utah, because my dad wanted to do something different. I don't look at him as bad, I will be eternally grateful to him for bringing us over, because like I said, if we were in Mexico, I wouldn't be a principal right now, I think it would've been so difficult for me to overcome, because in Mexico, as in other Latin American countries, the education costs money, you have free education to elementary school and maybe secondary school after that. When you finish ninth grade equivalency, then people, kids need to decide if they want to go into a technological field, or into education. So if you go into education, equivalent to high school, they call it preparatory school, if you finish preparatory school, or three years of high school there, you guys next year would be graduating and could be teachers at the elementary level. That's what preparatory school is... to teach. Technology school is, we're talking about engineering, electrical, architectural, whatever, so either one, technology or kind of like a fine arts type of thing, and that's why we came to the United States...to try to become better.

Annie: Okay, last question, why do you think there's so much discrimination between Latin American people from different places? Because, I have friends that say, we don't like people from Guatemala, and they're from Mexico. Why do you think they're so much intercultural discrimination, I guess?

Mario: Yeah, that's a good question. In Latin America, if you watch UniVision, that channel on television, I don't know if you've ever seen it, but the Spanish dictations and Spanish soap operas, if you watch the newscast, look the newscasters. The people that are on TV, they're usually blonde, fair skinned, and they speak fluent Spanish, and they are Latino. When people think of Latin America, they think of dark individuals. You (points to Eva) would fit into Chile, in Argentina, in Paraguay, because there are a lot of European individuals there, or people of European descent. You would fit right in. If you went to Spain and Europe, you could say, "I'm Spaniard," and people would be like, "Okay," because that's what it is. People often think that Latinos are kind of like Asians. I mean, all Asians are either Chinese or Japanese, right? "Oh, you're Korean?" you know, "What's a Korean?" you know. So how do you... how can you tell the difference? Most people think Latin Americans are Mexicans, or most people that speak Spanish are Mexican, and they're not. So, the reason they discriminate is the class issue. In most Latin America, if you say you claim descendancy from Spain, that's a good thing, because that means you're fair-skinned. Do you understand? If you're fair-skinned, you have a shot in life. My very own grandmother, who is a full-blooded Indian, said to my face, "Marry a white girl," and I did. I should say I should've, I'm not married anymore, but you know I have four beautiful children, but that was her thing. "Marry a white girl, so your children will have a chance." Look at my grandma, she's darker than I was. I mean, her features were beautiful, you know, I mean she was full-blooded Indian, Mexican-Indian, or from Latin America...

Eva: Like Aztec and...

Mario: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but to her it was no, in order to survive, you need to be light-skinned. So that's why there's so much discrimination. The people that are darker are the ones that are put down here more, within their own race, believe it or not. If you want to offend someone in Latin America, you call them an Indian. That is so offensive, because an Indian means a peasant, it means you don't have an education, I mean if you call someone an Indian, "I'm not an Indian, I'm a Spaniard." To me, it's a mindset. I'm proud to be a Mexican, I'm from Mexico, I tell people I'm Mexican, because a Mexican is half Indian, half Spaniard. Mexicans are the result of breeding of the European with the Native American, and that's the Mexican culture. But in Argentina, they're more white because there are more Europeans there of descent, than there are Indians. So Argentineans don't like Mexicans because Mexicans are dark. I mean, go figure. So racism, it doesn't, I mean, it goes across borders and lines just like the United States.

Thank yous are exchanged...