

Crossroads of Commerce, Culture, and Community

Interview with Enrique Franz

May 21, 2005

Interviewer Miguel Giner

Miguel: We're going to start by asking your name.

Enrique: Okay.

Miguel: Tell me what your name is.

Enrique: My full name is Enrique Rodriquez Franz.

Miguel: Enrique and what is your date of birth?

Enrique: I was born June 29, 1976.

Miguel: What is your place of birth?

Enrique: I was born in central America to specific Managua, Nicaragua.

Miguel: And what is your race or ethnicity, Enrique?

Enrique: I'm Hispanic.

Miguel: Can you tell me how many brothers and sisters you have and what are their ages?

Enrique: I have one brother he is 18 years old.

Miguel: Are your parents still alive?

Enrique: My mom is.

Miguel: Not your father.

Enrique: No.

Miguel: When did he die?

Enrique: He passed away when I was three years old.

Miguel: And who of your family members continue to live in your native country?

Enrique: I got several ones. The closest one is my grandma, I got uncles, most on my mom's side and I have uncles on my dad's side. My grandma on my dad's side too and several other cousins and relatives like that so you could say there are few down there.

Miguel: When you growing, or when you were little what language did you speak at home?

Enrique: Spanish, 100%

Miguel: And how old were you first came to the United States?

Enrique: When we immigrated to the states I was seventeen and a half.

Miguel: When was that?

Liberal Memorial Library received an \$8,000 Kansas Humanities Grant to record the immigration stories of immigrants to Southwest Kansas. The Grant titled "Crossroads of Commerce, Culture, and Community" will record and preserve the stories of 40 individuals and/or families who immigrated to Southwest Kansas from a foreign country.

The grant dollars from the Kansas Humanities Council allowed the library to record the interviews with both video and audio equipment and disseminate the information obtained during the interviews through our website and DVD recordings. Preserving the stories of immigrants to Southwest Kansas is important for many reasons, and if we do not begin to record them soon, the stories will be lost as families move on or individuals pass away.

Enrique: That was December 18, 1993.

Miguel: While you were living in your native country, Enrique what was your occupation?

Enrique: I was a student.

Miguel: Did you ever have to work back in Nicaragua?

Enrique: I did but not because it was a necessity, but mostly because when we were on vacation, summertime vacation my mother would send us to Grandma and grandpa and we used to go down there and spend three or four months at a time. Most of it was what my mother and grandparents called being a man, teaching you good things in life. It was not necessarily to get paid but to learn good habits and all that kind of good stuff.

Miguel: Can you tell us about your living conditions back in Nicaragua? What was your living conditions like before you came?

Enrique: You could say that we were middle class, not poor, we were not rich at all. Like I said my mom had a pretty good position in a company, but we were still middle class individuals, family a single parent home, middle class.

Miguel: She was the one who supported the family?

Enrique: My mom, yes.

Miguel: What is your religion?

Enrique: Officially, it's Catholic but I really don't practice.

Miguel: While you were living in your native country were you ever subjected to harassment, physical or mental abuse or imprisonment or torture by the authorities?

Enrique: In a way harassment is always been something that has been, that has been in Nicaragua. The reason being is because there's been a civil war and we were subject to serve in the military when you turned 15, 16. There was like no choice. You were maybe at the movies and they get these trucks and back it up the build and just shove people into the truck and you were in the service and that's why in the middle eighties, mid eighties, maybe mid nineties, actually early nineties there were a lot of people, young people dying because they were serving in the military without having the proper training and not wanting to serve in the service that was more likely to be a military type of deal. It wasn't like you were given a choice, and so in a way yes we did and that's one of the reasons we were wanting to immigrate down here.

Miguel: So it affected you in some way?

Enrique: Correct, absolutely because I have friends and family members most of the people you immigrated to this country because of the civil war going on down there, where people were getting killed for no reason and where we had a government that was doing dumb stuff and we had this whole situation going and we had our own people fighting for land for stuff that was not worth it.

Miguel: Did you have to serve in the military in Nicaragua? Were you forced to serve in the armed forces?

Enrique: No, no.

Miguel: You didn't have to?

Enrique: No

Miguel: Did you have to...were you directly harassed, imprisoned or persecuted by authorities?

Enrique: Personally not but close family members did, like my mom's brothers and I was a witness several times when we had people, the rebels, you know those people that we called the contras. I don't know if you remember back in the eighties when we had the Iran-contras deal it was...yes I think it affected me because I was you know every time I remember that it brings back memories that I don't want to remember. I've seen so many not very pleasant stuff that was done to family members, direct family

members.

Miguel: So you lived through the experience of the revolution and Ortega taking over and overthrowing...

Enrique: Simosa, yes it did affect me directly and the reason it affected me directly was because in the whole mess the whole situation, you know the revolution in Nicaragua was July 19, 1979 that's when that happened, well in August on 1979 that's when my dad was killed and he was killed in a dramatic, sad and stupid way that in did affect the rest of my life. It affected me to this day in a positive and a negative too, and also my mom obviously because that was a situation I don't think no one wants to live that. No one in their right mind wants to live through that situation.

Miguel: You were born in 1976, the revolution overthrowing Simosa was three years later in 79...

Enrique: Correct.

Miguel: How do you feel about describing the circumstances under which your father died or is it something would you rather not talk about it?

Enrique: I really don't mind, you know why because it make me a better person is a way. I heard a lot of people, lot of guys, a lot older people that tells you know I didn't have that and that's why the way I am, maybe it turn out to be a drug abuse or turn out to be an alcoholic some of these people blame that situation or the way they behave or what they are doing because of that or I didn't have that in my house well my situation was situation where I had to learn at a very early age that you know is tough and if you sit down and just take whatever comes around to you and say okay I'm just going to take it and go from there, no heck no make me a stronger person, make me more aggressive in a very positive way , make me want to be better and do better things and be positive and be competitive and be number one in everything I do. I know a lot of people will call that, you might have an ego, and maybe I do have an ego thing, but that's a different situation, but it did affect me directly and my mom too and many members of my family. For instance my mom to this day my mom always, always, always gets you know sad and she always remembers that and that's something that hurts.

Miguel: What did your father do?

Enrique: My father was a military, was a professional military and he was one of the main officers that put together the revolution. He was pretty close to, he was in the north part of the country and he had pretty good, I would say that he was like a company commander and like he was one of those guys that was a tanker commander, tank commander. He was a very high officer in the revolution.

Miguel: He was against Simosa.

Enrique: Correct. Right. And the whole situation was after the revolution my dad had a command it was a accident of the country and he was actually going back because my mom from north of the country and my dad was also from there but with the war going on he was all over the country and he was part of the rebels, and so he went back after the revolution it was a situation where we were going on vacation and my dad owned a pickup truck oh, maybe like an S-10 I can relate it probably to a Toyota and we were going to the north of the country and my grandfather use to be one of those guys that had a lot of land and he was one of guys that had a lot of cattle and a lot of coffee, which is one of the main deals down there, so he was, not wealthy, but he was pretty good. You know he was not poor or middle class but he was in between. So we were going down there and we had my grandma and my mom, myself in the truck, it was my uncle, two or three of my dad's side and two of my mom's side.

Miguel: These grandparents are you talking your dad's side or your mom's side?

Enrique: My mom's side.

Miguel: Your mother's side?

Enrique: Yes. Correct. And my dad didn't have any body guards on him at that time, he was just being himself and when we got down there one of my brothers, because my whole dad's family was involved in the revolution, they were very strong they had very strong beliefs about what was going on in the country and all the stuff that was happening in Nicaragua back then, so they were all involved in my dad's

smaller brother, the youngest one got killed and got killed by one of their own guys. Cause they didn't really have the control over what was happening down there and some of the guys were getting out of hand, going out and doing stupid stuff that I'm sure you know what I'm talking about, you know. You've got the military, you got the power and there's no control and you're liberating your country, so on and do forth. So one of these guys, one of the santadetas back then was doing some stupid stuff and so he got into a fight with one of my uncles, my the youngest one, my brother, my mom's, my dad's brothers and he killed him.

Miguel: Your father started serving in the armed forces under Simosa...

Enrique: No actually he started, no.

Miguel: He started when the revolution...

Enrique: My dad was a civil engineer

Miguel: A civil engineer

Enrique: Correct. My dad when he joined the santanetas he had been working for Simosa, not Simosa directly but at one of the energy plants where most of the energy was going out to the places in the country. He was one of the main engineers in that...

Miguel: And he joined the revolution

Enrique: Correct

Miguel: But he had not been serving in the armed forces before the revolution.

Enrique: No, no, but his dad was in what we called the national guard, which was Simosa's. So my dad had already been through the philosophy of you don't want to be in the military, so when he joined he joined and he went, he joined very early you know after you had this job. I don't think he had that job, I can't really tell you, but as far as I know he did not hold that job very long because that's when he saw how things were working and he didn't like it so that when he joined the revolution. It took a lot of years, so to make a story short, this guy killed my uncle and my dad since he was a higher up he had been looking for this guy for whatever reason, whether it was to look up for revenge, or put him in jail or to apprehend him or whatever, this guy decide to get ahead of the game on my dad and he got a truck, he pulled a bunch of people in a truck, armed people obviously because it's just after the revolution so he just decided to intercept my dad's convoy while we were just family members and got my dad out of the truck where we were and my mom got out of the truck and everyone was going crazy and my mom on the outside and I was in the truck. To this day I still remember...

Miguel: You were there when...

Enrique: Correct to this day I remember how my dad died and this guy grabbed this gun and I'm not going to tell you I have this clear picture, but I do know, I remember how it happened. That's when this guy just grabbed a handgun and just shot my dad in the head in front of me and in front of my mom and all the rest of the family members. So it was a really, really cold person, those people you don't even want around on this planet and then shot my dad several times.

Miguel: In cold blood, basically.

Enrique: Cold blood, absolutely and he wasn't only in cold blood but he didn't have a reason for doing that, he was a coward.

Miguel: And how long after that did you come to the United States, after your father had been killed?

Enrique: After my dad got shot, I was three years old, like I said, three and a half something like that and after that life was pretty much downhill for my mom because she had a kid and she was single and she had to do some stuff to survive. She did go to school, what she was a professional secretary and she got this job and she started working and she got to the position like she was a human resource director of

this huge company that was forwarding coffee to the states and so and so forth and she started working but it was not easy, especially when you are in a country like that, we had to live and leave and the situation where a lot of things come together but not to make it better but to make it worse because you have a kid. And I can't complain to this day the person I admire the most on this planet is my mom.

Miguel: So after your father was shot, your family still stayed in Nicaragua?

Enrique: Correct.

Miguel: For many years?

Enrique: Yes for many years because they had no choice

Miguel: Your family didn't come, they didn't leave right away after the murder?

Enrique: No, no they never did. Justice it was something that was pursued for many years, my dad's murder. It never really got done. We had a lot of information that were coming from the big guys, the military leader, or whatever to my family to my mother actually, but his guy wasn't apprehended, he wasn't in jail. Some of the people would come up and say oh, he fled to Cuba, he was in Cuba and instead so back then back then sending him to Cuba meant that he was rewarded for what he did, because Cuba was a pretty close ally of the Nicaragua government back then, the santanetas, so it was last thing, so we never did find out, some people said he went back to the militia and he got killed. So we never did find out what up, but we, my mom did stay there for several years, and that's when I had to go to school. She sent me to, after I finished high school, I went to university and stuff and I can't complain. She did a terrific job in putting me through the best I could have back then.

Miguel: I'm sorry to hear all that.

Enrique: Oh, you don't have to be sorry. That's a problem with a lot of people they think that just because something like that happen to you they want sympathy.

Miguel: Yes, but I don't think it's easy for you to talk about that subject.

Enrique: Ah, it's not easy, but at the same time like I say it's something that for whatever reason God makes you go through the situation. A lot of people tell me, blah, blah, blah, so you know what sympathy, a lot of people so that's who I am, sometimes people might approach me as a hard person I don't have feelings, I don't get me feelings hurt easy because of a lot reasons. Life has been a little tough for me, but I'm sure there has been people going through stuff that's not even close to what happened and it's probably tougher ten, fifteen times, so that's the way I see it.

Miguel: When you were talking about people being forced to serve in the military are you talking about before or after the revolution?

Enrique: After the revolution.

Miguel: After?

Enrique: After, after, after the revolution a lot of people were unhappy with what was going on in the country with the santanetas and the connection they had with the communism which was not a good connect. You know they had the USSR or whatever with the Cuba people and so on and so forth. I mean the country was basically, it was a plat hole that's what it was. They were doing whatever they wanted to, just like any other country in Latin America. I sure that's the situation that when somebody gets the power they start making money, getting money, taking money away the people they should be giving the money to so ya it's one of those deals.

Miguel: You have strong feelings about that?

Enrique: I really do. I really do, I really do. That see, even though I was born in Nicaragua and I'm always going to be a Nicaraguan until I die, because I am really proud of who I am and where I come from at the same time I believe in the system that we have in this country, and I believe in this system really strong. You know I believe about how things are working, obviously I got some disagreements with

some stuff I and do have a say so because I'm here and that's where my family is and stuff and I'll probably be here, I'll probably die in this country to tell you the truth.

Miguel: We'll be getting to that point, as I'll be asking you about that. Well, thank you Enrique. Let's move to the immigration experience. Your experience as an immigrant. Let me ask you, how did you first learn about America, or the United States as we call it?

Enrique: The influence that this country has on the rest of the world as you know is pretty strong and whether it's Nicaragua, whether it's South America or China we have a lot of strong influence whether it was the people who will eventually go back after the revolution a lot of people head back to Nicaragua, so you get to see all these people who are coming from the states, most of them from Miami, Florida and you know you heard these great things. Grandpa use to talk about it a lot, he, my grandma was Canadian, my great grandma was a Canadian immigrant so it was a lot of stuff, ya we did learn a lot of stuff through my grandpa, because my grandpa use to sit down and talk to us, you know give us these long speeches he was part of the revolution with sandino, he was part, at a very early age part of that situation when he was 16 he joined the sandio you know back in the day.

Miguel: What side of the family is that?

Enrique: That's my mom's side.

Miguel: Your mom's side?

Enrique: Ya and that's why my military tendencies that I have and the love of the military comes not only from my dad, but also from my grandpa, because he was in the military too. He was a career, and he was also in the national guard.

Miguel: What's his name?

Enrique: His name was, he's deceased already, Josantonio

Miguel: Joantonio.

Enrique: Josantonio G (get name).

Miguel: G (get name)

Enrique: Ya.

Miguel: And what brought you to Southwest Kansas, Enrique. How is that you ended up in Southwest Kansas?

Enrique: It's very funny story because my mom, we had a lot of family, we got not a lot but we do have family in Miami, Florida but when we first came to the states the plan was to come to Miami, Florida because Miami is very famous around the world and most of the coming from Nicaragua to the states was coming to Florida. So you see the guys, all fancy guys you know the Miami boys you know and you went to Miami because that's the place to be. Party and girls you name it, everything so that's a dream land you know that you want, so my mom's said no, we're going to send you to Kansas. Kansas, I say what am I going to go to Kansas for and she said Ya, Kansas you might get out of hand and Kansas, why Kansas, I don't know where Kansas is, but it happened to have one of my uncles and aunt who live here.

Miguel: Here in Liberal?

Enrique: Here in Liberal, yes.

Miguel: In what year are we talking?

Enrique: We're talking about 1993, well I came here in 1994 to the United States in 1993 and she just said Kansas, so we ended up in Kansas and I hated it. To tell you the truth I hated this little small town, right in the middle of nowhere. In Florida there's a lot of American people so to Spanish it is very popular. When I came to this country I didn't speak the language so when I came out here it was very difficult to communicate and one of the things that really made me feel bad was the fact that I was

sent to high school. You know I was a second semester in civil engineer; I was doing some stuff that these kids were not even dreaming about.

Miguel: You were already in college.

Enrique: Correct, I was, you know I was on my way to be a professional engineer, so and the first things they say is you're going to school is that you aren't old enough to say you're not going to go. I say I want to learn the language for sure, but I don't want to go to regular school so they send me to ESL classes and to regular school. To tell you the truth I didn't even pay attention because I was really upset that they would pull my back so far.

Miguel: From college

Enrique: Correct. And that was the whole idea when I, I came here on vacation.

Miguel: When you came to Liberal or...

Enrique: The states

Miguel: When was that, in 1993

Enrique: Ya, I was only on vacation I was suppose to be here for a couple months only and head back home.

Miguel: You came here by yourself or...

Enrique: Yes, by myself.

Miguel: In 1993?

Enrique: Correct, my mom was already here.

Miguel: She was already here.

Enrique: Yes, she had been here about a year, about a year and a half, so I was by myself in Nicaragua a whole year and a half.

Miguel: So you came on vacation in 93, your mother was already here?

Enrique: Yes.

Miguel: And the next year she sends you to Liberal?

Enrique: Correct.

Miguel: Because you had an uncle and your aunt.

Enrique: Ya, and she wanted to move down here because, since a lot American people down there and competition is hard and you don't find jobs like what your going to get compensated like you want to. So my uncle had been talking and said ya, I'm going to go and it's just a great place to work out here at National Beef.

Miguel: Okay what was your uncle doing when he came, I mean when you came, what was he doing?

Enrique: He was working at National Beef

Miguel: At National.

Enrique: Yes and he still works at National Beef.

Miguel: He's still working at National Beef?

Enrique: Still working at National beef, correct. So that's how we ended up here.

Miguel: Can you tell us about your immigration trip? You said you came on vacation and that was all.

Enrique: That's it.

Miguel: How is it that you ended up staying?

Enrique: I had a guy, a great guy when I came here and the whole situation was I wanted to go back. I wanted to come here and have a good time for a couple months and then head back because you know university life in Nicaragua is tough, the curriculum is really tough, but I didn't want to stay I wanted to go back and I had people I knew, I had friends that were important. So when my mom decided to come to Liberal to visit, because at first we came to visit we meet this guy, this Nicaraguan guy that, the Nicaraguan community is very small in this town okay and we meet with Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson is all about education, okay. He said come back you need to go to college here. College here is something that you need and the education here is something that is recognized all over the world and so I said alright, we can go ahead and stay probably and see what's up and so I ended up staying and that's the whole reason...education.

Miguel: What do you remember about your immigration trip?

Enrique: It wasn't...

Miguel: Anything in particular, the travel...

Enrique: I was, I was I was very excited when I left Nicaragua because I was going to see my mom obviously, and hadn't seen my mom and it was very hard for me because when I graduate from high school in Nicaragua my mom done this whole life and put up with a lot of stuff and had put me through high school because I went to a private high school which meant extra money, uniforms and so on and so forth. And throughout my whole high school I was in the powerhouse in Nicaragua and she paid a lot of sacrifice and so on and so forth, except when I graduate my mom was here and she could not go to my graduation and the way it works down there, because I'm sure they do this in other countries, mom and the person who's graduating walk down the aisle and you receive your diploma, you get your diploma it's pretty much like a bragging rights. You know, jeez, I put you through this, I'm proud and you did it. And I didn't get to do that and that's always something, it's something that I'm going to take to my grave and it's something that really bothers me.

Miguel: Because she was not there?

Enrique: She was not there and she suffered a lot because she was not there and I did to because I didn't think it was fair because she had done all these things for me and she was not able to be...you know they usually give you your ring when you graduate and your mother or your parents are the ones that put the ring on your finger and I didn't get to do that, it didn't happen for her and that's one of the things that really bothers me and it will bother me until I die, like I said.

Miguel: How did you first find work here in the Untied States?

Enrique: It was funny. I was mainly...I'm the type of person, I like to work. I like to do a lot of things. I'm also very active and we had a guy from Nicaragua that was working at McDonald's back here at Pancake Avenue at McDonald's we I came out here and my uncle knew him and as I said it's a small community you get pretty tight with everybody, you get together and so on and do forth. And most of the community, the Hispanic community was Mexican you know most Nicaraguans became pretty tight you know because we got different tradition different things we do and so on and so forth. This guy guy to my uncle say, I want to work at National Beef, I want to work at National Beef, I want to make money before I was here and if I was going to stay I wanted to do something. I didn't want to just stay at home or something. I wanted to make money I wanted to be able to buy the shoes. I wanted the clothes, I wanted everything I wanted the car, you know. That was one of the biggest things, I wanted a car, um, so this guy said okay. You want part-time. I said ya, I want a part-time. So I was going to high school. They put me in high school here and I went to through, to work for McDonald's, and that's how I started. I started as a dishwasher.

Miguel: At McDonald's.

Enrique: McDonald's and that entire...I didn't speak the language, at all. You know I had my classes at the university, you know university class but the teaching of the language in our country is kinda you know very small staff, you know. So that's how I started, that's how I started working down there.

Miguel: And how did you first find housing?

Enrique: I didn't have to. My uncle was already established down here, so we just moved in with him and we lived with him for a long time.

Miguel: Enrique, what have been some of the most difficult adjustments that you have had to make living in the American society?

Enrique: Um. I don't think there's any to tell you the truth, I'm very easy to adjust to any environment.

Miguel: What has been your experience with immigration authorities?

Enrique: It's been great. I don't think I never had any problems with them.

Miguel: And your experience with teachers and school officials here in this country?

Enrique: Um. It's been good and bad. The bad in a positive way and I'm not sure if I'm making myself clear on that. I'm going back to what I was telling you when I was put in ESL. I felt very dumb. I felt very stupid. I was very unhappy because here I was at that whole different level than you know education and I come out here and they want to treat me like I'm a freaky dumb person. Like I'm a kid. Then in the ninth grade I've been through these things. I could probably teach this stuff if you want me too, but no, I cannot get any conscience to teach people. They just what to...I was an immigrant and the perception of the immigrants was, you know. Some of these fellows is different...and you don't have education and you don't have education and by golly you're doing to do what the system says you do and so in a sense I was kinda dumb because I didn't manage the language but which is why. It was gray, but at the same time I was feeling really bad and I had a few teachers that really didn't agree with the system that they had, but other than that I think the system works pretty good and if you're willing to learn they are willing to teach you and you have education in this country that 's the most valuable thing you can have.

Miguel: What about your experience with police and other law enforcement agencies in this country?

Enrique: I have nothing to say. At one point I thought I wanted to join the law enforcement, so I don't have anything against them or anything to say about that.

Miguel: Have you ever, have you ever experienced racism on part of Americans towards you.

Enrique: Yes I have. Yes I have. Directly or indirectly. Directly I think I have.

Miguel: Why do you say that?

Enrique: You mean you want me to tell you specific cases

Miguel: If you feel comfortable explaining in more details how you exp...

Enrique: I think I'm going tell you...let me tell you something and this is something that a lot of people don't know and they take it personally, but going back to the same thing...education, education, education. The perception that north American people is that we are a bunch of idiots, okay. Some of them, but everyone because I know people...north American people that really extremely nice people and they understand how it works. But the thing is when you have a person and it has to do with education as I said and ignorance because when you have a person that doesn't know anything about where you come from what you go through everyday, what these people do down there, you know how much money you earn. Most people don't know the average person in Latin America makes about twenty dollars a month. Twenty dollars a month, okay and the only reason they want to immigrate to this country, most of them ninety-five percent of them is to make a better life for their families, and they don't get it. So you see what I'm saying, we do have a problem with the people and I want to make that very clear that that is understood that we do have a problem with the people that is ignorant about our culture forgetting why we are here, why we are here in this country. We're not here because you know it's cool. I think it is a necessity.

Miguel: When you were put back into school you were in college, you were placed at the high school level do you think that was a language issue or racism?

Enrique: No. That was a language issue it has nothing to do with racism. It was just following the truth...the

system.

Miguel: Enrique, during the time that you have been in America, have you returned to your native country?

Enrique: Yes I have.

Miguel: How often?

Enrique: Once, only once. One time and one time only. That was a pretty good experience, very refreshing.

Miguel: When was that?

Enrique: I don't remember exactly what year....what month but I think it was 98. 98, 97 I'm not really sure when it was at....16, 19 days I don't really remember exactly, but we did end up going back there and, um...actually it was 18 days and it was pretty good, pretty good experience because I got to see a lot of stuff. I went through the whole country in about 18 days.

Miguel: Do you keep in contact with people back in your native country?

Enrique: No. Unfortunately no. I did for a few years, but since time, life in this country is pretty hectic, sometimes you get, it's pretty fast everything is pretty fast so no, I do not anymore.

Miguel: Probably you don't send money back to anyone there. Do you send money there?

Enrique: I do some to my grandma.

Miguel: She's still there?

Enrique: Yes.

Miguel: Do you think that at some point in the future you will return to your native country?

Enrique: Probably not.

Miguel: Why is that?

Enrique: Many reasons. One of the main ones is that my family is here. My kids were born here and they are growing up here.

Miguel: How many children do you have?

Enrique: I have three kids.

Miguel: Okay, well thank you. Let's move to the expectations versus reality. What your ideals and dreams about America when you came? What were you expecting?

Enrique: I guess I didn't really have a clear picture on the U.S. I wanted it to be successful, and success to me is not in the sense of money but successful in having a family, you know. I reached the American dream and the American dream for me it was and still is a lot of things, but those expectations you're talking about you can always you can always you know change those. You can adjust yourself, or adjust the expectations to yourself or change them sometimes, but it really depends on what sense you're talking about.

Miguel: That dream that you were saying those ideals that you had, do you think those relate to the real America?

Enrique: Yes. Yes they do because anything is possible in this country and I don't care who you are.

Miguel: What do you like and dislike about American society?

Enrique: What do I like about American society?

Miguel: What do you like and dislike about American society?

Enrique: You know I never thought about that question before therefore I...I the only thing I can tell you is that you know the American society is good, but at the same time it stinks, because sometimes you don't

disagree like for instance this country is founded by immigrants so why not you know agree. Why not work with immigrants, why not be able to get along with immigrants because I don't care, those immigrants might be from Europe or, but it was founded by immigrants.

Miguel: So that's what you probably dislike about living here.

Enrique: Sometimes I have because if you are an immigrant and you don't obey the law and you are being dumb you are being stupid that gets you the right to act and to enforce the laws.

Miguel: And in what way is America similar or different from your native country?

Enrique: Let's start with difference. The system, the government. Whatever, whatever you name it, I'm going to tell you it's completely different from how, it's a different world, it's a different planet down here.

Miguel: Are there any similarities?

Enrique: No really.

Miguel: What has been the most difficult aspect of American society for you to adjust and what have you done to adjust to it? What has been the most difficult aspect?

Enrique: Obviously the language barrier at the beginning. That was not really hard, but it's been sometimes when I came in that I had been and it's bad for a lot of immigrants, you know is one of the biggest deal, but other than that I think I'm pretty flexible and I adjusted to everything else.

Miguel: Do you feel more secure or less secure in America?

Enrique: 100 percent more secure than any other place I've been to.

Miguel: Do you think that the quality of your life has improved?

Enrique: Oh ya.

Miguel: In what ways?

Enrique: 100 percent. Everything. When you have family and you have a job and you have roof on top of your head and you have food and you have the stuff that you want to buy. When you see something at the store for you kids and your kids say dad, mom I want that toy I want that whatever and you know you are able to provide for your kids, I think that's a plus. Absolutely.

Miguel: If you had an opportunity to talk to someone from your native country who was planning to immigrate to America, what advice would you give them?

Enrique: Depends who the person is. Depends what age the person is. Depends what expectations the person has about coming to this country, but hey heck if you want to immigrate you need to come over here now. Every case is different because we all different, different personalities and we adjust different and we talk different and we walk different, so it really depends who you're talking to and what age group, what expectations the person. I mean they come up here for vacation and they want to stay forever so on and so forth. I mean it's a lot of stuff that you can do it.

Miguel: Can you have a one fit all advice? Is there something you would tell everybody regardless of age or interest or...

Enrique: Yes. There is one thing and one thing only that makes this country unique and that's why a lot of us are here and that's the fact that this country if you don't succeed, or if you want to succeed you can do it, because it gives you the tools and it's really up to you if you want it to happen or not, so if you're coming up here and you what to succeed guess what you're going to work hard but at the end of the day at the end of the road you're going to make it. You're going to make it if you have the conviction to make and you are true to yourself and being realistic because obviously you have to be realistic to come out here and say hey, I want to be the President and that's not realistic. But to say in ten years I want to own my own business I'm going to work hard for those ten years and I'm going to save up and make it happen that's possible.

Miguel: If the President of the United States invited you to serve on an immigration committee what suggestions would you make to improve the immigration experience?

Enrique: The immigration experience in what sense...the people that are already here or the people that is planning to be here?

Miguel: In general...

Enrique: In general...

Miguel: People you are coming, people who are already here?

Enrique: To make it better, I'm going to give a pretty quick example and this is something that you and I can relate to. In Liberal, Kansas we've been trying to get people to understand and get them through the process of learning about our culture. Cinco de Mayo is a big example you know what I'm saying so to me...to be able to understand each other it's going to have to be a process of education so what I will suggest, what I will probably do is maybe get some more education going. Campaigns to get more education going so we can learn about each other, so people can learn about us and ourselves, learn about them.

Miguel: Let's talk about national identity. Do you see yourself as American or Nicaraguan or both?

Enrique: I see myself as an American first right now because I am in this country, but at the same time I'm a Nicaraguan because I was born and what I tell you at the beginning at this interview, I am very proud of where I come from I am very proud of my roots, so to answer that questions I have to tell you that immediately, right now I am an American. I'll tell you I disagree with that term because American, we all Americans. A lot of people have tendency to say Americans you know and I'm from central America. We're in north America right now and there's south America. So first of all we all here on this planet we are seeing different because of the way we talk and the stuff like that to go back to your questions...American or Nicaraguan, to me I am equally right now, and little more right now I have a tendency to tell you that I'm in this country I obeyed by the rules of this country and I am a little more on this side now, but also, and I take this into consideration all the time is the fact that I really don't care what we call ourselves. Americans, Nicaraguans, I really don't care I mean we are created by the same God, so it makes no difference to me.

Miguel: Do you make attempts to maintain your national identity?

Enrique: I don't have to because I keep it all the time.

Miguel: How?

Enrique: I do for instance, my Spanish and I speak Spanish with a person that is going to understand what I'm saying and I talk to them in the language like how we suppose to in that country. I keep informed, not like a use to because I used to read on the Internet the newspaper from there everyday and I don't do that anymore, but still I make attempts to get myself informed and fortunately most the stuff you see and stuff I really don't want to know about. Ya, that's some of the stuff I do.

Miguel: As an immigrant living in the United States what are your greatest challenges right now?

Enrique: Greatest challenges. Gosh, this might sound you know dumb to you, but challenges...

Miguel: What do you see as a challenge?

Enrique: That can be a lot of stuff, but any challenge or anything for...I'm going to give you for example one of my challenges. I want to eventually make myself independent in the whole sense of the word. Financially independent and I want to be able to get my own business and I want to be able to do things on my own. Not having to, not having to depend on the employer or anybody else but myself. So that could be a challenge, like I tell my wife sometimes I might be you know I might be right I might be wrong. I might dying trying to be independent in the whole sense of the word but other than that a challenge would be having my kids educated, have my kids have a college education to have make sure that when I look back when I'm seventy if I live to be that, and turn and look back I want

to be able to say you know what I did a darn good job raising these kids and they are good people and they have a good life and that's my biggest challenge in life.

Miguel: Do you think the American education and society in general should foster bilingualism?

Enrique: Yes.

Miguel: Why?

Enrique: Because you haven't to put. I'm going to give you my own example. You haven't to put, I had already graduate from high school and was attending university and stuff, but you're having to put a person, let's say you're an immigrant and you come from another country and you are a junior in high school and you come out here and just because you don't speak the language you don't adjust right away they're going to hold you back and put you in ESL for a semester or a year or whatever until you catch up and so that to me is a problem. Because you're holding a person back and if have a bilingual you can always be doing your thing but your catching up with the language to.

Miguel: So you're in favor of that?

Enrique: Yes I am.

Miguel: Is there something else you want to add or say about your experiences as an immigrant, Enrique?

Enrique: Not really it's just one of those things you know. As an immigrant I have to tell you that I appreciate everything more. You know I have everything I do I give of myself 300 % of everything I do because I'm an immigrant and I appreciate the little things that people don't appreciate I do appreciate those a lot. I appreciate the fact that I'm here. I appreciate that I'm able to make money and to give my family food and so on and so forth. As an immigrant that's what I can tell you that I have a tendency to fight a little harder than the average person because I want to succeed and I have something to prove. Not to anybody, anybody else out there you know, don't care but I have to prove it to myself. And that's about it, but other than that, that's good.

Miguel: Anything else?

Enrique: No. Anything else you want to ask me?

Miguel: Okay thank you Enrique. Thank you very much...

Enrique: No problem.

Miguel: For sharing your experience with us

Enrique: Good