

Crossroads of Commerce, Culture, and Community

Interview with Erica Rosales

September 25, 2005

Interviewer Dora Ponce

Dora: Good afternoon, I am glad that you are here.

Erica: My name is Erica Rosales.

Dora: What is the date of your birth.

Erica: 5-2-1984

Dora: What is the place of your birth?

Erica: Zacatecas Mexico.

Dora: What is your race?

Erica: Hispanic.

Dora: How many brothers or sisters do you have? What is their age?

Erica: I have two brothers and one sister. My sister is 19 years old. One brother is 16 and one brother is 12 years old.

Dora: Are your parents still alive?

Erica: Yes they are.

Dora: What are their names?

Erica: Manuela Rosales and Miguel Rosales.

Dora: Who among your family continues to live in your homeland?

Erica: I have my mom's parents, one of my dad's uncle and the rest in the U.S.

Dora: While living in your homeland what was your occupation?

Erica: None, I came here when I was a child.

Dora: What were your living conditions like in your homeland?

Erica: I never lived there really,

Dora: What age were you when you came to the United States?

Erica: I was one year old when I came.

Dora: What is your religion?

Erica: I am Catholic.

Dora: How did you first learn about America?

Erica: Well my parents brought me here when I was small.

Dora: Do you have an idea or a reason as to why your parents came to Southwest Kansas?

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.

Erica: I think it was because since they already had me, they wanted to give me a better life, in the way of living, give me more. I think that's why they decided to come to America.

Dora: Do your parents tell you about how they describe their immigration trip?

Erica: Yes they do. They said it was hard. I came here whenever I was one year-old. My mom and my dad said that they had to cross the Rio Grande, and they had to carry me on their back and the water was up to their chin it was really hard.

Dora: How did you find work in America?

Erica: Well after my parents got legalized, they legalized me, and so I grew up here, I went to school and so, I was legal.

Dora: How did you find housing in America?

Erica: Well, By my parents. I've always lived with my parents.

Dora: What were some of the most difficult adjustments you had to make living in American society?

Erica: I don't think I ever had any difficulties. When we would go to Mexico, since I've always lived all my life, I think it was harder to live in Mexico than to living here.

Dora: What has been your experience with immigration and naturalization authorities?

Erica: I really...what do you mean?

Dora: Do you have clues about authorities...

Erica: I think I had some bad one when I was small...my parents weren't legalized and I wasn't legalized yet. When we would go to Mexico I remember I had to play being asleep, and the immigration people would go inside the buses wouldn't ask for my papers. Saying that was ok.

Dora: I know that you got your naturalization the last year. How was your experience with them?

Erica: I think it was good. They really treated us like people...you know. I think the people were there because they wanted to become naturalized to the United States. I think is a big step for in their life someone to become naturalized. I Know a lot of immigrants that are not residents, and it's really hard. They have to work for their families always with the fear that they might get caught.

Dora: What is your experience with teachers and school officials in America?

Erica: To me, it's been a good experience, every time I went to school. I've never had any [bad] experiences with anything.

Dora: What has been your experience with police and other law enforcement agencies in America?

Erica: I've never had any problems with them.

Dora: Would you please describe occurrences of racism on the part of Americans towards you?

Erica: I've never had any.

Dora: During the time that you have been in America, have you returned to your native land? If so, when and how often?

Erica: Would I?

Dora: Hmm...

Erica: I wouldn't I am so used to ...everything here. I remember going back to Mexico for vacation and to me it was very hard. My grandparents' home wasn't at all...you know...like American homes. They had a restroom?...no. We had to go all the way to the back. To rinse the dishes and wash the dishes we had to bring buckets of water. I didn't like it. Yeah, now we do. The last time I went to Mexico it was when I was 15 years old, and it's so different now. I would love to go to Mexico, but not to live, just to visit, since I have my family.

Dora: Do you maintain contact with people in your native land?

Erica: Yes, with my grandma and my uncles.

Dora: In what way?

Erica: Calling them. I haven't gone to Mexico in like what...six years. And I call Mexico to see how my grandpas are doing. I do plan to go next year.

Dora: Do you send money back?

Erica: No, I don't send money.

Dora: Do you think at some point in the future, you will return to your native land?

Erica: I don't think so.

Dora: Why not?

Erica: It is most of all because of that. I have my home, my family, my kids and my husband here. To visit yeah.

Dora: In what way is America similar and different than your country?

Erica: Like I said before, it's the qualities... the way of living is so different.

Dora: What was the easiest aspect of American Society for you and how did you adjust to it?

Erica: I think the easiest is that I was born here, I mean in Mexico...the easiest was getting along with it.

Dora: For you, it wasn't difficult?

Erica: No...

Dora: What resources did you use to help you adjust to American society?

Erica: I think...the resources were probably just my parents telling me the way it was in Mexico, since they had a hard time. You know ...my mom worked outside farming, it was really hard. I think it is just them wanting to be here.

Dora: You feel more secure or less secure in America and why?

Erica: I think I feel more secure...because of I guess cause you know how Mexico is like with police...I hear on the news...I don't know if it's true...but I hear they've killed somebody and they can't find them or whatever.

Dora: Do you think the quality to your life has improved? If so, in what ways?

Erica: I think my quality of life. Yeah, it has improved.

Dora: In what ways?

Erica: Well, since I've never lived in Mexico, but when I would go on vacation, it was different. In what ways? Like...I've told you...like going to the restroom, taking a bath, washing clothes outside...

Dora: Do you see yourself as an American or the nationality of your country of origin or both?

Erica: I think I see myself both. I love where I come from, but I've also lived here all my life, so...I feel I like I am both.

Dora: Do you think it is important to maintain your national identity? If so, why? If not, why not?

Erica: Yes I do, I think it is very important that you know where you come from.

Dora: In what ways have you attempted to maintain your nationality identity?

Erica: The way I think ...is by talking Spanish, doing things...like ...your culture, your customs, like quinceañeras...the food you eat.

Dora: What has been your experience with language, religion, food, dress and other customs in American society?

Erica: Ah, the way I see it...it's different. The food in Mexico is different than what you eat here. The dress is different.

Dora: What you like best?

Erica: I like Mexican flavor. It's better...

Dora: In what ways would American society improve its treatment of immigrants?

Erica: I think immigration is doing good. I know... I work with immigration. It has been giving a lot of people the opportunity to be here. I think that everybody should be given an opportunity, and yes, whenever... like the people abuse from that opportunity, I think they should be send back to Mexico. I mean like whenever, they have committed a felony or a crime. I think immigration has come a long way.

Dora: Do you think American society is becoming more hospitable or less hospitable to immigrants?

Erica: I think is becoming more...I think is becoming better helping immigrants.

Dora: Would you like to add any other comments?

Erica: No...

Dora: Well. Thank so much Erica.

Erica: Thank you.