

Oral History Collection

Hector Flores

Interviewer: Malik H. Dulaney                      Date: September 3, 2011

Place of Interview: Dallas, TX

Mr. Dulaney: September 3, 2011, we are here with Mr. Hector Flores for his interview. How are you doing, Mr. Flores?

Mr. Flores: Great, how are you today?

Mr. Dulaney: Pretty good, pretty good. We're going to go ahead and start this off, and we're going to [going to] be laid back and kind of see where this goes based on what you say, if that's okay. And we have some set questions, which I think were probably sent to you or should have been sent to you.

Mr. Flores: I didn't get any questions.

Mr. Dulaney: No, okay. Let's go ahead and start off with your background. Can you tell us where you were born?

Flores: Yes, I was born in a little farming community called Dilley, Texas. It's about eighty-five miles from the border of Laredo [Texas], right between Laredo and San Antonio [Texas]. I was raised by grandparents--my mom died right after I was born, so my dad joined the service and stayed in the service. My grandparents were migrant workers. The first time I came through Dallas [Texas], I came through Dallas in the back of a truck. If you can imagine, going up north to Indiana to plant the tomatoes as--about eleven years old because I remember I went and got my social security so I could work in the fields. We'd go to Mount Summit, Indiana. The interesting thing is, on the route to Indiana, we'd stop in Hope, Arkansas. Which, to me, has meant a lot because hope means a lot to a lot of people. But, [I was] going to school in Mount Summit, Indiana while I was there. Also went to school in Chicago [Illinois]. The migrant trail took us all the way to Michigan. Traverse City, Michigan, and up to the peninsula where we picked the cherries and

strawberries, and other things like that. We used to do that, like every year. I did it about three years in a row. One of the years we stopped off at Chicago to work. Big Hispanic community. Most of the migrants from the U.S. actually come from Texas. They may come here from Mexico originally, but they fan out throughout the U.S. and work all the crops. But, that's part of my background. I went to school in all these places, including Plainview, Texas, where we picked cotton. But, I went to school, at every place we went to work. Ultimately, they'd have an opportunity to graduate from high school there. Didn't know what to do, because I spent two years in the first grade. With you know, the separate but unequal system that we had in Texas? Where we had black schools-- well we had the Hispanic schools on the other side of the tracks, same thing. The interesting thing about that was that there was a discipline labor policy at the time that they wanted Hispanics and Blacks to be educated enough so you could count enough to

be able to know how much fertilizer to put on 200 acres and what the yield of that crop might be, but not to prepare you to go to college. That's basically--they would graduate you in the sixth grade so you could feel like you had some education. But, thank goodness for organizations like LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens] and NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and all those who actually advocated for us being able to go to school where the best schools were at, the best curriculum, and the best teachers. I was able to be the sergeant group of kids who went to schools with Anglos and got me an opportunity to think about going to college. My teachers put me on a track to college. I did spend two years in the first grade learning English. But, I beat the system, I feel, because I graduated as a junior. It kind of evened out. I didn't know what to do when I finished high school. My buddies were still in school, so I decided I'd go to San Antonio, that's the next big city. I went to a business college

for a year, and I honed up on my English and Math, and all those kinds of things. I eventually tried community college to see if I could handle it. When I saw I could handle it, I kept on going to school. Ultimately, I got a degree from Saint Mary's University. And was recruited from Saint Mary's University--I was a policeman for seven years. I went to school about nine years to get my degree, worked part time. I mean, worked full time, and went to school sometimes full time. I was eventually was recruited to come to Dallas to work for the Department of Justice. Worked for them a year, rifted, went to work for the Office of Civil Rights and learned the education business working for the Office of Civil Rights Department, the old HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] of the education side. And that's how I got enthused about how important--I already knew that value of education with my own experience and how that opens doors of opportunity for everyone. But I worked there for eleven

years, and met people like Dr. Roberts, Thomas Jones, who worked with me and is currently a JP [Justice of the Peace], and other people in the community--John Wiley [John Wiley Price], and others who were known advocates. I won't say agitators, but this one was probably considered an agitator. But that's what makes things happen in our country. You have to be a catalyst for change or things won't change. From there on, I heard about a job with the district, and I had been involved in desegregation through the Dallas Alliance and was part of a twenty-one member group to try and fashion a desegregation plan for the school district. I felt it like a mission, so to speak, to continue that. A General by the name of Dr. Robert Brown and a guy by the name of Tankerson recruited me. At that time, there was a plan that called for 44-44-12. Forty-four White, forty-four African American, and 12% Hispanic. They were required by Judge Taylor to go out and recruit. And part of the court order, that was fashioned by the court,

dictated--ordered the school district to go out and find more minority representation for the school system, particularly in the professional ranks. So that's been there in the school system for the last--I worked in federal service about seventeen years and I worked for the school district, I just recently retired, for the last twenty-three years. Twenty of those was working in Human Resources, along with Dr. Alfred Roberts, and other bosses that I had there. The last three years I've been in charge of--been the director for intergovernmental relations--dealing with interaction between the school system and different units of government, be it the state, the city, the county, the airport, the congress, etcetera. Dealing with public policy issues as it effects education. That's--in a capsule, some of my background. I am married, have three kids. My wife is a retired teacher, taught thirty-eight years. That's kind of like, my history.

Dulaney: Okay. And, just to be clear, you mentioned the 44-44-12. This was the tri-ethnic committee?

Flores: Actually, this is the plan that was ordered by the federal district court. And so they directed the school system that they must change from what they currently had. Because one needs to approach discrimination, as it was proven in court, that discrimination sometimes is overt, where they overtly tell you "No Blacks needed" or "No Blacks can come in" or "No Hispanics can come in." And then there is the institutional discrimination that's inherent in different institutions like at the city of Dallas, with the police department, or the fire department. All of these have had to be opened by a court order so that people of color have an opportunity to not only apply, but to be a part of the work force there and also for there to be opportunities for upper mobility to rise to the highest level within those departments, just like in the school system or any other institution, but particularly those that are public entities. They have a moral responsibility to make sure that they are operated in a nondiscriminatory fashion. By law.



Dulaney: Okay. Can you talk about some of the organizations that you are a member of? Such as the NAACP, or--

Flores: Well, we work very closely. I am known as a member of the League of Latin American Citizens, and it is known as its acronym LULAC. And LULAC is a mirror of NAACP. They're twenty years younger, but it was patterned very much after NAACP was founded. To advocate for Latinos in the country. And because in Texas, in the 1920s, there were many people interested in the South. During the time of Jim Crow, and other--in that era. Well, in Texas, and in other parts of the country like California, Arizona, New Mexico, this also happened, it's just not as documented. We just didn't get the media play that African Americans got. Needless to say, it's all illegal, and immoral, but it happened, and LULAC came about as a result of that. Education is also close to us even though at times we were considered White for political purposes whenever they were going to desegregate a school system. They would say "Yeah, we

desegregated, we put Blacks and Browns together. They're considered White. What more do you want?" You know? They put you in the same dilapidated buildings with the same--I don't want to call every teacher inferior, but you know we had inferior teachers, and buildings, and curriculum. Because as I mentioned earlier, sometimes the underlying policy was not to get everybody educated to where they could compete with dominant majority at the time.

Dulaney: Can you talk about some of your achievements as president of LULAC?

Flores: Well, I think, going up the ranks in the last thirty-eight, thirty-nine years since I've been in Dallas, it has always been about building coalitions. You know, those issues. Because we know, in particular, that minorities, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, by every social economic indicator, we're always at the bottom. We're talking about Black or Hispanic owned businesses, if we're talking about lack of education, we're talking about lack of

employment, or underemployed, we're talking about lack of access to social services. You name it. We're always down at the bottom. So my goal has always, in working here, [has been] to try and integrate and work in a coalition form, and it hasn't been easy as there is a lot of racial tension because the Hispanic community has grown dramatically in the last thirty-some odd years. When I got here, as I mentioned to you, 44-44-12, twelve was the number of student enrollment at the time. If you look right now, it's almost 70%, but perhaps this year it's almost 70% of the school system. So, there is high expectations of Latinos that their employment should mirror that growth. And sometimes--there's also the--African Americans have made great gains in those thirty or forty years. There have been gains made in our community, but I can tell you that normally it has been at the point of a court order. So, African Americans have been opening these doors of opportunity for everybody, beginning with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It's opened up the doors of

opportunity, not only for African Americans, but also for other minorities, particularly Hispanics. In almost all the institutions, every program that's out there dealing with affirmative action, in particular, and are these--every federal program has a clause in there where everyone has to comply with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. And so that not only helps African Americans, it helps Hispanics and other minorities that come, they are part of the protected classes. Some of the goals that we've had is affirmative action, speaking on behalf of affirmative action at the last Gorama [unclear] Supreme Court. I was one of the Latinos that was invited, along with NAACP, and the Ministerial Alliance, National Ministerial Alliance, PUSH [People United to Save Humanity] out of Chicago, and others where we all came together to make sure that affirmative action was not derailed, because, you know, every once in a while they'll be White students that are manipulated, sometimes, by these legal organizations that are out there that

are trying to push an extremist right-wing agenda to take away the underpinnings of the Civil Rights Act. And many of those are how do you get to equality or parity? Affirmative action is one of those. Now it's called a more fashionable name, which is diversity. But, let me tell you--now that we comprise-- Hispanics and Blacks comprise over 100 million Americans, more than a third. We are a group to be dealt with politically and economically, because our consumption together is--that's why we have to prepare our children via a good public education, to assume their rightful place in our society and to have a job with an education. At least, now the doors are open a little crack. But we're able to go in and compete. A lot of changes have occurred in those thirty-nine and some odd years. But, we need to be working together and not against each other. You have to understand that there's a dominant group out there that would love to have us fighting each other instead of working together to ameliorate our own

situation. My goal at the national level has always been to be interacting with NAACP, the Urban League [National Urban League], and other advocacy organizations. Some of those are sometimes difficult. There's many laws that Congress tries to put on the books, so that we have to work and go against those laws. And I guess a good example is the organ--the memorandum of agreement in Texas that I was part to fulfilling with the state and the NAACP to work together on all civil rights issues, whatever it is. In many parts of the state, Blacks are a minority, but Hispanics are a majority. So, they're able to join our organization. In fact, we have a significant amount of African Americans in LULAC, and likewise. In some places where we don't have a LULAC organization, they join NAACP, or PUSH. I know that Jesse Jackson has made just an overt recruitment drives in the Hispanic community. And has many staffers in there working for them. I admire that because I think it--most of the time, Hispanics and Blacks don't know each other, don't accept

the kids in schools, sometimes. They haven't bonded. We ought to bond around issues, issues that are important to both of us. Instead of fighting over a measly little job--we should all be competing, in a way, but we should not be denying anybody the opportunity to compete. The best person ought to get that job. But we should not also try to derail any successes of any other group. We ought to try and work and emulate those successes. Particularly when it comes to political empowerment. I think a test of that coalition building is what has happened here in Dallas County in the last three election cycles. I think we've been able to turn around where we see people that are paying more attention to what the needs of Blacks and Browns in Dallas County--what those needs are, and addressing those needs. Like anything else, people come out of the woodwork to come and attack you when you're trying to help your brother. But, anyway, maybe I rattled too much.

Dulaney: No, no, not at all. I actually think you are going through a lot of these questions. I think you got a copy before.

Flores: No, no I didn't. From here [points at heart] to here [points at head].

Dulaney: [Laughter] I know. Now, can we talk about your role in Operation SER [Service Employment Redevelopment]?

Flores: Okay. In that--basically, it's like OIC [Opportunities Industrialization Center], you know, it's the old work force commission funded type. Like Workforce Solutions, it's the same thing. I'm on the national board, but I also used to be on the local board. It's nonexistent anymore, because they consolidated all these problems, and we have the Workforce Solutions. But I used to be on that board too. Now I'm on the national board of SER. One of our biggest problems has been CSAP [Chronic Stable Angina Pectoris], which deals with the elderly. In Spanish, they call it *la tercera edad*, or the third age. And helping them come back and be useful citizens, because--DealWell had a problem



worth about twenty-five million dollars throughout the country. Our goal is to get those--couch potatoes that are at home, and not doing anything, to keep their mind active, but also their body in better shape by going every day to do something. They're paid the minimum wage, but they can go and--we prepare them. If they don't have any skills to work in non-profits, or hospitals, and nursing homes, and even in companies, where they can work and be useful. Where they feel themselves useful and wanting to get up every day and go do something. We know that research indicates that when people don't have any reason for living, that's exactly what happens--they start to deteriorate, their mind and everything else. They can't do anything for themselves. But you have them serving somebody else, and they feel good about that. There's gratification in helping other people. I think that that program in particular is one that is helping just thousands of people in the country, in about twelve to fourteen states. We're touching

about a million people every year. Minimum. These are all problems that are federally funded. We hire the elderly, bottom-line, and put them to work. Not making a lot of money, but making them feel that they're useful and that they're doing something, and that they're contributing to society, and extending their life, basically, by that. The other problems are more for people that are not at job training skills. Where you prepare them to do--be able to prepare for an interview, how to do a resume, how to tailor that resume so it shows really what you're capable of doing, and then giving them skills. So that they can go out and--people that have families--like, now, with the unemployment rate at 9.1% nationally, and in some places as much as 50%, this helps the local community and the majority of these people are minority. But now, it's also affecting the Anglo population.

Dulaney: Which is why it's important now.

Flores: Somebody going to be listening real seriously. When we're at 15%, you didn't get anybody listening.

Dulaney: Now, can you talk about why you were forced to step down as a chair of operations here?

Flores: I haven't been--

Dulaney: Is that not correct?

Flores: Nope.

Dulaney: Okay.

Flores: No, I am not the chair. I was at one time. It revolves, like anything else. When I was the local chair, I served like five years. That was the local, here in Dallas. Up in the national board, there was some--how should I call it. There was some division in our group because we wanted to make sure we complied with everything and we had some staffers in there, including the executive director who was faking social security numbers. And I, as an official of the Department of Justice, am not going to tolerate. So there was a lot of tension on the board of how we should correct that. Well, we corrected it by changing the bylaws, and all that, to upgrade it, to make

sure we complied with all federal laws and regulations, and forced the director to resign. Without a doubt, I would do it again. Now, there were those in the community that went out--for a minute thought we were just trying to get rid of the director because we were trying to bring in our own person in there, which happens in a lot of these non-profits. Where you have a group that thinks alike--most of us work for the federal government, we're not going to do anything that is going to prejudice our reputation or our job, you know what I mean?

Dulaney: Right.

Flores: So we had to clean house. But, thank goodness we had a friend with the city. Levi Davis, who used to be the executive director, the city manager. Everything we did, we did with his blessing to make sure that our funds were not in jeopardy. But I did eventually pass over the helm to somebody else, to assume the presidency, to make it flow. You know, to make sure we kept that project, to be honest with you. Not only that, it's an unpaid job.

Don't think that--a lot of people think that there's prestige. Some of these jobs.

Sometimes you don't even get a "Thanks!" They attack you for being the chair [chuckles].

Dulaney: So we're going to--

Flores: I used to be on the Martin Luther King board, so I listened to Al Lipsen till two in the morning many nights, attacking us, okay? He was my buddy, man. I hate to say that he's no longer with us.

Dulaney: We're going to talk a little bit about education. I guess my first question would be--what is your opinion of Yvonne Gonzalez's tenure as DISD's [Dallas Independent School District] schools superintendent.

Flores: Well, I thought when she came in--well, see we had somebody else that was going to be the pretender to the throne, by the name of Dr. Ruben Alvarez, they brought him here out of TEA [Texas Education Agency], and that guy really knew how to work all the different racial and ethnic groups here. I think he had--working with TEA, he had real strong connections throughout Texas, particularly

Houston, and all the legislatures, and all of that. He knew more about the political nuances than I think this young lady. I don't think she was prepared, even though she had been a superintendent up in--Santa Fe, I believe is where I think she came from. But they did a number on Ruben. They made him an area superintendent first, and he was going to assume this job. Then, all of a sudden, when she came into the picture, he was no longer the candidate. You know, boards play politics. I think if you talk to one of my buddies, by the last name of Roberts, he'll tell you how those games are played over there. But, obviously, he did not become the favorite person there. You know, he's for compliance with the law. You know what I mean? But hey, I think she came in, probably was directed to do certain things. There was this strong anti--from what I understand, perception. The perception that was there that she came out with an agenda to do away with African Americans. I don't know that to be true or not. But, if she had a list to--I

guess, to get rid of African Americans. I don't know that to be factual, but I do know that that was a perception. And that obviously, there was a big scandal. Ultimately, it also hurt her, because she was in there doing things illegally. I'll tell you one thing, if somebody had not told her how to do the procurement, she wouldn't have one iota how to do it. You know what I mean? But she fell into it, and actually requested it, that it be done. So she's as culpable as anyone else, because she had to approve it. When you approve wrong-doing, you're equally guilty, man. I mean, I don't care.

Dulaney: Exactly.

Flores: It cost her! It cost her her career. It made us all look bad. It didn't only make Hispanics look bad, it made the district look bad. Scandal makes everybody look bad.

Dulaney: So I'd like to ask you the same question about Dr. Hinojosa.

Flores: I think Dr. Hinojosa did a hell of a job with what he was doing, but the politics--I think he's an introvert, and he's very hard to get to

know, personally. He just doesn't have those relationships. He's not about creating those relationships, all he was interested in sometimes were "Do I have the five votes?" I don't think he--you can't work like that. Even Dr. Moses would come to me from time to time, and say "Get Joe May off my ass." You know, because Joe May would be asking all these provocative questions about everything, basically about student achievement. "Why are Hispanics on the bottom, why are Blacks on the bottom, why can't we change those things?" Joe May had an agenda. His agenda was the kids. He was serious about that. Joe played politics over here for many times. I can't, for the life of my--can't think why he would want to become a board member. But, one day, he decided he was going to go in there and try to be the policy maker. But I think that, if you look at the achievement, he did a hell of a job. Even Moses [Mike Moses]. Though, to Moses' credit, when he came in, I knew he was going to change the district. I knew he was going to do a lot better, he was



the master of testing, because he opposed the testing in Texas. So he had to know something about that! And how to prepare the kids to be able to test; the curriculum, and everything directed at that. You know, Hinojosa benefited from that. I think that there were a lot of things in place already when he got here, and he just kind of keyed in, and he was able to finesse all of that, and I think he was--however you judge him, but if you just judge him strictly on the achievement of the students, I dare you to find another era in our time that has been more successful. And anybody that is distracted distractors-- now, on the political side, I think he played a real--he just didn't play the political game that needs to be played to stay there. And, obviously, he could have retired any time he wanted. I think he was tired of the-- they chew you up here in a year or two, you don't last too long in DISD. Ask, oh-- [gestures off screen] our Dr. that went to Illinois--

Dr. Edwards: Edwards.

Flores: Dr. Edwards. He found out real quickly that he was up here [gestures above his head] the first year and second year, but once the honeymoon is over--man, they were packing his bags! This is the way--big city politics and the school district is, big time. You got to know how to be building coalitions all the time, if you don't do that, you're not going to stick around. Mike Moses, I think, is a good example of that. I think we couldn't have gotten a better guy to come in and manage the school system. We've had people from internally that also that came in. We had Jim Huey, that I remember, and Robert Payton that came in. But, I mean, they got beat up all over the place, man! That's the hard-nosed politics that is here in Dallas, to be honest with you. The same thing happens at the city, same thing happens at the county. You got to be able to stand it, you got to have a thick skin. And, you know, those board members, those city council, they're all individual, they're all independent. And when they get five of them together, that's the way the

school district is going to go, regardless of what anybody else thinks.

Dulaney: Okay, so we've kind of looked at DISD--from recent history to now. Can you kind of talk about DISD and the desegregation of DISD from a historical perspective, what you've seen in any role that you've been in--

Flores: I've seen great changes from the time I started working there twenty years ago. I was given the opportunity to go out and recruit. Even though my responsibility was recruiting more bilingual and Hispanic persons, you can't turn away anybody else that is a good prospect, you understand what I mean? When I saw a Black or White that were good or excellent, you can't just--I mean you're there--you can't discriminate against somebody else, man. That's what we have to always be--in the back of our mind, we have to be thinking when we make a judgment, value on somebody. If somebody is prepared and can work--because I've had this experience. I've had when Mike Moses, in particular--when he came here, I had older, white people coming

to my door asking to come work here. And I said "Well, are you sure you want to work in our school system? I have to tell you it's 90% plus African American and Hispanic. It's not what it used to be a long time ago." She said "Well, I want to work for Mike Moses. I only have another five years to go, I'd like to do it here, because I think he's going to turn this district around." On the other hand, I had a person come in and say--highly qualified English teacher, so I had a job down at A. Maceo Smith school. English teacher, she said, "My husband would never let me go down there in that part of town. That's an African American school, isn't it?" I said, "Well, I think so." She said, "I could never go down there." I said, "Ma'am, before you say no, would you like to go visit, and go visit with some of the teachers, and go visit with the principal, and maybe talk to some of the kids?" And, believe it or not, she came back, "I wanna work there." She went and saw the teachers, saw the kids. And, you know, a year later,

she comes back. She said, "Mr. Flores, I am so happy for you giving me the opportunity to work here. The kids are wonderful, I'm having a great time. The teachers are really supportive, my kids are really achieving. You've opened up my eyes. It's not like the perceptions that I had, about kids and being--they were not disciplined." You know, all the perceptions that the media--you have to be yourself, you have to be cognizant of that. You can't believe--what do they say, "Don't believe anything that you hear, and only 50% of what you see, okay?" So you got to be real careful. Particularly when you're dealing with human relations, okay? 'Cause you have to be really careful, because, you know, people entrust you with their children. You got to put the best person that you can there. Even despite all the screens that we have, you know, to screen our people. There are some people that are going to--and they create problems in the schools and with the kids, and they're not there for the kids, to be honest with you. But, I've seen a lot of

changes in the demographics of our school system. I think Black children in particular have had great role models. We've had Black superintendents, and obviously area directors and--I don't care what level of profession in the school system, either there is a Black or we've had a Black in those jobs. Where a child can say, "I wanna be like the superintendent" or "I wanna be like the human resources director, what do I have to do to prepare myself for that?" or "I wanna be a nurse, like the nurses that we have there", or a lawyer. I mean, it has changed dramatically. That's not to say that we're the picture of perfection, either. Because again, there's these levels of interpersonal skills that people have, and the skill levels that are up there. I always believed also that sometimes the Alternative Certification Program, which have done a hell of a job to bringing a lot of minorities into teaching--I always felt that there's no way that--to me, the teacher preparation programs were always preferable, as far as I'm concerned. 'Cause

they used to do a lot of the student teaching and all those kinds--their skill level, to me, was far superior than somebody coming through in ninety days or four months. But, I mean, like anything else, I also have seen from the Alternative Certification Program, which is a program that I felt was engineered by legislators because you had all these white kids graduated from college, couldn't get a job, because they got them in all professions, you understand? So the legislature retooled education so we could get those kids that decided perhaps to go get a degree in P.E without certification, or in Spanish without certification. If you've got Math or Science, you're going to get a job. Or Theater Arts without certification, you're not going to get a job. So, you know, this is one way--go through this program like the ninety day wonder program that the military has to make you an officer. I always felt like--in due time, they're going to be at full performance level, but it's going to take time, effort on our part and their part.

Four or Five years. The other thing with teachers is you have to understand that there is a continual in and out. You know, where by the first year--20% of all the teachers that are produced in the state of Texas don't ever show up at a classroom. Another 20% drop out the first year. So, by the fifth year, whatever group started in the first year--by the fifth year, it's been a complete circle in terms of the people. Now, perhaps because there's no job, maybe that's slowed down. Retention is another issue. That's an issue. Attrition is another issue. Now we're seeing the effects of a lot of people retiring. You know, at one time, 40% eligible to retire--the teachers. Not enough teachers being produced. So, the Alternative Certification Program served a need. I don't know that that's helped us. What I see is that if you had an all minority school, you saw a lot of ACs [Alternate Certificates], is what they're called, going in there because they have a lot of people leaving, and so you're filling up a lot of these vacancies. At so one time,



there were more ACs coming into the workforce, 50%--more than 50% from AC than through teacher preparation programs. Same with bilingual. Like anything else, I think the achievement levels have increased for both Black and Brown. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. You know, they're always changing. The state of Texas is always changing what testing is. Then the national government, they have their own standards. So you don't know which standards are being--who you are going to address. Particularly like, the graduation levels. The dropout levels. What else are we going to do to redesign curriculum in the school system so that kids are able to get a job when they finish high school. Where do you send them to? 68% of Blacks and Browns go to community college, they don't go to a four-year institution. When they go to community college, they have to take all these redevelopment courses, because they're not coming out prepared, you know, to go to college. I don't know if I answered the question, but--

Dulaney: Okay, let me ask this last question. Do you think that DISD schools are actually desegregated now?

Flores: Well, I think--you can't desegregate DISD in the vernacular because it's 96% African American and Hispanic. So you know that the schools that just by the housing patterns, you know that in some neighborhoods are going to be all Black or all Hispanic. Unless they come--the beauty of the concept of desegregation was--that's why you had the magnet schools. Where Whites would want to come in to like Booker T. School for the Performing and Visual Arts, or they can come into Yule magnet school, where they can come in--and, they know that if they come here, people pay tuition for their White kids to come to our schools. Because they are top--they are world class schools--science and engineering. Number one or number two in the country. Booker T. School for the Performing and Visual Arts--national recognition, you name it. There's three or four. But the others are also top notch in the magnet schools. We have

Skyline [Skyline High School]--the kids out of Skyline are going to college, man. It's like going to Bishop Dunne [Bishop Dunne Catholic School]. 90% of those kids are going to college, and getting a degree. Not just going to college--anybody can go to college. Finishing college is not easy. Going onto post-graduate work. This is what we want to do. This is what the school system should be about. It should be about results. But, like anything else, obviously there's racial politics that are played on the board, and there's also racial politics that are played out in the schools. Whoever is the boss can play those racial politics as they choose to. I'm not saying that I approve of it, but we know that that happens. We know that there is politics that is played with every decision in this country, and the school system is not immune to that. That's where community groups and advocates like LULAC and NAACP--we can go and hold these schools accountable and the district accountable. Of course, we can always litigate, you always have that. Like

Mr. Tasby [Sam Tasby] did, to change--if anybody did anything to change Dallas, it's been the Tasby family with their lawsuit. They changed it for everybody, not just for Tasby and for African Americans. Just like Martin Luther King. His whole concept, his philosophy, [chuckles] it's not just meant to help Blacks, it's to help everybody. To get yourself out of these racial divides that are there, to get you thinking about that you should recognizing people for what they are, not what you look like. Hey, we've got a long ways to go in America, okay.

Dulaney: Right. Are there any non-Latino or non-African American people of goodwill that are notable that you've worked with?

Flores: Absolutely. I think that we have Clay Jenkins right now that represents us at the county that's going to do a good job because I think he listens to us. But, I remember working with Mr. Cullum [Charles Cullum], one of the Cullum brothers, and Mr. Jack Lowe Sr. I think he was part of the Dallas Alliance. These are people that had good heart. Jack

Miller was another gentleman, he used to be with--he used to be with a clothing company, I don't remember the name right this minute.

Dulaney: Sanger-Harris.

Flores: Sanger-Harris. Jack Miller. He spent a lot of time-- and I think this young man met more wrath-- who left his company to spend 100% time on the school district, not on the board. It says something about having an interest, you know what I mean? This is commitment, man. Where you commit yourself to--because when you help the Dallas public schools, you're helping all the children, man. You got to go in there to help the children, man. They're the--hey, not just because I'm looking at my retirement, my pension, to make sure it stays into the future, but you better think like that. Because you know what, I used to go out and speak. When I would go out to the schools, they would let me tell some of the middle schools. You're better off paying attention to these kids and treating them with respect because you may find one of these kids one day burglarizing your house or

even your car. You got to educate these kids so they can at least have an expectation, that they can at least get to your successful rate, to be a teacher or more. I mean, you have a vested interest in this, in our community. You know, and some of them didn't like what I had to say. They'd say, "They're not going to do that." I'm just telling you, I have a law enforcement background, okay. I have to think like that, because you know, if you can't read or write, do you know where you're going to wind up? I said, Penitentiaries are full in Texas, man. We put everybody in jail. And, here in Dallas County, that's what's going to happen. They're going to go this way [gestures to his left], they'll be doing first marijuana, then drugs, really hard drugs, and they're going to be up there. They're going to steal from anybody, they're going to burglarize any house, any car, whatever it takes. I've seen it, personally. I said, "So, you need to think about your neighborhood, what you want it to be." But, the neighborhood--the anchor

is that school, man. In all the neighborhoods we have, it's a strong anchorage, just like the church. The church plays a vital role, but it's the school that, in my opinion, plays a more important role because we're churning out the leaders of the future. Tax-paying citizens. So, we deserve to give them the best that we can. Because, if you don't, it'll come to bite you in you know where.

Dulaney: Right.

Flores: Anyways, that's the Hector Flores thirty second--

Dulaney: Dr. Roberts, do you have any questions?

Dr. Roberts: Just this. We didn't explain that this is a project of the African American museum and the Archives and History program involved in local educators. We're looking at a period of 1950 through 1990 in terms of documenting the civil rights movement in Dallas County. And what I'd like to ask is--who are some other Hispanics that have been involved in the civil rights movement in Dallas?

Flores: Well, obviously, you know some of my running buddies. Adelfa Callejo, Rene Martinez, "Trini" Garza [Trinidad Garza]. They're

falling by the wayside, because many of them have passed on. Victor Monreal, was one of those guys. Dr.--the first Hispanic doctor that graduated from SMU, he now has a school named after him, would be another person I would consider a person that played an important role in this community, particularly on Hispanic--not only Hispanic, but on education issues. These are people that were totally, totally committed to education. Even Adelfa, I mean, she has always been, you know, whoever is superintendent, whoever is on the board--I would like to say Rene Castilla, but Rene Castilla has there's strong feelings about Rene Castilla when he was chairman of the board and the way he treated Dr. Edwards. I know that it's common knowledge--

Roberts: We're not limiting about it, just an indication.

What about in the area of housing, criminal justice, health care--?

Flores: Well, Matthew Macon [?] would have been the health care guy. I need to go back through my notes, but we used to have a Hispanic summit where



we would--Marisela Alvarez is was another person who was an advocate, did a lot of good work. Diana Flores. Diana Flores, she is extraordinary. Even Domingo Garcia--there for a while was really on school issues. He hit town about fifteen, twenty years ago, he and Roberto Alonzo, they were--particularly Domingo, he was doing a lot of the city council issues, on civil rights stuff, but also school issues. They come to my mind.

Roberts: You haven't mentioned a major family.

Flores: The Medranos, obviously. Pancho Medrano [Francisco Pancho Medrano]. I would say, Robert and Richard, I would say, of all of them, were probably the critical--but Pancho Medrano is gone, he's a component. I mean, you know he was the bagman during the civil rights movement in the south. He was the one that worked for Walter Ruther, and he was the one that would sit down to make sure that a lot of the events took place because labor was underriding a lot of that. Pancho Medrano played a hell of a role, making sure--that's why he got beat up all over the place.

Including here in Texas, by the Texas Rangers, because he was helping the melon pickers, you know the cantaloupe pickers. He and Joe Bernal, who is my friend from San Antonio--Texas Ranger captain Allee [Alfred Y. Allee} threatened Joe Bernal. He said, "You know what? I'm your boss, you got it wrong, Captain. I am your boss as a senator. You're not my boss as a Ranger." A bunch of Medrano took this case because Captain Allee beat him all over his head. You know how Pancho was a big guy, he wasn't afraid to fight either. He as a boxer, in fact. Pancho Medrano, were you aware of that? He was a heavy weight fighter, here in Dallas. So, he beat him all over his head, so he took him to court, and won a case against this Texas Ranger for going in there and getting involved in the picketing the melon fields and the strike they had. It's part of the recorded history. Pancho Medrano's mother was African American. Were you aware of that? So, Robert's grandmother was African American. Okay? So they have these ties with the Black

community, not only the civil rights movement, but also their family. They have ties, very strong ties. You remember Robert when he was on the school board? He was the only Hispanic we had on there, but whatever Kathlyn Gillam did, you know that Robert was right there with his vote. He didn't even read his stuff, whatever Kathlyn Gillam --you know how Kathlyn Gillam was a very--I mean, she the only one that read up on every detail of the budget or anything, she was very well read. It was marvelous to go in there and see [imitates Kathlyn Gillam] "Mr. Superintendent, look at page 132. Last night I was reading--can you please explain to me what this expenditure is about and why are we spending all that money there when we're not spending it on the children?" [Stops imitation] Man, I tell you what, man. She was--and that's why people did not like her on the school board. I'm not talking about us [gestures around room, laughs], okay. She would be pricking the conscious about where all this money is going. Let me tell you one

thing about the school system. Everybody deadpans the school system, but everybody wants to do business with us. They won't put their kids here in our school system, all the Whites have put all their kids in private school and charters, and everywhere else. But they sure want to come here for a job, and they want to come in and do business with a billion dollar business. I'm sorry, but that's the truth, and I think we need to-- that's why I always--as soon as we have another bond program, they talk about "Oh, yeah, we're going to make sure there's procurement opportunities there" and when you wind up--when you pay one firm forty-five million dollars to manage the construction, and you know who that firm is, they're not going to be Black or Hispanic, right? They may hire one of us in there, you always have to have a token, but you know how that goes. I didn't mention the civil rights that--I know school is the most important, but I was very active and involved in a lot of the

police brutality. Both professionally and also in the community.

Roberts: In fact, I wanted to ask you a question about that.

I noticed that it was in your role with the equal opportunity, I guess--

Flores: Well, it's community relations service where I worked. Department of Justice. That's where Bob Greenwall used to work, remember?

Roberts: Yes. And were you here in Dallas, and if not you can still respond to it, I think the name was Santos Rodriguez.

Flores: Yes, I was here. That was when I first got here, and I thought I had made a mistake when I came here, because I had just gotten the job. I came here in 1972, during Father's Day, and this happened in like, July. I was in Mexico City [Mexico] with my family, and I had two boys. Now, coming to Dallas to come see my wife at TWU [Texas Women's University], I would come through Oak Cliff and I-35-- remember I-35 crossing over, to me it was like a moat. Where all the White people live on this side [gestures off screen], and you have to pass the bridge to go over here and

work. But, there was a sign there, on the right, believe it or not, it said "Impeach Earl Warren", who was the Chief Justice. It said--big sign there, it said, "John Birch Society, Dallas, Texas." I say, "Man, what did that guy do to them?" And it had to do with *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*. Now, if you know anything about that case, LULAC helped--there's a Mendez case that's a precursor. Earl Warren was a Republican governor in California. Mr. Mendez was married to a Puerto Rican lady, and so Mr. Mendez had a business. But he always wanted to farm, and he would always tell his backer that he wanted to be a farmer, a gentleman farmer. So, when they had the--when the federal government actually removed all the Japanese because of World War II, and they put them in these encampments that they had for them, they suspended some of their rights, they suspended their constitution, basically, to the Japanese. Some of them were born here, and they put them in these camps. Well, this Japanese family that were farmers,

they were going to lose their land. So, the backer went to Mr. Mendez and said "Mr. Mendez, you have the opportunity. I have this family--this Japanese family and there's no way that they're going to be able to work the lands, they're going to lose their mortgage. They can't pay! They're going to be up there in a camp. Would you like to lease them?" and he said "Well, yeah, I'd to go" and he grew asparagus, up there in the LA area. Not only did he help himself by becoming a gentleman farmer, because he had a little beer joint and grocery store and all that, he and his wife, that's what he wanted to do. He was Mexican--Mexican American. You need to know this, because this is what ties us together. If you go back in history Mr. Mendez tried to enroll his kids there at the school, and they wouldn't let him enroll his kids because they were darker [chuckles]. Now, part of his family was lighter, they wouldn't let his five kids of his family who lived with him, they wouldn't let him. So he goes up there to the school, "So wait a minute." First, to the

teacher, "I'm sorry, but we have a policy here. You got to go back to the other school, to the Mexican school." He said, "Wait a minute. I served my country, I'm a good resident, and you're not going to let my kids go to school here. I have two business, I'm paying taxes!" They'd say "I'm sorry, that's the policy, and we can't let your kids here." But they would let his nieces and nephews. So, he went to the principal, he said, "I'm sorry, but we have a policy." He went to the school board--the same damn thing. So, he said, "I'll need some fire power." So, he got LULAC, and he got some of the other organizations, and he filed a lawsuit in federal court. That's known as the Mendez case. It went all the way--district court, I think that's the ninth or tenth circuit over there in San Francisco. Earl Warren was a governor at the time. He was appointed by Ike Eisenhower to the Supreme Court. But, this case was flourishing. NAACP, Thurgood Marshall filed a brief on behalf of the Mendez case. It was the first time they used



a psychologist to say in, because they were saying that Mexicans were intellectually inferior and that they could pass on diseases to the other kids. Something that they used to say about Blacks too, you understand, about the intellect. They went and got psychologists to talk, and the principals were saying that's the reason that they didn't want these Mexican families in there. So, they lost at every level, and when they went to appellate court, Earl Warren touched base with his attorney general, says "Do we have a chance of prevailing?" "No, there's no way we can win this case." So, instead of appealing and going to the Supreme Court, the guy stopped it right there, and in fact, the next legislature session, he put some bills in California, to try to desegregate the schools in California. This Mendez case, they had the Japanese American League, and they had ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], and they had NAACP, and LULAC, and all of them supported this effort. Now, LULAC went out and raised money, they were the

agitators, you know how they go. This case went to--they used this as a basis for-- because, you know, they had all these cases percolating all over the country, besides *Brown vs Topeka*. So, the Supreme Court consolidated all of them, but it's called-- because, you know how they all have different issues, so they consolidated, and that's how-- Earl Warren, in fact, went out and he politicked every one of the justices, so they had a unanimous decision, because he knew that racial warfare could erupt. But, anyway, look at the Mendez case. In fact, I was at the Smithsonian, one time, with also--Ms. Brown, one of the children. I get invited every year to an event that they have in Washington DC. I went to their forty-fifth or fiftieth anniversary. They go to the Smithsonian, and the Mendez case--because it's a step. The first step was the Mendez, the second step was the Brown, that decision. But see, these are how Blacks and Browns, in some of these issues, in my opinion, if they coalesce--not only that, I subscribe to Jesse

Jackson's idea that if we were to work together politically, we could control the major cities in the country, and then eventually we could control the states, politically. But we also have to make sure that our groups buy in to--that we have to be at the table, making policy. You can't go in and then fight policy. You got to get in on the front side or be there at the table, so they don't do all these--like what they did to us with the budget, in Austin [Texas]. They have a supermajority Republican, they are basically going to destroy us. Police brutality during the Billy Prince era--you know the deadly force. One year that we analyzed, they had thirty somewhat African Americans, in particular, killed at the hands of police. I'm sure you were here when you saw the demonstrations, and all of that. But it wasn't easy to get them to change their deadly force policy, because you had these cases at the Supreme Court--unless you fear for your life or the life of somebody else, you can't use deadly force. That didn't used

to be the case. I mean, they could just about shoot into a car, all kinds of stuff. The problem was normally it was against people south of the Trinity [River], it wasn't in Highland Park, it definitely was not in East Dallas, it definitely was not going to be in the nicer part of town, but it was always against Blacks. I think there was a major deal that a lot of the leadership came to-- just like Santos Rodriguez. You know, I thought we had made a mistake, because we were in Mexico City, vacationing there with my family, and I saw it in the morning. Front-page news in the Daily--English Daily. Said eleven year old Hispanic kid, shot by policeman in patrol car. Blew his brains. I had the opportunity to see those pictures because one of my friends--I brought one of my buddies from San Antonio--this is during the Henry Wade era. You know, he was putting away people for a thousand years. Now, how does somebody with a sentence of a thousand years going to serve that? But I also served on the grand jury when they put about 300

people in the penitentiary, most of them Black or Hispanic, and they were planting drugs on them. 'Cause they knew that they were drug users--they were planting drugs on them, the narco [narcotics] squad here. So we kicked back all those indictments, we no-billed them. I was on there for like ninety days. 45% or more of those indictments were no-billed because of the scandal that they had. But the big issue to me was always the use of deadly force. They were also forced to do more recruitment, selection, promotions. Their testing is always suspect over there. Their training, their lack of cultural sensitivity, racial sensitivity, all those kinds of things. But I can honestly say that the demographics--there's been a consistent transition from Whites to minorities. Part of that has been 14/1 that has achieved that to some extent. Where power is now shared--but you know where all the resources are going to go. You know where all the streets are being maintained. You know where all the libraries are not going to be closed down or you know

where all the pools are not going to be closed down. I think our representatives have to continuously be mindful of that. I've had the experience of seeing the first city manager in Richard Knight, and knowing him, he lived by my neighborhood, and the first Hispanic city manager, we had the first chief of police, or two. We had the first fire chief, Black and Hispanic. The Hispanic didn't know he was Hispanic. He's from Miami, he didn't believe in affirmative action. So we said, "We don't want this guy around." And I went up and I told the mayor, "You know what? This guy doesn't even believe in affirmative action. Everybody this guy is running is White. What kind of deal is this?" You can't have a police department, or a fire department run by that. You got to have--you have to look like the community. You want to respect you, and pay attention to you. You have to apply the laws uniformly. Of course, I told you about Reverend Holmes, I think, right? He's a--when I was interned from college to Carlos Truan, who would become the

senator, he's from Corpus Christi, he was a LULAC leader, and I was interned to him and the first guy--He said, "I want you to meet Zan Holmes from Dallas, he's the first Black to get elected to the legislature." I saw Zan Holmes, I thought he walked out of *Gentleman's Quarterly*. He was dressed better than *Gentleman's Quarterly*! I mean, impeccable, you know, he's very articulate--the issues he carried. Very impressive. Now, I never knew that someday I'd be here--you know, I'd go from time to time to St. Luke's, on the forums, the definitions. He was always the first to open up his church to everybody, whatever issue it was on desegregation, police brutality, you name it. I guess that's how I met John Wiley, too, because he worked for Cleo Steele, and he had his, at that time, even then, John had his situation, but he was always there. Doing the work that needed to be done for the community. I also--of course, I worked with Eddie Bernice Johnson when I worked for the HEW, she's a registered nurse, and she was the regional

representative. Of course, she become the first congresswoman from this area. Of course, very familiar with John Wiley and his admittance at commissioner's court, and now Elba Garcia. I think this is all better accomplished, like I mentioned earlier, through coalition politics where we can change things. I think a good indicator and I think a good experience in Dallas has been evolving in the last three election cycles, where we come in and knock out forty-four or forty-five judges. Come in and change county politics. Now we got to keep it and sustain it. This is a Black/Brown city, whether they like it or not. Now its how do we do--we're getting political empowerment, how do we do economic empowerment? I think we're pretty much done on the lawsuits with the school systems. They know they have a job to do, but now it's got to be economic empowerment. I think that's going to be, in the coming years--how do we get our kids prepared so they can become the doctors and the lawyers. We have some, but to reflect our numbers in



the population. And in the banking field, and the finance, and all that. Most of us, when we're at home, they don't tell us about becoming a businessman or businesswoman. But, you know, Hispanic females, that's the fastest growing part of business. Hispanic-owned business. You know, they get a lot of experience at home balancing the books at home, you know? I mean, the males do not handle that, it's the females in that community. But anyway--and also education. They're the ones getting all the scholarships. Are you aware of that? They're willing to apply themselves. Guys are out there messing around, sports and everything else. Smoking dope and all that crap. They got to concentrate on getting themselves to the next level, you know. I'm sorry, but girls are snookering [edging out] all the boys, Latino, big time. We got to have affirmative action for Latino males to get scholarships. So we do the top 10%, top 20%, and the top 30%, that way we can sneak in a

few in there. I'm not lying! Anyway, any other questions?

Roberts: Oh! This has been great. We're going to do a DVD of the interviews, of course. Just a little bit from each interview. We'll have a public program on November 19, at 11:30 a.m., here at the museum. You're getting an invitation.

Flores: You have my email address, just shoot me an email.

Roberts: You'll have the opportunity to view the DVD of this interview, if you choose to do so.

Flores: Well, it's been my pleasure. I hope I didn't bore you.

Roberts: No! It's been very interesting.

Dulaney: Very interesting.

Flores: I appreciate always the relationship I have with Dr.

Roberts--

[End of interview]