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JAVIER TORO: My name is Javier Toro and I'm here with Guillermo Lopez Jr. to talk about his life and experiences as a community leader and a member of the community in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as a part of the Voces De La Comunidad project. Our project has funding from the Lehigh Valley Engaged [00:03:00] Humanities Consortium. We are meeting on Zoom, on July 9th, 2020. Thank you, Guillermo, so much for your willingness to speak with us today. To start, can you please state your full name and spell it for me?

GUILLERMO LOPEZ: Sure. Guillermo Lopez Jr. It's G-U-I-L-L-E-R-M-O L-O-P-E-Z J-R.

JT: Thank you. Will you please share your birthdate?

GL: January 31st, 1955.

JT: Thank you. For the purpose of this interview, how do you most comfortably want to be identified? As a Puerto Rican, Latino, Hispanic, or any other?

GL: If I'm given a choice, I want to be identified as Puerto Rican.

JT: Okay.

GL: But, I'm okay with Hispanic, I'm okay with Latino. I'm okay -- look, [00:04:00] I'm okay as long as you don't hurt me.

JT: Oh, definitely, yeah. We understand, that's not a problem. Okay, let's talk a little bit about the consent. Do you consent to this interview today?

GL: Yes, I do.

JT: Do you consent to having this interview being transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online in searchable formats?

GL: Yes.

JT: Do you consent to the Latinx Archive using your interview for educational purposes in other formats, including films, articles, website, or presentations?

GL: Yes.

JT: Do you understand that you will have thirty days after the electronic delivery of the transcript to review my interview, identify any parts I will like to delete, or withdraw my interview from the project?

GL: Okay.

JT: All right, then let's start it. Let's do the first question. Will you tell me about [00:05:00] the early years of your life? Describe your childhood.

GL: Well, I was raised an only child, and so I was Puerto Rican from the day I was born, and was being raised like a Puerto Rican in this community. And all my friends, and all my parents' associates, and family were all Puerto Rican. Until I was -- I think I was five years old -- I actually didn't converse with anybody other than Puerto Ricans. And yeah. I knew there were other groups and other races, and the [00:06:00] people that lived around us weren't always the nicest. But I was very kept in-house and sheltered. And it was from my house to wherever we were visiting family, or to the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society, which was like a cocoon -- or a bubble, if you will -- that kept me from interacting with the outside community. Which was a good thing. Now that I'm older and I think back, and I think, "Wow, that was really great to have that early foundation for me to be able to go back to," if you will, as I've gotten older when I've had to sort of reclaim who I was, later on in life. So, yeah. [00:07:00] So, it was the only other time that I would witness outside of that is

when my mom would go shopping at the Five and Tens -- that's what we called the -- on Third Street. Or we would go to the food market. And everybody, for the most part, in those areas were very nice. And I remember watching when people got out of work at the steel company, when I was a child -- around three o'clock -- and how Third Street became this -- looked like Times Square. It was just hustle and bustle, and the market -- Bethlehem Marketplace was -- everything was happening there. And so, I remember all that as a child. I remember having my mom's brother, Ralph Lopez, lived I would say two blocks away from us.

[00:08:00] And so, they were -- my cousins, they were like my siblings. I was being raised as an only child. And my mom's mom and my uncle's mom -- my grandmother -- lived in that house. So, I was like one of theirs, if you will, when I visit them. And to this day, my *comadre*, Myrna, she's like my closest confidant besides my wife. And, yeah, she's -- it's funny because when you think of the tracks that we took -- because we remained close throughout school. We both went to Bethlehem Steel as soon as we turned 18, and she went to the management sector, and I went to the labor sector. But we both we went to the

company, our jobs were just a little different. But that's what it was like for me while growing up. And watching *Lassie*, and watching [00:09:00] things like that that didn't really show me what the world was like for my family. And I remember *Captain Kangaroo*, I remember -- I think it was Jack London, or John -- I don't know, there was a show called *London*. I remember the Lamb Chop, the puppet. I remember all those things, and I don't ever remember seeing anybody that looked or sounded like me, unless I was in the Puerto Rican Club or visiting family. So, yeah, that early -- now that I've gotten older, I've come to really appreciate and respect that protective way that my mom and dad tried to shelter me from [00:10:00] anything. I have to tell you a quick story. My parents lived on a street called Butler Street, and it paralleled to Webster Street, where that big science lab is for Lehigh. The street doesn't exist anymore. And so, my mom and dad bought a house there that had two apartments. We lived in one and we would use the other one for family. And it was in an alley where, in that particular neighborhood, most of the houses had garages, but the garages would face the alley, and the homes would face the

main street. So, I believe all the homes on Webster Street would have garages on this Butler Street. My mom and dad's house was one of the few houses that faced the alley. And that's another conversation, because they had to jump the hoops [00:11:00] to be able to buy a house like that, let alone any other house. But I remember, as a child, my dad double parking his car in front of our house, so he could unpack the groceries. And he -- I never understood why he and my mom were always in such a desperate hurry to unload the groceries. And then, this one day, a gentleman from across the street came out and started hitting my dad with his cane for blocking his garage. And then, my dad told me the whole story later, but apparently, I didn't appreciate it too much, and I let my dog out. And apparently my dog chased this guy down and was biting him, and my dad had to pull him off. My dad said he never bothered him anymore when he double parked there. But [00:12:00] to me, that's like this simple story of how I wish I could have done more to protect my parents from the oppression they had faced. And they've done a lot. They were part of the founders of the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society, they put their house up as collateral. And it took an incredible amount of

planning, and behind the scenes organizing, and trying to outsmart people with money, for them to be able to buy the house. And then, there was a few families -- I believe it was five or six families pulled together -- my parents were one of them -- put their homes up as collateral to buy the Puerto Rican Club. And it's funny that we're talking now, in this day, about police brutality, but that was why they built that club. It was from police brutality that was [00:13:00] happening to them in those days. So -- yeah, I'm sorry, I slipped into the older days.

JT: That is perfectly fine. That is the whole purpose of the interview, that you be free to express and say anything that you think will be important to preserve for our community. You mentioned that your family was very close, and you were the only child. How was your life when you started going to school? How was school?

GL: It changed dramatically. So, the other thing about being Puerto Rican, as I understand it, is in those days you have no choice but to be Catholic. And my grandfather -- my dad's father -- was a kind of salt of the earth individual. He was the kind [00:14:00] that was able to love unconditionally everybody. And so, as a child, I was

indoctrinated into believing that the only people going to heaven were Catholics. And I was in kindergarten, and met someone who wasn't Catholic, and I was in so much despair for them that I actually said to them, "I don't think you're going to heaven." And they popped me in the nose. It was my first interaction with religious intolerance. And in today's days, I was completely wrong. I mean, I was wrong back then, but I didn't know any better. And so, it's interesting because I started realizing that we were being raised as a culture and as a faith mixed together. And that's not always the [00:15:00] case for all groups, but for lots of them. But for us, we were raised in that -- and we didn't know any better. We were Catholic. That was the only religion, if you will. And my father -- my grandfather and my family -- like I said, my grandfather was a super Catholic, I'll say. They had fourteen children. And he helped build the town's church. He physically helped build the church, and he helped organize it. He was part of the group that picked the first priest that came to the barrio. Palos Blancos in Puerto Rico. It's part of a town called Corozal in the barrios, called Palos Blancos. And so, he's revered there, to this day.

It was a lot of years ago. But even -- [00:16:00] I've realized as I got older that I was, what I'll call, a dissenter. I questioned things. I don't take things at someone's word. I'll ask them, "Why do you believe that?" And it's something I developed as a young person that sometimes was good, but most of the time got me in trouble. And that's -- I constantly still ask questions about, "Why is it that we, those that practice Catholic, still believe that the only people going to heaven is the Catholics?" And I don't think it's wrong for them to believe that they're going to heaven, but I just struggle with that -- the only ones going to heaven. [00:17:00] So, yeah, that's always -- there's always that rub that, even now, when I got visit my family in Puerto Rico, who were with my grandfather all their lives. And me I only got to see him three or four times in my life, but he made an incredible impression on me. But they were with him their whole lives, he really -- you know, when he was 79 years old, he convinced his grandchildren to teach him to read, just so he can read the bible, because he had never read it before. That's the kind of guy he was. And you know, that stuff filters into the rest of the family, if you will. My dad

was a strong Catholic, all my uncles and aunts. And so, yeah, that was really important. And I remember as a child going to Holy Infancy and celebrating mass in the basement.

[00:18:00] And I always wondered why we were in the basement, and why we couldn't go through those big doors. And my mother would say to me, "That's not your place to ask that." And so, there came a day when we were at service in the basement, and I believe it was one of those times when we do the stations of the cross. And it was during that time that we were told we were going upstairs. And I'll never forget the excitement of everyone. And I was like -- my mom turned to me as we were going up -- because they had a spiral step, and we were going up the spiral step -- yeah, I was a problem child. But she turned to me and said -- she grabbed me and said, "Don't mess this up for us." (laughs) [00:19:00] So, yeah, that was part of my upbringing. And watching that and I always questioned why we needed to do that march. Why we needed to do those steps. "Why is it that, if you're teaching me God is who he is, why are we in the basement? Why aren't we with everyone else?" And that was before I went to kindergarten, I would ask that. (laughs) So, yeah, and it

was such a tight-knit community. And right now, I'm trying to help out the Bethlehem Co-op -- the food co-op -- and it brings me back to when I was child and the Puerto Ricans here had a food co-op, and it was right there on Third Street. Right around where the [00:20:00] parking lot for Price Rite is. And they had a food co-op, and it was -- the resources came from the community, and kept it going as long as it could. And that was how they built the Puerto Rican Club, was just the resources of the community determined to create a safe space for our people to go. And it takes me to Bethlehem Steel, because Bethlehem Steel played a big role in making that happen, by the fact that they would take Puerto Ricans and pigeonhole them in one place, called a coke works. So, you know, you have 50, 60 Puerto Ricans working together around the clock for weeks and months at a time. They start sharing information about what's going well, what's not. And the discussion about the police brutality came up in [00:21:00] the workplace, and amongst themselves in the workplace they decided, "Well, we need our own place where we can go and not get in trouble." And that's how it came to happen, was in those discussions. Since they were all put together in this one

place, and they would all have lunch together, or dinner together. It was how the concept of the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society came to pass. And it was how information was exchanged, that was increasingly important to the Puerto Rican community. Like the education of our children. So, since there was this group of people, like my father and his peers -- so, they were all having children right around the same time. And so, it was this large group of Puerto Rican youth that were going to school at the same time. And when somebody would all of a sudden say in the workplace about their child -- they don't understand [00:22:00] why this challenges -- all of a sudden, the other one would say, "You know what, my child is having that same..." Before you knew it, there were 30 people saying, "My kid's having the same..." And then they would require some kind of attention around that. And unfortunately for me, the attention for correction didn't happen until I was already in my senior year of high school. And I had already decided I was done with school. So, there was nothing they could do to convince me to go to Lehigh. In fact, they recruited this guy named Dr. Valenzuela, I believe was his name, and his job was to

increase the minority population at Lehigh with Spanish-speaking kids -- Latino kids, Puerto Rican kids. And my father was so excited. He came to me and he said, "Junior, you're smart, you can do [00:23:00] this. I gave them permission to get your grades and stuff," and he said, "You can do this. They'll give you a scholarship. Meet with this guy." And prior to that, I had been through so many embarrassing moments as a child in school, that I was just waiting for the moment that I could be liberated from education. So, I had no interest at all in higher ed. I figured, once I turn 18, nobody can force me to be part of this system that I just felt horrible -- I can still, to this day, remember how kindergarten was a difficult time. How embarrassing first grade was because I didn't understand protocol -- like how do you introduce your parents? My parents came to visit, and they asked me to introduce them, and I said, "Well, that's Sara and Guillo. [00:24:00] Those are my parents." (laughs) And the teacher scolded me, and she pulled a white girl from the classroom and she said, "You introduce them, and show him how it's done." And I will never forget how embarrassed I was when this little girl said, "Please welcome Mr. and Mrs.

Guillermo Lopez." And I just didn't have that knowledge of that. And the teacher was angry. And so, that. And I can go almost grade for grade for particular moments that were incredibly difficult. I've learned now, as an adult, that I don't necessarily do well studying books. I'm not a book kind of reader. I learn through vision and interaction. And so, in sixth grade, [00:25:00] they created this ranking system. And so, they had the most popular, which were the super bright ones, and they had those that could handle and hang on, and then they had me and three other kids that -- oh my God, we were hopeless. And I would have a difficult time in that class -- in any class, for that matter, when it came to studying books. And something happened that my principal in that building got sick, and he couldn't be in school for quite a long time. And so, they took the teacher that I had in sixth grade, and made him teacher and principal. And so, that put us in this position that he couldn't be in front of us all the time, until they figured out this absence of the principal. And [00:26:00] so, we were just getting ready to start on the Civil War, as part of our courses, and this teacher decided that he would use films. And so, we saw films for weeks

about the Civil War. And I loved it. It was -- to me it was like watching TV. And so, it came time for us to take the exam for it, and he said to the classroom, he said, "So, I'm going to grade these while you guys are studying. But I'm going to have the person whose paper I'm grading here at the desk with me. And for every one you get wrong I'm going to hit you with a paddle." And he started out, of course, with the brightest, and worked his -- our class was only 16 people -- [00:27:00] but he started with the brightest and he worked his way down, and those got hit a few times. And especially to the girls he was very gentle with, the boys he would be a little harsher with, and then when it came time to -- he saved me for last, because he expected me to have the most wrong. And I remember sitting in my chair throughout this whole process, thinking, "How do I get out of this? What do I do to avoid this, because I know I'm going to get my butt beat? What do --?" I remember how close I was to just getting up and running out of the room. And when it came time for me and he called me to the front, and he was -- he was almost salivating about how -- he actually said -- I'll never forget these words -- "I've been waiting for this moment." [00:28:00] And I got

100. I got nothing -- everything right on that test. I was the only person in our classroom to score 100 on the course of the Civil War. Now, I couldn't explain to you then why I got 100, other than "Oh thank God, God saved my ass." (laughs) But later on, in life, what I've learned is, because of how I learn. And so, that became obvious in that moment as I think back. But when he was done, he was angry at me. He called me lazy, grabbed me by my neck, pushed me down on the desk, and he hit me probably half a dozen times, to say he thinks that I've been lazy every other time, but I can get 100 [00:29:00] now and not before. And I swore to myself, in that moment, that I would never do well on a test again. That first chance I get I'm quitting school. I never told anybody, but I had this already plan developing in my head -- sixth grade. And I then was in eighth grade, starting to feel a little better, and so they were asking some of the students what they wanted to major in as they moved into high school. And they would start that process right there in Junior High School -- it was called back then -- eighth grade. Now, I checked with my comadre Myrna, "Hey, what are you doing?" And she says, "I'm taking college prep, [00:30:00]

you should do the same. We could go to college together.”

And I said, “I’ll take the class, but I don’t think I’m going to college.” I’m still thinking I’m going to quit. But I didn’t -- but I wanted to be around her. So, I met with a guidance counselor, and he said, “So, what do you want to do?” And I said, “I’ll take college prep.” And he said, “You’re too dumb for college.” I’ll never forget those words, exactly just like that. “You’re too dumb for college. You should probably do horticulture, auto-mechanics, restaurant management. Something like that. Something in [O-tech?] would work really well for you.” And it was in that moment that my head went click again. “Yep, first chance I get, I’m out of here. That’s it.” And [00:31:00] so, my plan was in place, I actually started working full-time at a delicatessen, and at fourteen years old, I was preparing to become a -- I don’t know, have my own franchise kind of thing, and quit school at sixteen, and have my own place to run. That kind of thing. That’s what I was thinking. And in ninth grade, I met my wife. And the only way I could see my wife was to stay in school. So, I stayed in school. And then, in my senior year, I -- is when my dad came to me and said, “We

know that the school system hasn't been fair, and that they have been talking as a group, and they're [00:32:00] trying to do something." And that's when Lehigh University got involved, and he worked really hard to try and convince me. And I love my dad so much for that. And I wish there was a way I could have said that to him, because I never got a chance to say that to him. That he never disappointed me. That the system we were fighting up against, we didn't know existed, we didn't know how to battle against it, and -- but we did pretty good, even though we didn't have the skills that we do now. I would have loved to have said that to him. And so, Isabel and I got married a year after high school, and that was in '73. And what's this, 2020? So, I think it worked out. So yeah, [00:33:00] the school system was not the best thing for me. And I didn't know how bitter I was about that until I got older. And in Bethlehem Steel, when people would challenge my intelligence, I would be enraged. And I was the kind of person that -- it just occurred to me recently that I was actually pretty good on the job. They didn't like me, but I was pretty good on the job. And I didn't realize how good I was until I finally thought this through. And I

realized that whenever there was a major unsolvable problem, they would turn to me. And I used to say that [00:34:00] the only time that they turned to me is when they have nowhere else to go. And that wasn't the case, actually they would turn to me because it was difficult. The challenges that were happening. And I was pretty resourceful. And Bethlehem Steel made me that way, because of what happened to me in the school system, how pressure was happening in the workplace. I know you hear a lot of guys talk about what a great place it was, and how camaraderie -- and yeah, there was camaraderie, but institutional racism was alive and well in Bethlehem Steel. And it showed up economically, it showed up in health, and it showed up in how people were promoted and not promoted. So, yeah, we got along because we didn't think we could beat the system, but it doesn't mean it wasn't happening. And [00:35:00] that's the truth. It did happen. It was that way. There was a saying that since the beam yards -- that was a particular department in the company -- since they made the finished product, they are entitled to be paid the most of anyone else in the Steel company. Do you know how many Latinos worked there? I don't think any.

Maybe three, out of hundreds. But just think of that kind of mentality, and how the union even supported that. In fact, it was union officials who would say that to me. "We're the finishing end, we should be paid the most." So, yeah, it was interesting to work in there. And then, at the same time, I have to say to you that my dissenting kind of thinking and way that I am [00:36:00] brought me to where I'm at now. (coughs) I think I may need to take a break. I'm going to have to get something to drink. Is that okay?

JT: Yeah, that's perfectly fine. Don't worry.

GL: Okay, let me get something to drink. I'll be right back.

JT: Yeah, no problem.

(pause) [00:36:25] - [00:37:30]

JT: Okay, we are back here with Guillermo Lopez Jr., we're interviewing him for the Voces De La Comunidad project. Guillermo you were talking early about your family, your school experiences. I want to continue with the subject that you ending before the little break about the Steel. But before that, your school experience was public school or was Catholic school?

GL: It was Beth-- (clears throat) [00:38:00] public. Bethlehem Area School District.

JT: Bethlehem Area School District. All right. You brought to our attention the issue with the Steel, and you brought a point that I've been hearing so often since I move here. That the Steel was great. I hear that so many times, and knowing how factories work, that statement for me never was quite correct for me. (laughs) And I want you to go into more about the relationships of the Latinos and Puerto Ricans in the Steel, with the rest of the staff of the plant, with the other workers.

GL: So, in the early '70s -- so, I think it was in 1969, in that area, there started to -- the government started to put pressure on [00:39:00] both the union and the Steel company about them not putting Latinos, in particular -- because there wasn't much of anything else -- Latinos in particular in roles of higher paying jobs. Not just supervisors, but mechanical jobs, craft skills, things like that. And so, they worked out a consent decree. And a consent decree to avoid a lawsuit was that 50 percent of craft jobs -- 50 percent of jobs that require you to take schooling or testing -- will be saved for minorities, or

classified groups. So, women, Blacks, Latinos, they qualified for this. People of color. [00:40:00] And so, it was an interesting thing to do, and they did it, and they put it to play without ever having a conversation with any of the workers. And what made that difficult was that how Bethlehem Steel would give out jobs like that, prior to the consent decree, was who you knew. And who was related. So, the consent decree finally went into play -- I think it was in '72. I started in '73. I'm fresh out of high school, and I take a test and I'm told that I tested so high, I could take any job that I want. That's pretty neat. Now that I think about it, that was pretty neat that they said that to me. The only advice I had was from my dad [00:41:00] who said, "Don't go to the coke works." That is, he didn't use these words, but he would explain how dirty -- how much dirt you eat, how hot -- and we're not talking like summer hot. We're talking intense hot that your ears could melt, kind of hot. And he said, "So, that's the only place they offered me. I didn't have anywhere else to go but there, and I'm telling you it's horrible. And if you have a choice to go anywhere you want, pick anywhere else but the coke works." I said,

"Okay, I'm okay with that." And so, there was a guy that was interviewing me, and I, young as I was and not understanding how the system worked -- I didn't say, "Who pays the most?" I said, "All I know is that my dad said don't go to the coke works." And this [00:42:00] gentleman says to me, "Well, I don't know what to tell you. You have your pick of whatever." And he could have said to me, "This is the highest paying job." He never said that. But he said, "You know, nobody ever went to this department, Steam, Water, and Air, that I know of. And why don't you go there and let me know how that is?" So, it turns out that Steam, Water, and Air was a polite name for the Boiler House, and it was about a quarter of an inch above the coke works. (laughs) And how oppressive a work environment it is. It was just as dirty, just as hot, you had to eat dirt, there was flash -- I remember eating a turkey sandwich that, when I would pull it out of my lunch bag, I would take a bite, and by the time I'm done taking a bite and I'm ready to take my second bite, it looks like it's almost covered in pepper. [00:43:00] And I have -- and what do you do? You eat that. You just do. And people say to me, "How could you stay somewhere like that?" And I

say, "Well, I didn't know I could go anywhere else." And you learn to work in that oppressive environment, because if you're worried about your health, you couldn't be there. It's just not possible to worry about your health and keep working there. So, I went there. I was there for two years and then I took on the apprenticeship. I went into a machine shop called Central Tool. And it was a four-year apprenticeship to be a machinist, and I was actually a machinist in high school. That's what I took. I did three years of O-tech and machine shop. And for machine shop, [00:44:00] I went to theirs, so I was well versed, and I had the knowledge. And how the apprenticeships worked is you do one week on the job, and then you do one week in the classroom. And it sounded exciting. They start you out very low, and as the years progress -- the four-year program -- by your fourth year you're making really decent money. And it was government-funded for you to learn how to have this skill in the trade. And it was one of those top skills and trades that requires education. So, it qualified for that consent decree. And so, the consent decree happens -- when I got interviewed for the consent decree, the same thing that happened to me when I started

for the Steel Company, happened to me when I tested for the higher-class jobs. There was a [00:45:00] gentleman who was running the program, said to me, "Look, you came out top of the class. You got the highest grade of everyone. Pick whichever apprenticeship you want, it's yours." And well, I had knowledge of machinists, so I said, "Well, I'll take machinist." So, I took that and I went into that machine shop, and it was a setup, if you will. There were 16 apprentices that came into that place, and eight of us were minorities, and the other eight were white. And my first day on the job, in the department versus in the school classroom, I was told that I had to spend 17 weeks on one machine, [00:46:00] and then I would be tested for it, and then I would qualify, and then I would move on to another machine, plus whatever I was taking in my classroom. My first day on the job was with a Pennsylvania Dutch individual, really tall guy. And he said to me, "Just go sit in that corner over there, and don't get in my way. I'm here to make money not babysit you." I thought, "Coño, I've got to sit here with this guy for seventeen weeks." (laughs) So, as the weeks went by, you sort of start wearing them down by doing my best to be a good

person. And he would let me, eventually, clean his machine. And about halfway through, he was starting to let me run it. And I remember the last couple of weeks -- and we would have these really interesting conversations, [00:47:00] mostly about race. He was very interested in how -- why the government thinks I should get this special treatment, versus his brother who was supposed to get the spot that I had. And so, you know, I had to do my best balancing act to not offend him, since I had to sit with him for seventeen weeks. And then, the last couple of weeks, he was walking around the machine shop letting me operate his machine, because they made money by incentive -- by how much they produce. And he trusted me enough to keep walking around, smoking his cigar, he says, "Look at the kid's making money for me." And the last day I had to work with him, he said to me, "Kid, I was so wrong." And you know, I started feeling in that moment, "Wow, maybe I played a role in helping someone change their attitude and stuff." He said, "I really got to tell you, [00:48:00] I really like you a lot. I'm really glad we spent this time together." He says, "You know what, you're not like the rest of them." And it was like a match went off inside my

head that -- now, as the seasoned person that I am now, I would know how to handle that different. But I said, "Wait a minute, are you saying to me that I'm good, but my wife is not, my child is not, my parents are not, my family is not? Do you know how insulting that is? You know, forget about it. I don't need your accolades." And that was the best I can do in that moment. It wasn't the last day I had to work with him. And then, it became a challenge for me throughout the whole shop, because he was one of the leaders. And he blackballed me because of that conversation, that I didn't give him the benefit of the doubt. And it became a real challenge for my first two years there. [00:49:00] So much that the program ceased, because the economy went into a downturn, and the Steel Company lost the funding. And so, they stopped doing it. And then it forced me to be a laborer. And then, I had to stay there another two -- three years, working in that place, until a job opened up in the coke works. And I told my dad -- and it was called a Mechanical Helper -- and I said to my dad the situation, and he said, "Well, then come down here with the family. I know I told you don't come, but obviously it's better down here for us than it is

anywhere else." And he was right. Even though the coke works was the most oppressive, and noxious, and carcinogenic environment. But as far as how we treated each other, it was the best place to be for me as a Puerto Rican. Because there was so many of [00:50:00] us. And at that time, they had promoted a couple of them to be foremen, and the consent decree had forced them to make some of the millwrights -- I don't know if you know what a millwright is, but a millwright is an engineer that never went to college, and can do what an engineer puts on paper to make it work in real life. And so, you have to be able to fix -- in fact, the title millwright is no matter what goes wrong, you have to make the mill right. So, you have to have a skill -- troubleshooting skills, repair skills, welding skills -- you have to know everything, if you will. And so, eventually, I got an apprenticeship in that about three years later, and as much as people were arguing "It's consent decree," I was actually the person with the most seniority, even though I was Puerto Rican. Which really bothered a lot of people because they thought, "Well you got here because you're Puerto Rican." And I said, "No, I got here because I'm older than you." [00:51:00] But then

I finished that and then I stayed in my career there for 27 years. So, my life took a different turn, but Bethlehem Steel played a big part in how I learned and what I did. And I worked for the union and the company in social justice. My last 10 years I was the joint civil rights representative for both the company and the union. And that was where my skill as someone who questioned things came into play. And so, I remember how I got it. There was a German guy named Randy Liebermann -- I will name him because he, in my -- he should be loved dearly in heaven, because he was a good guy. There was a fight at work.

[00:52:00] Two Puerto Ricans got into a fight with a Black guy, and it happened on the night shift, and it happened on the shift that I was the lead mechanic on. And so, the call came out to go out there and try to stop the fight. When I went out there, the Puerto Ricans were screaming Black -- nasty stuff to this Black person. Just wasn't nice at all. And I took the position that I didn't care what the Black guy did, the fact that they were spewing racist stuff at this guy that I was going to side with him. I didn't care. It just was wrong what they did. And that's what I did. And then, I got in front, I helped stop

the fight, and they were mad at me for doing that. And then, we were told when we came around day shift, to go to a meeting in the washroom. And there was some union [00:53:00] officials there -- an older union leader and a really young union leader. (coughs) They were stumbling all over themselves saying things like, "Can't we just get along?" Because the company told them if they throw one more punch -- and this was still hot, it was still escalating. We were just trying to keep them apart until we figured out what to do. But the company, instead of figuring out how to resolve conflict, told the union that, "You better do something with them, or we're going to fire them both -- all three of them. We're going to fire them all." And so, they had this meeting, and these two leaders came down into the washroom when we were there, and they were just doing the Rodney King, "Can't we just get -- all get along" kind of thing. And I was just a little frustrated, and I said, "Look, can I say something?" And they said, "Sure." And I said, "So, just so you understand it, as long as we fight amongst each [00:54:00] other, we take our focus on watching how the company is treating us. And they can do what they want with us as long as we fight

amongst each other. So, I would hope that we can figure out how to bring this to an end, and do the right thing so that we protect ourselves better, and we treat ourselves better." And I stopped. And this young union leader said he was so impressed with that, he decided to run for President of the Union. Came to me and asked if I could help him get the Latino vote, the Puerto Rican vote. And said that if I did help him and he did win, he would appoint me to this civil rights position. And I helped him, and he won, and he did. And it was the beginning of my new career, this career of not just fighting the good fight, but [00:55:00] learning that in reality if we want to change, we have to be the people that heal, and be the healers, if you will. And it reminds me of my grandfather. He was the kind of individual who treated whoever was in front of him like they were the most important person in their life in that moment. And what I've learned about this work of cultural competency, and ending racism, and labeling institutional racism is that when I'm not training, how I have to live is that no matter who I meet, after I meet them, they're better off than when I got there. You know? That whatever happens, the interaction

that happens between us, my goal is always that they're better off than they were before I got there. That whatever interaction we have, I am able [00:56:00] to lift -- make their day just a little bit better. Make them see things a little bit better. And we can all do that. We can all practice those skills, we can -- it's a decision you have to make. Now, in training, it's a little different. You have to train people, "These are the rules, this is wrong, this is right," and that's sort of how it goes. And you got to set a path for them. And so, I learned that through all that. In fact, in the last ten years of the company, there was a contract negotiated that said, "For every hour of overtime we would work, they would put a dollar into a continuing education fund." I think like within two years we all were able to spend up to \$2500 a year to further our education -- understanding that the plant was closing. I took all the money that they would give me [00:57:00] and used it toward increasing my skills around the civil rights position, which led me to learning about cultural competency. And yeah, in fact, there came a point, in 1993, where an international organization came to the Lehigh Valley and did a training of trainers for

leaders. It was called a Leadership for Diversity Initiative. And they went to Bethlehem Steel and asked them to support it with some employees from the Steel Company. And nobody wanted to do it, and then they came to me and said, "Why don't you do it?" I said, "Okay." And I took the training and I was like a duck to water with it about this, "How do we as leaders train to create a better place?" To the point where I become a specialist at working with law enforcement [00:58:00] around cultural competency, to the point where I actually hold -- I haven't done it in the last few years, because I'm getting older, and I can't do as much as I used to. And whatever excess money I have, I use it to see my grandchildren, because they're in San Diego. So, I can't use the resources of my own that I used to use to make these events happen. But I used to have an annual retreat just for Latinos. A caucusing kind of thing. And it's been some of the most rewarding things that I've ever done in my life, is that work around how -- in fact, I used to do a workshop called, "What I Love About Being Latino, and Why Do I Forget?" It was just one of those -- because of how even in the Steel Company racism existed, in our society it exists now,

[00:59:00] and sometimes we just got to get together ourselves to talk about "Oh God, this is so hard. How do we continue?" And just counsel each other and remind each other that we're on the right track, that we don't give up, and know that there's always a place to go that we can talk to each other about it. Listen to each other. So, I've had a very eclectic, rewarding, and -- I love the life I've had. I love being Puerto Rican, I love that I grew up in the city of Bethlehem. In fact, when I introduce myself and they say, "Where are you from?" I said, "I live in a little suburb of Puerto Rico called Bethlehem, Pennsylvania." It's -- yeah. So, to me -- you know, when my family used to come see me, when I was in my 30s, and my wife and I we had our kids, and stuff. And I remember computers were [01:00:00] first just coming out. And I had a cousin, and she would come to me from Puerto Rico and visit, and she would look at my screensaver of flags, and all my stuff on the wall from parades, and she would say, "Damn Junior, you're more Puerto Rican than me, and I live in Puerto Rico." (laughs) So, there's something about being who we are. It's just so sweet, and so special, and so -- it's combination of courage and kindness, you know?

That we have the courage to go and support each other, even when things are difficult. That we have the courage of speaking to oppression. [01:01:00] And we have the courage to not forget where we came from. I love that about us as a people, and how when something goes wrong on the island, or to one of our own around here, how we rally around it. And how we rally around our other friends. Like how I believe we rally around right now with Black Lives Matter, I believe -- I remember when the Dominican Republic -- this was also in the '90s -- had a very bad earthquake, and I was involved in the leadership of the community. And so, some of it happened in -- no it wasn't an earthquake, it was a hurricane -- and Puerto Rico got it too, but not nearly as bad. And I encouraged my brothers and sisters here from the island to then just say, "Hey look, of course we all have pain for what happened on our island, but we have resource. [01:02:00] We're part of this country, we're part of the Red Cross system, we're part -- we have ways, we have resource to protect our people." So, it wasn't as bad as Maria. And we didn't have the kind of inept leadership that we have now as a nation. So, I encouraged us to focus on the Dominican Republic, and that

we do what we -- since our island had resources, that we do what we can. And I remember the Dominican community coming to me with tears in their eyes and saying, "We had never seen someone who is not Dominican treat us in this way." And I said, "Well, it's the way it should be for all of us, you know?" But that's who we are. That's sort of how I've been raised, and how my parents were. My mom would help organize trips to the beaches once a year, and it was a busload of [01:03:00] Puerto Ricans headed to the beach for the day. And it was one of the most fun days of my life. Being around a lot of adult Puerto Ricans and their kids, and just -- did it for many years, so many fond memories of that. Baseball teams. We had our own teams -- the Puerto Rican Club or the Holy Infancy Church team. It was a Puerto Rican team no matter -- and we had a few outliers, if you will, that would show up to it. But yeah, I remember those days, and how we held on to who we are and our culture in the most loving way. We didn't always get it right, but we figured out how to get it to the right place. And you know, I'm fortunate that I was blessed by a lot of the leaders before me, my dad, [Don] (inaudible) Rodriguez, Ismael Garcia -- [01:04:00] these are all Steel

workers that I'm mentioning now. Luis Huertas. I can go on down the list. The women -- my mom, (inaudible) Trinidad, Teracita Trinidad, Blanca, Iris. Oh my God, just these people that were just phenomenal in how it is that we kept our community intact. Don Juan (inaudible), his wife Rosa, just... Yeah.

JT: Okay Guillermo, I don't want to finish the interview without talking about -- you already mentioned the topic -- is the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society, or commonly known, the Puerto Rican Club. I know it's very close to you, [01:05:00] with what your family have done for the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society. But would you please explain to us what the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society means for the families. When the organization is started, how they helped families, how they create (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

GL: Oh yeah, they -- when we say Puerto Rican Club, it doesn't really explain what their intent was. By saying Puerto Rican Club, we think it's just a place to go have a few drinks, and hang out, and dance, and meet people, and be entertained. And it does that, but that wasn't its original intended -- its original name was the Puerto Rican

Beneficial Society for a reason. And I can't remember the tax code. It's not a 501(C)(3) -- I can't remember exactly, but the tax code was meant to be (coughs) an organization that helped the Puerto Rican [01:06:00] people of Bethlehem. And they helped them with health benefits, funeral benefits, things of that nature. They would hold fundraisers for someone that was sick. They would hand out scholarships -- I think they may still do that, I don't know. I'm not as close to them as I used to be. It changed -- and I should probably go back because now -- I stopped going because, for health reasons, there was just too much smoke there. And I've heard that's changed, but I think (dog barks) -- I think maybe I got to get rid of my dog. Do you hear him barking?

JT: Yeah, I hear a little bit, that's all right.

GL: Hey, go. Come on. Come on. Get. Get going. Call him, Isabel. (laughs) [01:07:00] He's mad that I'm not paying attention to him. Do you know what he usually does? He gets on my table here, in front of me and my computer, he sits there. (laughs) Doesn't want me to touch my keyboard. The Puerto Rican Beneficial Society was meant to -- they would help hospital, they would help with funerals, they

would help -- it was just amazing the things that they would do to help bolster the community. Nobody -- you know they -- I don't know exactly, but I believe the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley exists because the Puerto Rican Club got behind it. There was a force of people and the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society was one of them that got behind to make that happen. [01:08:00] And they were also the -- in Pennsylvania -- Northeast Pennsylvania -- not Philly, because Philly had its own thing going on -- in the area of what we now call the 222 corridor, if you will, we were the cutting-edge organization. We would bring entertainment -- they brought Yomo Toro here. They brought all the stars that were in the Cuchifrito circuit at the time. They brought it to the Puerto Rican Club. And I got to meet these guys, I got to hang out with them -- because my parents were always involved in some way, shape, or form with it. My Uncle Ralph was always one of the musicians, so his band would play and these guys would sing with him. And so, as a child, I got to be pretty good friends with Yomo Toro. And interesting because I would only see him [01:09:00] once a year, and he was such good friends with my mom and dad, and he would -- and my Uncle Ralph -- and

he would actually, when he would come to play, he would always bring me a pack of Juicy Fruit gum. That's the kind of guy he was, you know? So, that was the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society. That place could pack it in before there was such a thing as packing them in. But the truth has to be told about why it came to be. They needed a shelter for protection. There was police brutality happening. People would get locked up for loitering, which is socializing as a community -- that's what we do. We stop on the corners and we talk. And they would get beaten with night sticks. Yeah, in the beginning, it was pretty [01:10:00] rough. But they figured out that they needed to have a place of their own, so that they can be themselves. They used to be so poor in the beginning, that you had to bring your own chair to sit. (laughs) I will never forget that. When we would go to the Club, when I was really, really young, we'd bring our own chairs. And look at it now. And look at how it's grown and what it's done. And it had some struggles a couple years ago with the shooting out in front, but that was no fault of the Club's. That's just a kind of time and place that we're in as a society, where guns are too often looked at as a solution. And it's

not. So, yeah, that Club -- and it sustained [01:11:00] a lot of people. I don't mean just financially. I'm talking about sustained them mentally. It was a place where you can go -- it was really a community. And if you had a struggle, everyone talked about it, and everybody chipped in. I remember as a child, when we lived on Butler Street, when my parents got that house, I used to wonder, "Why don't we live upstairs and have more room?" And it was because they would use the upstairs portion to help a new family coming in from Puerto Rico. And, you know, that's amazing that they -- and they stayed with them until they were able to stabilize and get a decent job. And you know, I'm not going to mention the families, but [01:12:00] there were a lot of the predominant Puerto Rican families that first got here and helped establish the early wave of Puerto Ricans, first stayed with my parents at their house. And if I'm not mistaken, the only rent they ever charged them was "Pay what you can pay, if you can pay." So, yeah, that was the Club. I remember when we moved from -- because it used to be down further east on Third Street, and we moved it to where it is now. And then it was a big remodeling and rebuilding. That -- I'm telling you, it was

cutting edge. Every time it made a move, it was cutting edge. You know, we came this close to negotiating a deal [01:13:00] with the Steel workers, swapping buildings. That union would take over the Third Street building, and that the Puerto Rican Club would buy from them and wind up with the Union Hall as the place where the Club would be. And when I was involved in those talks, it looked like, "Wow, this can really happen." All of a sudden, heavier hand came in and stopped it. "We can't have them be central in this city," is how the message came down. And so, the deal didn't happen. But it came very -- can you imagine? That would have been amazing to have the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society there at the -- in Center right next to City Hall. [01:14:00]

JT: That should probably be a big transformation for the city. And I understand why you said that they say, "Okay, we can't have you here in the center of the city. It's not the right thing to do for them." And about your Puerto Rican born in the United States, your parents are both from Corozal -- both of them?

GL: Yeah, Corozal. Both my parents are Lopez, too.

JT: Oh, okay, that's great. (laughs) That's very strange.

GL: It is. Not related, but they're both Lopez.

JT: Growing up here in Bethlehem, as a Puerto Rican, do you ever have to challenge somebody or show yourself that you are Puerto Rican?

GL: [01:15:00] There was a time in Fountain Hill where there was a robbery and the newspaper reported it that there were two Puerto Ricans. And so, you know, the question was, "How do you know they were Puerto Rican? Did you ask them? Did they say, 'We're Puerto Rican and we're going to rob this place.'" And the Globe Times, it was at the time -- and they changed how they reported it from that moment. Instead of saying that they were Puerto Rican, they said that they were Hispanic. And I remember a couple of people that -- my cousin Ralph, who is passed away now -- he was red hot on that. And I was in conversations with him about that. And a fellow by the name of Tommy Morrero -- he's still around -- [01:16:00] him and I worked in the Steel Company 20-something years together. He's got some stories. His family has some way back -- his father played a big role in -- he was like a headhunter, bringing Puerto Ricans here to work in Bethlehem Steel. But that was one. And another one was questioning the school district.

Because in my work that I do now, sometimes I have an opportunity to speak in front of young people -- or young adults, if you will, and many times they are Latino, Hispanic, or Puerto Rican. And I still ask this question, "How many of you have been told by someone in school -- a teacher, or counselor, or something -- that you're too dumb for college?" And there's still too many hands that go up. I'm 65 years old and this shit is still going on.

[01:17:00] I just -- and so, I've taken a personal place in education. And I don't -- in this stage of my life, I don't necessarily throw rocks, but I am a truth seeker. And so, I speak to that. When I worked in Allentown for Alliance for Building Communities, there was a grant of money given to a particular store. And it was a million-dollar grant for a façade improvement. And this particular store was just horrible with the Allentown Puerto Ricans. I mean, horrible. And so, I organized -- when I heard about this grant [01:18:00] and that they were going to do a really big press conference -- truth be told it was only five of us, but I organized a group that we were going to protest on that day that they did the big press conference. And that we were going to flood all

these people, because that place is racist to Puerto Ricans. And so, they sent -- he's dead now -- Lou Rodriguez. He worked for PPL Public Relations, and he was part of the business world of Allentown and Lehigh Valley. He came to me and he said, "You know, Guillermo, they said you're crazy. They said you can't do this; this deal has been struck and made already. This is really going to bad." And I said, "It's not going to look bad for us, it's going to look bad for you." And he said, "Well, they want me to convince you to stop." [01:19:00] And I said, "Well, here's your moment, Lou. Go back and tell them you can't stop me. Go back and tell them that this guy is that crazy that he's going to bring hundreds of Puerto Ricans and protest this place. You're going to have egg on your face the whole time, unless you get them to agree to changing some of their conditions. That Spanish will be allowed to be spoken in the store when people come in. That they are not going to treat people like crap anymore, that they're going to do some sort of training for their staff. And if you get them to agree to that, we won't protest." Well, that's what Lou did. That's what he told them, and guess what, they agreed. (laughs) It was only five of us.

JT: That was great. I think those kind of battles, you have a few already in the community, I remember [01:20:00] that you single-handedly handled the baseball team to change the name. And they have a name that they want to use, and because you interact -- I said, "No, this name is not correct." And then the team recognized that and they changed the name. That's a few battles that you have that way. Do you want to elaborate a little bit more about that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

GL: Yeah, that was an interesting thing because there was a new wave of Latino leaders cropping up, if you will. The Pennsylvania Latino Coalition, State-Wide Latino Coalition was in force and it was starting to develop leaders and stuff. And I was in that phase between just left Bethlehem Steel and starting in the non-profit -- and [01:21:00] truth be told, at that stage, I didn't hear the word "Porkchop" said all that often. That was something from my past. It wasn't said much now. And I remember opening up the newspaper and saw that they picked that as the name, and it was such a big -- I remember standing there with a cup of coffee on a Sunday morning, with my wife, and I said to her, "Wow. If my mom and dad were alive, they'd be

rolling in their -- they would be spitting right now they're so mad that this name was used as something for --" because it just had a whole different meaning. And it was like the N-word for us. So, that's all I said. I didn't say, "They can't do it, it's horrible." And that was my first take on it. The truth is I don't hear it that much, my parents they would -- [01:22:00] they'd be livid if that was the case. So, as the day starts, we get ready for church. On the way to church we're getting calls, "Do you believe that they're doing this?" Get to church, people at church are saying to me -- even non-Puerto Ricans are saying to me, "I can't believe this. How is it possible? How can they be so clueless to pick that -- they're insulting the majority minority group in this valley. It's going to impact them economically." And I'm hearing this, and I'm saying -- and then later on that day, my wife and I went to a -- I think it was a 50th Wedding Anniversary kind of thing, and it was at Comfort Suites in Southside -- and it was a Puerto Rican family. And so, we were there, and of course it was full of Puerto Ricans. And my wife and I are sitting at our table, and the whole night, "We" -- and so, when they would say "we" they were [01:23:00] saying,

"You have to do something." "We have to do something."

And we got home that night, and we heard an earful -- quite a bit. And even my wife said, "So, what are we going to do?" And so, I did no different than I do now. I went back online; I checked the paper to see what the comments were. (coughs) I wanted to see what the conversations were about it, and I saw about four times people would say, "I can't wait to go to that park and yell 'Porkchop' at them Puerto Ricans, and they can't say anything to me about it." And I thought, "It's going to happen. They know exactly what --" it's exactly what we [01:24:00] didn't want to see happen is going to happen. So, at the time, I was vice-president of the Latin Alliance, and I was -- actually, Tony Iannelli was -- as he is now -- the CEO, President, whatever of the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce. And him and I touched based about it, and he says, "You know, I'm an oldie like you, you don't say that. You don't say that here in the Valley, I just don't get it." And so, I believe he called him and said, "You know, that might not be the best name for your mascot." And he told the guy that was there, his name is -- I can't remember his name now -- but he told him that he should

call [01:25:00] me. And the guy called me, and then I said to him -- actually I called him and left him a message. And said, "Hey, look, my name's Guillermo Lopez, I'm vice-president of the Latino Leadership Alliance here in the Lehigh Valley. Look, I've seen the name that you picked, I just don't know that that's going to serve you well when it comes to support from the Latino community, the Puerto Rican community in particular. That's an old equivalent of the N-word to us. And I'm sure you didn't know about it. But I just wanted to give that information before this goes too far, and it became too much of a problem." So, he calls me the next morning and he says, "Oh my God, no we didn't know that. And I've started asking, and I've heard from a few people, and you're absolutely right. Thanks for pointing that out." He was really polite, and really supportive. And he said he spoke to the owners, and they decided [01:26:00] to not use the name. That they would, based on this civil conversation we were having, that they would change it. But what changed after that, was when they made the change, and there was a crazy culture of people who wanted to attack me for leading this effort. Which, I didn't lead, I just gave him

information. They made the decision. But my life was threatened -- this stuff even made *Sports Illustrated*. I was getting calls from *Sports Illustrated* who wanted to talk to me -- Kurt Landis, that's the name of the guy -- and I said, "Hey Kurt, I got a call from *Sports Illustrated*, they want to talk to me." And he goes, "Look, I can't tell you what to do, but if you want me to handle it, I will." And I said, "Please do. You handle it." I was getting calls from ABC, Channel 10, and the local radio stations. And they wanted -- [01:27:00] because there were some people in the Latino community who were embarrassed that white people got pissed off about this, and that they were angry that this little girl who -- it was her idea to name the mascot "Porkchop," was now not allowed to do that, and how horrible of me. And how I gave them the ability to remember that oppressive name and now they can use it against us when they couldn't do it before. All this crazy stuff came out, and well, I essentially just stood my ground, and Kurt called me and he said, "Are you okay?" And I said, "Eh, I may have lost a few friends, but you know." And since then -- and that's quite a few years ago -- in my trainings, the leadership training, every time I'm

training a long-time Latino resident that's -- or Puerto Rican -- and part of [01:28:00] leadership training is also appreciating people that lead, that stick their necks out. And it always happens that one of them will come up to me and say, "I've been dying to meet you so I could just tell you how grateful I am that you led that battle to stop that name." And you know, I really can't take credit for it. Other than the fact that I told them the truth, that it's probably not good for them financially. That is probably is going to hurt them in the long run. You know, I said to him, "Good people make the right decisions." And they decided to not use it, to not go against it. So, that's what happened there.

JT: That's a great story. Guillermo, we are getting to the end of our conversation. Did you have any other thing that you want to add, or closing? Anything that you want to say now?

GL: Hold on a second.

JT: That's okay.

GL: Come on, [01:29:00] what is up with you? Come here, come sit with me. No, I just -- I'm humbled that this project's going on and that I'm being included in... I don't know

that I could be a prouder Puerto Rican than I am right now. And that I've had to do the journey and the search, and not -- you know, it's more about love. That's what I've learned, that our people are truly are about love. And that we're passionate about loving each other, we're passionate about making -- righting what's wrong, and we're also passionate about enjoying when we're together. And those are the things that [01:30:00] I love about being Puerto Rican more than anything. And history matters. You know, I loved -- I think one of the proudest moments for me as a Puerto Rican is when we were able to convince the governor to step down without firing a shot. When we convinced the Navy to leave Vieques without firing a shot. I think those were the things that, to me, shows us who we are. And that when we make the decision to move, nothing stops us. So, yeah, that's what I love about being Puerto Rican.

JT: Well, definitely yeah. We are very proud of our -- who we are. And we have a lot to show the people the greatness of Puerto Ricans. But before thanking you, Guillermo, do you have any names or members of the community that you may think will be good for this particular project?

GL: [01:31:00] Yeah, I think Iris Cintron, if you haven't spoken to her. I think she would be great.

JT: No, not yet, nope.

GL: Yeah, I think she would be a wonderful addition. I think you may want to speak -- not just because they're my in-laws, but Marcial and Ida Matos. District [Judge] Nancy Matos-Gonzales' parents. They're in their late-80s. And I say this with an achy heart that I don't think they have a lot of time left. So, I think you want to speak to someone like them, because they raised eight kids here, they --

[01:32:00] I'll never forget my mother-in-law, how she went in the school district to challenge them about -- because they're a very sports-minded family -- "How is it that my son didn't make first string and every other player that can't carry my son's jockstrap made --?" That's the kind of -- yeah, they have some stories. They also -- he was deeply involved in politics in this community. I believe he helped start the Hispanic Caucus. Politics and stuff. So, that family is huge. My wife's side of the family, they have like 800 years of service in the Steel Company. And then, the other person -- because I like to give balance, because her and I grew up side-by-side. Her and I

grew up every day, and like I said, [01:33:00] she's my comadre, but she's like my sister, and that's Myrna Lopez-Rivera. She was one of the last three people to leave -- she actually turned the lights out at Martin Towers. She was that high up, and she was there until the very end. So, she has a whole different perspective. And she stepped into the professional world from right out of high school. In fact, before leaving high school. I think she was working for them before she graduated, and moved up the ranks, and was at the top-three level. Not a lot of people know that. But she's humble, but she's got an incredible insight to the history of our people. We walked the same path, she see things a little different.

JT: Okay, [01:34:00] that's great. I definitely will contact you back for phone numbers of them. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

GL: Sure, sure.

JT: Guillermo, I want to say thank you again, from the bottom of my heart. I've known you for many years, and I hope for many more years with (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

GL: Absolutely. You and your family, your wife and your children. And you know, I just so much look up to you

Javier. You are the granddaddy of history here, and you're a resource to me. When I have a question, I go to you about it. In fact, don't be surprised, my son will be coming to you soon, because he's really working hard to understand Tainos right now.

JT: That's okay, I'm always available. It's not a problem. But Guillermo, I won't take any more of your time. Again, thank you for everything.

GL: Thank you, thank you for doing this.

JT: Okay, you're welcome. Take care.

GL: Bye-bye.

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