

Metadata for Oral History Project
Southwest Detroit Community Leader Gloria Rocha 2014

SDCL_Title	Interview with Gloria Rocha, November 13, 2014
SDCL_Creator	Schulz, Rachel; interviewer
SDCL_Contributer	Rocha, Gloria; interviewee
SDCL_Subjects	Latino/Latina, Southwest Detroit, Committees, Cinco de Mayo, Community Involvement
SDCL_Description	Audio 1: Gloria Rocha talks about her early life as a migrant farm worker and the education she received. She then goes on to speak about her achievements and the collaborative groups she is an integral part of.
SDCL_Publisher	Wayne State University; Walter P. Reuther Library
SDCL_Date	November 13, 2014
SDCL_Format	Marantz professional PMD660
SDCL_Location	Detroit, Michigan

Rachel Schulz: Alright, this is Rachel Schulz on November 13th, 2014. I'm sitting down with Gloria Rocha and uh, we are just going to be talking about her involvement within the Southwest Detroit Community. Alright, so, Gloria, um, can you tell me a little bit about your family origins?

Gloria Rocha: Well, I was born in November, in a little town called, uh Crosswell. It's up in the thumb. And um, that was one of the years that our family decided not go back to Texas because my mom was pregnant. So, our background has been working in the fields. That's what we first got contracted for. My parents are from San Antonio area, Texas, and my grandfather- one of my grandfathers is from Laredo, Texas. And then I have a grandmother that is from Gonzalez, Mexico and another set of grandparents that are from Morelia and Tehuacán.

RS: Wow

GR: So, they all came over and did work and stuff during that time there was not, immigration issues like there are now. So, basically, that's been my family history is in that area. I am one of six children.

RS: Big family

GR: mmhmm

RS: Um, so then going on to your education, what kind of education did you receive?

GR: A lot. It seemed like every time we moved from crop to crop, and we went into schools; we went to many different schools. So, they always had to assess what I knew so they knew what grade to put me in. And, so when I was in Texas, they, uh, advanced me because I had some key educational things that they did not have. So then I came back to Michigan and they had to test me to make sure that the advancement was legit. So I went to a lot of different schools and I enjoyed it I think, it's often the kinds of people that you meet and the communities, so, it was fun. But I really never felt like, um, I was part of something because of the fact that we moved so much. When I was in Texas, my friends would call me, "Gringa" because I had less of an accent. When I was in Michigan, of course they felt that I had a very strong accent even though I'm the same person. [laughs]

RS: Location...[laughs]

GR: Although I did pick up a Texas Drawl when I was in Texas and then brought it back, then I'd lose it and then go back and- but yeah it was um, the early years. I did graduate from a Michigan school, Crosswell Lexington and was able to get a scholarship to go to Michigan State. So that's how I started my education at Michigan State. And then of course, I met the love of my life [laughs], and got married and we moved to California so I continued a little bit of my education in California. Then we came back to Michigan and I continued my education after three kids, and graduated from Michigan State and started teaching there for a while.

RS: Very cool. Um, what, what brought you back? Did you come back to- for work opportunities?

GR: No, my husband had um, decided to get a masters, and so we applied in different places, ah well, he applied in different places and Michigan State made him a very good offer. So it was a choice between going to a California college or back to Michigan and he felt, "Well, let's just go back to Michigan." He was from California.

RS: Oh, okay

GR: But he said you know, that Michigan State had been good to him when he was here, so given that he didn't want to be here [laughs], he still was able to get the classes and graduate. So, that was the decision we made to come back. Especially with married housing and stuff, and with three kids and everything else, it worked out good.

RS: Good! So, when did you finally make your way to Detroit?

GR: Well, ah, let's see. We were working in Lansing, and my husband was a social worker, had his masters in social work and had come in cross- we used to have um, committees, well, not committees, well- groups of um- that we belonged to. One of them was a Latino Social Workers Association that was started, and so we started meeting other social workers from different parts of Michigan. And during one of those meetings, he was offered a position in Detroit. So, we talked about it, went back and forth and he decided that, you know, it might not be a bad id, and said fine, it's closer to Crosswell [laughs]

RS: Yes [laughs]

GR: So we decided to move to Detroit. And of course it was diffic-I had to stay there because I had a contract, so I had to finish out my contract.

RS: Oh, yeah

GR: So for about six months we commuted back and forth, and then we both moved, we were both here.

RS: Okay, good! Well, um, it looks like you've got lots of positions that you've held within the community in the past and in the present, so can you tell me a little bit about some of them?

GR: I think that what prompted my involvement had to do with um, had to do with um, the fact that Detroit Public Schools was not very open to Hispanics. Uh, it was very selective. I had experience and I had my degrees, and of course I also had learned bilingual education. So I was bilingual, and so- but when I went in to apply, they said that they were not taking any applications. So, I said, "OKAY [laughs]! What am I going to do now?" Well, you know, I took some little jobs. I even did some- I took a job as a waitress, and stuff. And just to be involved in something. The kids were in school. Um, but in, during that period then I started volunteering at La Sed first-

RS: mmhmm

GR: Right here across the street. I volunteered there and then they offered me a position on the board. As I got a little bit more involved, more involved, and um, then I ended up um, being offered a volunteer

for the schools, and um, got offered a position with the State Department of Education. So instead of teaching, I went with the State Department of Education and that opened up some other doors for volunteering- other agencies, other avenues, parent groups and stuff like that. So, yeah, that's- then it became a part of my life [laughs].

RS: It's all about who you know

GR: Yeah, it's- yeah. And it was interesting because, as I- when I- with the state, I worked with a desegregation court case. And during that period, there was a lot of bussing back and forth of different groups from here to Del Ray, I mean not Del Ray. Further down to 4217, and vice versa so there was a lot of interchange including my own kids. But um, as I met the different personnel at the schools, they kept saying, "Where did you come from?" you know, and they started to ask and I'd tell them. They says, "Well, yeah, we had positions here. Why didn't you come to the schools?" Because my process was that you went to the administration and you applied there. You didn't go to the schools. Apparently, it was an unspoken way of getting hired was going directly to the schools. I didn't do that.

RS: No?

GR: And of course since I was monitoring them, they had hoped that I would be on the other side instead [laughs]. It was funny, it was a joke you know. "Yeah, if you had been hired, you wouldn't be doing, checking us off." It was, it was an interesting ten years of working with them.

RS: Okay, [sigh] Very cool. Uh, and then, let's see....You were a board member, or you are currently a board member of the Detroit... Southwest Detroit Development Corporation? Does that sound familiar or no?

GR: Well, not now.

RS: Not now, but you were?

GR: Yeah.

RS: Okay. Um, what were some of your motivations for becoming a board member?

GR: Um, if it was an area that I had some interest in- there's a lot of volunteer opportunities all over, but if it had to do with community development, it had to do with safety, or education. Those were the kind of volunteer things that I like to do. And so, basically, that's what- and lately, I've been doing a little bit of arts and culture. But for the most part its safety, community development and now arts because my granddaughters are part of a performing group so that gets me a little more interested.

RS: Nice! That's always fun

GR: Yeah, it's always fun to see them up there doing their thing.

Rs: Yeah. What do they, what do they do?

GR: They are part of a group called Ballet Folklórico Raíces Mexicanas. It's a folkloric dance group and it's been around since 1981.

RS: Oh wow!

GR: Yeah, so it's a, it's got a place in the history of Southwest Detroit.

RS: Yeah, absolutely

GR: Yeah, I'm glad that we're here working with them to continue it, because having roots, uh, as part of your lifestyle, in your culture I think it makes you a better person, makes you appreciate who you are.

RS: Absolutely. Um...So you are um, a part of the Mexican Patriotic Committee of Metro Detroit. Um, and can you describe a little bit of your role?

GR: I am a Vice Chair, one of the vice chairs and um, what we do now is basically just the Cinco de Mayo parade. But in previous- when we first started, we used to have, uh, three or four festivals a year, and we used to have the Cinco de Mayo parade AND festival. But it involves celebrating the Battle of Puebla. And so, the parade has become at one time probably bigger than the Thanksgiving Parade almost as- I would say that we matched it pretty close.

RS: Oh, wow!

GR: There were two or three years people came and sat two miles, it's a two mile trip. And so they had, we had a lot of um, excitement because then after the parade they would go to the festival which was right here in Clark Park. And the- the parade ended here, so that park got packed with people. I, I think it's it was maybe it started in the 30's, actually, the 20's and then they filed for recognition with the state in the 30's, but part of it had to do with survival. Um, when we came to work in Michigan, and it was not necessarily one of the big populations, the Hispanic populations in the area that we did not have all the stores, all the food, all the different uh, like we do now. Less ?? and so as the families grew, they would bring stuff and then, you know they would get together or they would go to ?? well that was like a matter of maintaining their culture. So they wouldn't feel so strange in this foreign land

RS: That's important

GR: Yeah, it is. And it was, it was the Mexican Patriotic Committee were people who had been here a long time and they had come and they felt like foreigners in their own land and stuff, so this was a way of getting together for networking so that they would um, have some-eachother.

RS: Yeah

GR: And help each other.

RS: That's a good way to do it though

GR: Yeah, so that's how it started, and then they started celebrating weddings and Quinceañeras and baptisms and stuff, and then they expanded into the festivals. Well, you know we celebrate Cinco de Mayo.

RS: Oh yeah

GR: "Let's do a dance, let's do this, let's do that."

RS: Do you get, like the um, ballet folklore to come in and...

GR: Yeah, they're part of the parade and they perform

RS: Nice! That's got to be rewarding to see granddaughters a part of the tradition.

GR: Yes it is. Oh yeah

RS: Um, so, how have you expanded your role, your personal role within the committee?

GR: The committee?

RS: Yeah

GR: I started out as a volunteer and got elected for a while as chair. And then, as for my other volunteer opportunities came about, I decided that it was better for me to take a lesser role because my time was less. And so, I became vice chair so all of my rewards and whatever I always say are symbolic because it gives me an opportunity to see if this is something that I want to do. Something that I think I can support and then follow through.

RS: Yup, okay, so what are some of the different things that you tackle as-specifically as vice chairman?

GR: Uh, right now, we are looking at- um, I deal with the city.

RS: Okay

GR: And it's been very difficult with getting permits, getting the application filled out, and whatever- and in um, as the different administrations have changed, it has become a little bit more paper oriented. More permits, more fees, more everything. So, that's my role is basically battling the city officials [laughs].

RS: [laughs]

GR: To see what's going on, going to the city council, getting the permit and then meeting whatever requirements they have

RS: Uh-huh. I don't envy your job

GR: No. It's not fun.

RS: No?

GR: But we have- I guess the satisfaction is once it's all done, you can say, "Uh! Thank God it's over!"
[laughs]

RS: [laughs]

GR: Now we can enjoy it.

RS: Yes, absolutely! Um, what-can you talk a little bit about the CLAVE, the Latino Artis-

GR: CLAVE?

RS: CLAVE, yes, I'm sorry.

GR: It's okay. It's an acronym. It is something new that has been coming along. Part of it is that funding sources are always looking for collaboratives. It's gotten more and more, it's almost become a requirement that you are collaborative. Unfortunately, we have different artists- we probably have one of the largest areas of artists in the city of Detroit. We have all kinds of artist uh, organizations. And part of that had to come about because they kept saying that, "We don't work together, we don't work together." They couldn't find this and they couldn't find that because we don't work together. So we formed these, this organization called CLAVE. It's visual and performing arts, um, organizations and groups so that we can do a collaborative. We, we do workshops like, for Day of the Dead, we have speakers come in and talk about the different art forms that come, uh...

RS: mmhmm

GR: That are coming maybe to the DIA or something. In fact, we just finished a Day of the Dead project at the DIA with alters um, from the DIA for the, RFP for people to put forth some kind of an alter for Day of the Dead. And they had a, an exhibit for five days I think it was. And so we did one of those. So, our chairs worked with them to talk about it and met with them in person. The group performed, they got the skeleton faces, and white dresses and they looked like spirits walking through the area.

RS: That's cool!

GR: Yeah, it is cool. So you know that group is- it's hard because- probably harder than any group that I work with because, artists will be artists.

RS: Yup

GR: And they all have their little favorite things and whatever, and their media is more important than this media and so on and so forth. But you know, in the end, it does work together. It does do what it- when we do have a project, we do come together to do it.

RS: That's nice

GR: Yeah.

RS: Um, are you guys doing anything- I know that there is a Frida Kahlo/Diego Rivera exhibit coming...

GR: We just sent that in, yeah.

RS: You did?

GR: Yeah, we've come up with a couple of ideas. Including an, uh, the storefront area of when Diego and Frida were here, and when they came to visit the Southwest, what stores did they go to, what restaurants did they go to, what food did they eat, and stuff like that. So that's our proposal, lets hope- it's being flushed out, but it's a concept.

RS: Cool! I'll go visit [laughs]!

GR: [laughs]Well, and then they- there was an interest in having um, a stat- not a statue- a picture taking opportunity where we have the silhouettes of uh, Diego and Frida either together or separate and people can put their faces in to take pictures. That was one concept. The other one was, let's have some clothes of that era and have people dress up and take pictures. So we don't know which one is going to go, but something like that. That people can take back as a memory.

RS: Something hands on, a little bit more than just walking through and looking.

GR: Yeah, we're also looking- I think that Frida did a cookbook, and so, we're looking at the possibility of doing a "Taste Fest" of some kind like uh, on certain- like on Tuesdays and Thursdays we'll offer a taste of some of the recipes from her book.

RS: That's a nice idea

GR: mmhmm. Yeah, so I mean where I was thinking of something that is not so labor intensive [laughs]

RS: Yeah, well all of the ideas sound fantastic

GR: What comes out of it is something else.

RS: Yes, um, and then, so that's CLAVE and then, um the Latino Women's Association; the MANA?

GR: MANA?

RS: Yeah, can you talk about that for a little bit?

GR: Yeah, MANA has been around...I would say, 40-50 years. It's a national organization with chapters in almost all the states. And um, our chapter here has been very involved in trying to do scholarships for young ladies and providing them with opportunities to visit Washington and see the, see our government at work; which may or may not be a good idea [laughs], um, and also some workshops on building confidence and being self sufficient. We have an annual luncheon which is coming up Nov. 20th and I'm in charge of the invite as well as the program, and I do that for them.

RS: Um, so all of these different organizations, they're collaboratives, it sounds like they are all very different but all work towards the same goals

GR: They are different in maybe um, in what they do, but not in mission. In mission, the mission I think of all of them is to make you make um, Hispanic and Latino Southwest Detroit more visible and uh, improve opportunities for the people. They're all kind of leading towards making life better for Southwest Detroit and its people. So they are different in what they do but the mission is the same. Self development, self determination.

RS: What do you think- do you think that that might have drawn you to these organizations based on your education background?

GR: Could be, yeah. I guess it could be. I guess there are a lot of performing arts groups, there's a lot of women groups, but these were the ones that I got into.

RS: Uh...It says also that you worked with the Michigan Metro Girl Scouts and the WYCA, so can you tell me about your role in those organizations?

GR: I think, uh, WYCA was an effort to try and preserve some of the programs that were happening around and also to help recruit our youngsters and young ladies to participate and also to find other resources available to us. The Michigan metro Girl Scouts was in a transition mode-stage-when I was asked to serve on that. It was trying to see if they could outreach to um, other populations, so I came in at the right time and I worked with the new director in Penny Baylor was our first director that I worked for. We worked to set up um, a Latino- or Latina group that would be catering to the conditions and the values of that population. Not the traditional Girl Scouts so, if they chose to do that, that was fine, but it was more having to deal with mother/daughter relationships and having the meetings in areas that would be not uh, necessarily threatening. A lot of them are in schools and not necessarily to meeting places, but for the Hispanic family to let their daughters go someplace, it has to be something that they feel good about. So, sometimes they were in people's houses, sometimes they were in um, in one of the schools or one of the agencies and it had a different program. So, I think that that's why I was drawn to that; an organization that is trying to adapt and modify operations to meet the needs of our community.

RS: Okay, it comes back to safety...

GR: [laughs] Yeah, and you know, when I was working with the Detroit Monitoring Commission, one of the hardest things was to get people to leave like-they had school off for two of these like at Brighthoff, um they have the food service for events and um, Davis Vocational School in the east side we had to deal with the um airplanes and all kinds of mechanical stuff. And our kids wouldn't go. The parents wouldn't let them get on the bus to go that far to the east side or to the northwest side, to Brighthoff and to the other vocational schools, it took a lot of time to get them training just because, how do you think if something happens, how would they get there to deal with it? So, that was one of the big issues, and so that was why the Girl Scouts made sure that it was in what was considered a safe area. But, I'm not talking about being accosted or anything, but that they felt safe, that this was a place that they could meet.

RS: Right, a safe place always conducts an air of education, so when you feel safe, you have an easier time to learn.

GR: Yeah

RS: So we've talked about like, what you've done in the past and what you're doing now. Do you have any plans for the future? You seem like you're just not slowing down!

GR: No, well, a lot of my plans for the future are tempered right now. I am the oldest of six and even though um, my parents have other siblings near them, they still tend to rely on my assistance and my parents are 90 and 94. So they require a lot of attention. And so a lot of times I might be asked to sit on some committee, that does not necessarily have a regular schedule of any kind or something, and I'm saying no because I never know. Like, even today, I was in a meeting with John at lunch time and my mom calls. She went in to see the doctor and she's feeling better. I didn't know she was sick, and so I said, "Okay mom." She said "Are you coming this weekend?" and I'm saying, "[shrugs] How about maybe Sunday?" So she says, "Okay," because I have something Friday and Saturday. So, I'm really at they're call right now and see whatever they need. I feel like I have to deal with family first. So, yeah, right now this is just like uh-and then of course I have my aunts in Texas- they want me to go see them and I don't I get to looking at airfares are very high and so I'm thinking I might drive.

RS: That's a long trip though.

GR: Yeah it is, but we used to do it twice a year

RS: Yeah

GR: Every year [laughs] and we went um, after we got married, um, we used to go see my grandmother. She lived to be 101!

RS: That's how old my great-grandfather is now!

GR: Well, yeah! So for Thanksgiving, every Thanksgiving we spend it in Texas, and so we would drive down there and we'd come back and it was a nice enough-long enough weekend that we could have the kids miss one day of school or something. We would all go down for Thanksgiving. So, after she passed away, we kind of stopped that, but it was no big deal because we had done that all our lives- traveling back and forth.

RS: Right

GR: But now my mom doesn't like to travel. My dad says, "Well, if you go, I'll go." He doesn't want to get on the plane. He said that people weren't meant to fly. And I says, "Ahh, but we were meant to drive in cars?" and he still says, "no, no flying."

RS: So, do you see yourself continuing um, your commitments for what you're in now?

GR: Yeah, oh yeah. Very few times do they involve weekends and when they do I try to do like, if I go Friday, Saturday, come back you know, Saturday an org there. If I have a commitment on the weekend, then I try to go Sunday, Monday and stuff like that. It works out eventually [laughs]. Sometimes it's a little stress!

RS: Oh yeah. Especially, well- now that you're vice chairman instead of chair, that makes it a little bit easier

GR: And every- I mean every committee now has um, less activities as when I first started. When I first started, we had um, all kinds of- we had a Christmas activity, we had a summer activity, we had the parade, we had the festival, so we had a bunch of other things that we were doing, and now, part of it has to do with volunteers but now we only have the parade. So, February, March we start that process and it goes through May and then we're done with that. So, that's less commitment that I need to give to that organization.

RS: What are some of the goals that you have for this upcoming year? Um, have you thought about them yet, or?

GR: Yeah, we're looking to see if we can um, find a location for Raises Mexicanas, um to practice and maybe even have small shows and workshops because we're always at the schedule of wherever we are. Right now, we practice at Patton Park. During the school year it's very difficult and, actually during the summer too because their hours are- they close very early and the kids get out of school, parents get out of work and bring them around 5, but then they close at 7 and so, it's limited in the number of hours that we have. Right now we have about 35 kids in the group, so trying to get those schedules together- so, but if we have our own place then we would be able to meet different days and do something different. You know, break them up so that we would be able to give them the time that they need because they all want to be performers [laughs].

RS: Of course they do!

GR: They started last week, and they're going to perform this week [laughs]!

RS: So, if you broke down the parade or the festivities to someone who's never seen it before, how would you describe it?

GR: The activities, the event itself; or the process?

RS: Either, or both

GR: Well the process starts with, um, deciding on the day that falls good for us. It's the closest Sunday to the 5th. Um, and so that date is always a given, but we started revising the application and having um, everybody look it over and make sure that it's something that we decide. Last year we raised price for the first time in a few years, and so we have to decide that part; to see how much of a fee do we want to get. We track our finances to see, you know how, much our insurance has gone up too [laughs]. And, also then to see who's going to do what; who's going to do the application, who's going to do the

different parts of getting the information. Once we have the application then we start uh, publicizing that these applications can be picked up at certain places and that they're due a certain date, and so on and so forth. That process starts- and then we have to also make sure that we put in a petition to the city that we want to have the parade, and usually that's tricky. Do we do the application for participants or do we do the city? Since we've been doing it for a long time, we kind of do it hand in hand because for the most part, we will-they will approve us maybe with a few more regulations. But for the most part, they will approve us since we've been doing it forever. Um, so we kind of do it like: we submit the application one week and then the application for participants the following week. And so that process- and we all pick them up on a weekly basis from the locations, and uh, pay the insurance. Make sure everything's set up, um, the police department, tactical services and also with the company now we have to pay for our own barriers- street barriers. So we have to contact, do a RFP from different companies to see who gives us a better price.

RS: The city doesn't provide barriers?

GR: They used to, but they don't anymore. So we have to pay for them. That's one of our biggest expenses. We also do some porta-jons. Stuff like that. Work with um- meet with other organizations in the area that are going to help us- be kind of co-sponsor. To pick up the trash or to have trash barrels around. EMS to make sure we have an emergency component. Once we-and that's on going. And then the day of the event we need to have about 50 volunteers. Some of them might be lining up the people and also along the route to make sure that there's not too much lag time between units. Um, that has always been a problem, and hopefully this year we can get the help of a couple bicycle clubs that can go up and down the line to make sure that people are moving. Because I- part of it is that some floats or some groups like to show off and they- the people are clapping so they stop and perform. Well, if you stop and perform, everybody behind you lags, and everybody in front of you is gone, and so we got to figure that out. Eventually that happens. But that's all a little bit of what happens. Last year we had an incident and there was some family feuding and there was a shooting, um, and it stopped the parade. But we had a community meeting we invited the community to let them know what was happening, and how-how could we do it better, or should we do it anymore. And it was overwhelming. There was not one person that said we shouldn't continue with the parade and they said that, you know, the violence is not going to stop our efforts to celebrate our traditions. So we will continue with the program. Unfortunately the one person did die. But um, I guess it would have happened; if they hadn't met there, it would have happened wherever they met.

RS: Unavoidable, which is unfortunate...

GR: It's unfortunate, but I mean the marathon in Boston didn't stop because of the bombings. So...

RS: Yup, yup, absolutely. And your traditions are important. You need to celebrate.

GR: Yeah, and once it's over and we do the debriefing and whatever, "we could have done better," "not done this," or whatever. And then we say, "Thanks God it's over!" [laughs] Next year!

RS: What are some of the festivities that happen at the park?

GR: Uh, they have a Puerto Rican assembly that just started a couple years ago. So they do that, um, the Head Start program does a Dia de los ninos- uh, day of the children. And I think that's celebrated in a lot of places. Ann Arbor does it too in their school system. And so they have a festival there too. Um, sometimes impromptu things, um, there's community groups, youth groups that do presentations there. They just had a brand new bandstand, that got-not brand new, it got remodeled [laughs]. They fixed up all the cracks and painted it and whatever. So, sometimes they just come out there and start performing and the community comes and...so...

RS: Gets involved

GR: Gets involved! Yeah, you see something going on- this year city councilwoman, um, Raquel Castaneda did a procession for Day of the Dead and that's a little bit closer to the tradition of what happens in Mexico that people come and they do like, it's like a parade but it's a procession with um, artifacts that they want to bring to the alter or to the grave site. And so, they did that out at Clark Park and then they had an alter over there by the uh, Clark Park Coalition Building. People were able to leave some offerings for their memories of the people that had gone on. And uh, they had entertainment, they had a Native American come in and do the blessing of the grounds and they had readings and performances. So it was kind of nice.

RS: Sounds nice

GR: COLD! Very cold! But it's nice. The procession is very key because a lot of the times, we only do parts of the celebration and this time I think it was pretty complete. And then hot chocolate!

RS: It's what you get for being in Michigan! Well...

GR: Well! Here we are!

RS: Here we are. Uh, do your children and grandchildren live around here or are they scattered?

GR: They, well- I have one son in Pittsburg, one in Houston, a daughter in Phoenix and one here in Michigan. Um, they lived here in Detroit and then they moved to Dearborn Heights but they're here more than they are there because they work in Detroit. And of course the kids are involved in different events and committees and activities here in Southwest Detroit, so they come here too.

RS: So they picked up on your love of committees and-

GR: No! No, not love. It's um, a duty and responsibility to help grandma do this [laughs]! I think in the long run, I think they really enjoy it. You know, getting there is half the battle, like getting to church; once you're there you feel good, it's just getting there. It's the same thing with them. Once they get here, um, I know the youngest one of my grandchildren that lives here, she was born in this- in um, she lived here in Detroit for most of her early life- she's 13. She still misses a lot of the stuff. One of the things that she misses, um, after school they had these "Doritos" it's a Mexican thing that they put the hot sauce on the- it's like a Funyun but it's more, it's got a different flavor. Anyway, she misses that. She always wants- she says, "I can't find any "Doritos" in- over here" and I says, "Well you have to come to

Southwest Detroit."The other thing that she misses is the Paletas in the summer, the ice cream... the paletas has the flavors like arroz con leche and they have um, coconut and pineapple, but they have pieces of pineapple and it's a lot stronger taste in the Paletas than the ones that we get here, but um, yeah they miss that because the cart rolls by

RS: Oh

GR: And although they have their ice cream truck, that you can buy, they are waiting for their paletas [laughs]. So those kinds of things they miss, but they do come down here. Now they're starting to sell some of that stuff in the grocery store in this area so they can pick them up. So I'll take them, I don't know, uh, Meijers and Krogers and everybody; they're all buying into making sure they have a section of Hispanic foods because we can find just about anything that we want in those stores. They even have the Jarrito pop- it's a soda pop...

RS: Yes. I've had it before

GR: Yeah, and so they even have those in their stores

RS: Yeah, huh!

GR: Yeah, so I guess we're making in an impact somewhat [laughs]. If not anywhere else; with our money!

RS: No, I'm sure that you are making an impact in the community. After talking with you for the past whatever it was- however many minutes, it's apparent.

GR: Yeah, and I mean you go into Sam's Club and they have tortillas and they have the different kinds of foods. Hacienda Foods here has expanded and you'll see their chips all over the place in different stores. So, I mean, it's something that we're slowly becoming recognized and our business people are doing a good job of making sure that their products get out there.

RS: Yeah, well I mean, even with your work, you know, obviously the food-that's, that's a gateway, but your work with the committees and the parade, the festivities, that's a great way of publishing and networking.

GR: Yeah, I think one of the biggest things that we have continued to try and do is make sure that people get on boards and committees and organizations that are not Latino because that's where we lose some of the education. And that's where they learn about another community and they can do some other kind of projects that will help the community. So, that's why I kind of mixed Latino boards and non Latino boards because a lot of times, I'm the only one there and I wish there were more but I think that's one way to do it.

RS: Alright, well, thank you so much for sitting down with me, and if there is anything that I can do personally, just let me know!

GR: [laughs] Okay! Well, when you graduate, we'll be looking for you!

RS: Sounds good!

GR: Especially, well, the CLAVE office is right next door

RS: Oh, nice

GR: And so you can look through the window and look at some of the stuff that we did for Day of the Dead

RS: I will- definitely

GR: I mean, that's been kind of nice to be able to do something like that, and DIA is reaching out more and more to our community. It depends on who the person is that gets assigned to the projects to deal with community because we have somebody- was it 5 or 6 years ago, maybe longer that did so much with us and then all of a sudden, it was just gone. Yeah, in fact they invited us to perform was it last year or the year before for their community outreach. And we got there, and they wanted us to perform for 45 minutes, but they didn't have any place for us to change!

RS: Oh no

GR: They didn't have any of the accommodations or anything, and we ended up dancing outside in the on the side walk

RS: Oh no

GR: And they had-I mean we did it because we had committed to doing it, but it's- I mean we had to- they ended up giving us a couple bathrooms for us to change, and it was a long ways from where we were performing. But, um, it's just- people don't think about what is needed and when you say changing rooms, they say, "Oh...Oh, okay..."

RS: Light bulb moment

GR: We're going to be dancing with- you want us to do a show with different states with the same costume? No. But, yeah, I think a lot of it has to do with educating people just like we get educated, they need to- it's transfer back and forth.

RS: Yup, the more you know about each other-

GR: The better you can work together. Yeah, the kids go through a lot of those changes that will open their eyes. "Do they know that we need changing rooms?" [laughs]"Do they know that we need music?"

RS: Yeah, you would think!

GR: But last time, we went- this last time that we went to the DIA for Day of the Dead, they didn't hook up the music. Luckily for us that we have a series of dances that require no music, it's just the, the shoe, just the sound of the shoes making the music. So that's what we did because they didn't have- they

didn't provide for the music. We had it all there ready to plug in and they said, "OH!" So we tried to accommodate.

RS: Well, do the best you can.

GR: With what we have [laughs]! Better next year!

RS: Yes, absolutely.

GR: Well, thank you.

RS: Thank you!

GR: I appreciate it. I hope I didn't babble too much.

RS: Oh, no. I hope I didn't keep you from your coffee

GR: Oh no, I drink it hot, cold or whatever.

RS: Caffeine is a necessity. Especially in college

GR: Yes

RS: And when you do so much

GR: [laughs] I've um, been drinking coffee since I was very young so, it's not something you know, when we worked in the migrant fields, we had little, I guess you would call them cabins, but they're not. They're housing that the Michigan Sugar Company provided for us here in Michigan. Different places provide you with these little huts, and um, we lived in one and um, my grandmother lived in one right next door and my other grandmother lived in the other one. So there was always this family exchange back and forth, so you know, one grandma would baby me a lot. So, since I was the first granddaughter and if I wanted coffee, she'd make coffee. It was mostly milk [laughs] and stuff like that. So it's been part of me. I think that I don't have it, I'd probably go crazy, but no, it was interesting through those years. You know when you think about it, we traveled all the time and the housing and whatever. We had a house in Texas, and limit when we traveled to different places, and never did I ever feel like I was poor, nor did my siblings. We never felt we were poor. We got to travel! We got to see all kinds of stuff. We worked hard and we got rewarded. When I got to high school, um, in one of the classes, they were talking about migrants and Michigan Sugar, of course here in Michigan, and then I said that I worked in there, and one of my girlfriends says, "Oh, I didn't know you were poor!" And I'd say, "I wasn't [laughs]." I'm a worker. I wasn't. And I says, you know, all of the experiences that I had, you guys didn't get

RS: Right

GR: Yeah, but uh, it was interesting. The notion that if you do a certain kind of work, you're poor. I tell you, plumbers are the richest guys I know [laughs]! Try to buy some-try to get something for less than \$90 an hour! Probably a lawyer [laughs]!!

(The man sitting next to us was a lawyer)

Lawyer: I don't know, plumbers are out there [laughs]

GR: Anyway, but uh, it's been a fun life.

RS: It's always great when you look back and not have regrets, you just have memories

GR: Well yeah, I mean I'm sure that there are some things that I would have done different now, like what I know now, but hey, you know, that's part of life.

RS: Yeah, hindsight's always 20/20

GR: That's right

RS: Like, oh, "Could've, should've, would've...dang it!"

GR: [laughs] Yeah, dang it! Should I have gotten married at 19? I don't know [laughs]. Should I have finished my college first [laughs]? Yeah. Yeah, but would I have had these four kids? No.

RS: Count your blessings

GR: Yeah, count your blessings

RS: Alright, well, thanks!