

RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCELLA VARGAS

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Ezekiel Medina: Okay, we're going to start. My name is Ezekiel Medina, and today I am interviewing Marcella Vargas. I am also here with NJ AOC certified Spanish-English interpreter Nydia Otero, who is also the family historian. The first question I have for you is--where were you born?

Marcella Vargas: Puerto Rico.

EM: Where in Puerto Rico were you born?

MV: Isabela, Puerto Rico.

EM: What was it like growing up in Isabela, Puerto Rico?

MV: It was a very beautiful time. We had a beautiful family, father and mother. I had a beautiful childhood.

EM: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MV: Well, I had thirteen, plus the other ones, altogether twenty-two brothers and sisters.

EM: Who are your father and your mother?

MV: My father's name was Ambrosio Medina, and my mother's name was Juana Medina-Trujillo.

EM: Your father had all those children.

MV: Sí.

EZ: Your mother had how many?

MV: My father had ten children, ten sons and daughters before my mother, before he married my mother. Then, my mother had fourteen more after that, after he got married to her.

EM: What was it like going to school in Puerto Rico growing up?

MV: It was nice, fantastic. I used to like it. It's, you know, just a routine every day.

EM: Did you have a lot of good friends there?

MV: I had a lot of friends. We had to be obedient to what our father and mother say all the time. No matter what, we had to go to school. [laughter]

EM: Every day, you went to school.

MV: Every day, yes.

EM: Was this school far from where you lived?

MV: Yes, my school was about half an hour from my house. We walked to school every day, back and forth.

EM: Wow.

MV: Yes.

EM: Was your house situated close to the city square, or was it in the mountains?

MV: It was in the mountain far away, in the farm.

EM: Can you describe the area you grew up in?

MV: Yes, it was a farm. But my house was in a very nice part my father had, and the house was big. We all lived there together, and I used to love it. It was a farm; we had all kinds of animals. We had cows and horses and chickens, and we used to enjoy whatever we had. Everybody had a job to do.

EM: Oh, okay. Like what?

MV: We all had to help my mother. All the girls helped my mother to wash clothes, to iron, in the house, to clean up. The boys had to help our father, go out there to the farm, and work in the farm, and take care of the animals. We also had to take care of the animals.

EM: Where did you wash clothes? Did you was clothes in the river?

MV: We used to wash clothes in the river. [laughter] Everybody was in the river.

EM: Was it just your family in the river, or were their many families?

MV: There was other people in the river, not only my family.

EM: It was a community thing.

MV: Yes. Sometimes, we used to wash clothes also in our own place that we had, called a *manantial* [spring].

EM: A *manantial*?

MV: Yes, they had a place there that we used to wash clothes also.

EM: What did your father plant on your land?

MV: Wow, he had everything, you name it.

EM: Like what?

MV: He had bananas, plantains, and yam, and sweet potatoes, oranges, avocado, grapefruits, lemon. We had so much stuff that we never had to suffer hunger. [laughter] Coconut, and all kinds of fruits, all kinds of fruits.

EM: And corn too?

MV: And corn and vegetables, a lot of corn.

EM: Did they ever sell it, or was it just for you all?

MV: No, we used to use it for the house, and we also used to sell some of that stuff out there. My father used to sell oranges and beans and *gandules* [pigeon peas] and stuff like that. He used to sell them downtown.

EM: There was a market for it?

MV: There was a market in San Sebastián, where my father used to go every Saturday and sell whatever he had, to go there and sell. He used to put it on a horse and take it to the market.

EM: On a horse, that's so cool.

MV: Yes. [laughter]

EM: Getting close to leaving Puerto Rico, what were the reasons? Were there any reasons specifically for you guys leaving Puerto Rico?

MV: It was a decision of my father. I was like fourteen years old and my brothers and sisters were a little bit, you know, my sister Arcilia was the youngest one and my brother Herminio, and my father decided to come here. Maybe he was sick, or something like that, but we didn't know about it. So, it was my father's decision to come here.

EM: Okay. Were there other family members here already before you came?

MV: Yes, all my older brothers and sisters.

EM: How many of you left?

MV: About five. Between my father and my mother, we had five people coming here, from Puerto Rico to America.

EM: What year was that?

MV: That was 1963, May 20, 1963.

EM: Do you know what airport you left from?

MV: From San Juan, San Juan Airport.

EM: Do you know who took you? San Sebastián is in the northwest.

MV: I don't remember. I know that for me everything was something new, something that I never saw before. I don't remember who bring us to the airport, but we got there to the airport.

EM: That's amazing. Who went with you to the airport? Did anyone go with you to say goodbye?

MV: I think whoever bring us, I don't remember who it was. I don't remember. Maybe one of my father's friends. Stuff like that, I don't know.

EM: Do you know what was going to happen to the property, the house, the farm?

MV: My father didn't do nothing about the property. He just left the house and he saved everything that we had inside the house, thinking that he was coming back.

EM: Oh, okay. You said everything was new for you. Would you say that you never left San Sebastián? Did you stay there ...

MV: We always were in San Sebastián, and we were there. My father used to be in the farm all the time, so we were more at home and at school.

EM: What was that experience like? When you first came to the United States, where did you guys go first?

MV: When we first came, it was my father and my mother, my brother Oscar, my sister Arcilia, and me, and my brother Herminio. We had to split everybody because we didn't have an apartment yet. So, my father and my mother went with my brother Carlos and I think my little brother Herminio, and I went with my brother "Gundo," Segundo, and me and Arcilia, and the other one went with the other brother. We all had to be separate from each other, for the first time in history.

EM: So, you all had to live in different houses?

MV: We had to live in different houses with different brothers.

EM: Wow.

MV: Yes. That was brand new for us, everything was new. It was hard.

EM: Do you know where you stayed, where in New Jersey?

MV: I stayed in my brother's house in Edison, Woodbridge Avenue.

EM: You flew into Newark, Newark airport?

MV: Yes, from San Juan to Newark.

EM: Wow. You were all separated. Did you ever move back together?

MV: My father, he died a few months later. We all had to be in my brother's houses until my mother found an apartment and we all got together again.

EM: Okay.

MV: Yes. The apartment was in 1 Jones Street in New Brunswick.

EM: In that apartment, it was just the five people that came from Puerto Rico?

MV: It was only my mother, my brother Herminio, Arcilia, and me. That's it.

EM: Wow. You went to school here, right?

MV: Yes.

EM: What was that like coming from Puerto Rico and going to school here?

MV: It was very hard for me because I didn't know the language. I went to Metuchen Junior High School, and everything was very hard for me. I didn't know the language, I didn't know the people, but I got used to it.

EM: Okay. Did you experience any kind of discrimination from people for being Puerto Rican or for not knowing English?

MV: Not at that time. No, I never experienced that at the junior high school, no.

EM: Were there many Puerto Ricans there, like you?

MV: No.

EM: You did high school until what grade?

MV: Only ninth grade, I finished ninth grade, that's it.

EM: Did you go to complete your GED?

MV: Yes, I did. I went to complete my GED. In New Brunswick, I think I did it.

EM: After that, what did you do? Did you work right away?

MV: I was working at New Brunswick Lampshade Company, and after I got my high school diploma, I went for teacher's aide. I went to that and I went back to school. I went to work at a school. After that, in the school, they offered you teacher's aide, so I went to Rutgers University-Newark for three months. I think it was a three-month training.

EM: What was the training like?

MV: I studied child psychology. It was very nice. Even if I didn't know my English so good, I had very good grades.

EM: What made you want to do that? How did that opportunity come about?

MV: There were so many opportunities. But sometimes the English doesn't help you out and you get afraid, you don't want to do it because, "Oh, I don't speak English, I don't want to ..." But you do it. There is a lot to do if you really want to. But I did, and I passed it with a "B," all my classes.

EM: What was it like working at the lampshade factory?

MV: It was very hard for me because I had to start to learn everything new. Yo no sabía todo, yo no sabía muy bien el inglés todavía, y se me hacía un poco difícil. Pero trataba de seguir aprendiendo, aprendiendo hasta que salía con los trabajos.

Nydia Otero: It was very difficult for me because I had to learn everything anew. I had to learn English, I had to learn the job that I was doing. So, I did so little by little as I was learning it, I got it.

MV: Y yo era la operadora de máquinas.

NO: I was a machine operator.

EM: What was that like being a machine operator there?

MV: No era suave, pero ya cuando lo aprendí me gustó mucho. Y seguí haciendo mi trabajo cada vez mejor y mejor.

NO: It wasn't easy, but once I got the hang of it, I just kept going and going and I kept improving upon my job and just going forward.

MV: Y yo era muy, este, responsable en mi trabajo. Siempre estaba ahí.

NO: And I was very responsible for my job. I was always there.

EM: What was the culture like? Did you work with other Puerto Rican women?

MV: Yes, I did.

EM: Is that how you heard about the job?

MV: Yes. Sí. [laughter]

EM: Did your sisters and your brothers also work there with you?

MV: No, not at the lampshade company. No, esa fábrica, no. No, en esa fábrica, no.

NO: Not at that factory.

EM: After Lampshade, you became a teaching assistant.

MV: I became the teacher's aide first.

EM: At what place? The daycare?

MV: In New Brunswick. Demonstration Daycare Center in Liberty Street, New Brunswick.

EM: You started that in what year would you say?

MV: I think it was in the '70s.

EM: You worked there until ...

MV: About five or six years, something like that.

EM: During this time when you came here from Puerto Rico, you moved here, when did you meet your husband? Did you have any kids? At what time did that happen?

MV: Yo conocí a mi esposo en 1967 o casi '66. Y ahí nos, él era amigo de mi hermano. Él venía a visitar a mi casa y guiaba en bicicleta por ahí, y ahí nos enamoramos. Y me casé en el 1967.

NO: Well, I met my husband through my brother. He was my brother's friend, and so, I met him in 1967, well, I actually met him towards the end of 1966. So, he used to ride his bike around there. Then, we got to know each other while he used to visit my brother, and then we got married in 1967.

EM: Where did you get married?

MV: I got married in New Brunswick, puedo decir otra parte, que cuando mi esposo me vino a pedir la mano a mi mamá, ella me dio solamente un año para que me casara. Porque no querían que uno estuviera con un hombre ahí "hangeando" or whatever.

NO: When he asked for my hand in marriage, my mother gave him a year or less to marry me because they didn't want, culturally, they didn't want us to date. It wasn't acceptable, it wasn't accepted for a woman to be hanging around with a man.

EM: What church did you get married at?

MV: I got married at a Christian church. The pastor used to be Espada Mata.

EM: Espada Mata?

MV: No, not Espada Mata, ¿Este otro pastor, como se llamaba él?

NO: Another pastor, what was his name?

MV: I don't remember his name. *Pero--*

EM: Where is this church in New Brunswick? Is it still here?

MV: It was in New Brunswick. No, no more. I think it was on Jones Street, something around there somewhere.

EM: Jones Street?

MV: Yes, in New Brunswick.

EM: Were there a lot of Puerto Ricans in New Brunswick when you were here?

MV: I think so, yes. Yo creo que sí que había puertorriqueños que no conocía todavía muy bien.

NO: Yes, I believe there were other Puerto Ricans here who I didn't know well at that time.

EM: After you got married with your husband, did you live with him?

MV: I lived-- Yo, desde que me casé con mi esposo, estoy con él hace 52 años. Tuve dos hijos de él, y estamos juntos todavía.

NO: Since we got married, I've been together with him, we've been married for fifty-two years. I had two children with him, and we're still together to this day.

EM: Did you live in New Brunswick?

MV: I lived-- Yo viví en New Brunswick por 15 años, o 16, y luego me mudé a Somerset.

EM: Where did you live in New Brunswick?

MV: I used to live in 1 Jones Street. De allí yo salí casada, y después me mudé a 178 Hamilton Street.

NO: I lived in New Brunswick for fifteen years, then I moved to Somerset. When I got married, I was living at 1 Jones Street. Then, we moved to 178 Hamilton Street.

MV: A year after I got married, something like that, yeah.

NO: A year after I got married.

EM: Great. Did you have any kids with your husband?

MV: Yes, I had two kids. Dos niños, una niña y un varón.

NO: Yes, I had two children, a boy and a girl.

MV: Y tengo dos nietos. Una niña y un varón.

NO: I have two grandchildren, both a boy and a girl.

MV: Y tengo un bisnieto.

NO: And one grandson.

MV: Que tiene dos años.

NO: Who is two.

EM: While you were living here and you were still a teaching assistant, did you do anything with the community? Did you do any church work, did you go to church? Did you do anything with the community?

MV: Yo estoy yendo a esta iglesia reformada cristiana hace casi 40 años y ahí sí que yo hacía muchos trabajos para la comunidad. Muchas veces en la iglesia tenemos que servir pavo para regalar o comida, o ropa, o visitar a los enfermos, ir a llevar la Palabra. Sí, yo hice bastante trabajo en la comunidad.

NO: Yes, the church I've been going to for the last forty years is the Christian Reformed Church in New Brunswick and that is where I did a lot of community work, such as giving out turkeys as gifts, serving food, helping the poor, seeing to the sick. That's where I did the bulk of my community work.

EM: Did you ever teach Sunday school at the church?

MV: Yo enseñaba, sí, enseñé escuela dominical a los niños por cinco años.

NO: Yes, I taught Sunday school for five years.

EM: Did you notice any trends in New Brunswick? Did you notice a lot of African Americans here at one time? A lot of Hungarians here? Did you notice a change over the years?

MV: Sí, he visto muchos cambios. En aquellos tiempos, yo no creo que para mí, todos se llevaban, todos eran más, había más unidad y también había problemas que nunca sacaban. Esos problemas siempre existen entre, yo soy así, o yo soy así y el otro así, pero yo personalmente me llevaba con todos. Yo siempre he sido una persona de amar a mi prójimo, y eso es lo que yo hice.

NO: Yes, there were many changes here. We all got along though. There was a lot of unity back then, we always had problems because problems always exist. But me, myself, I'm the type of person who gets along with everyone, and I always feel that one should love and honor thy neighbor. That is the way I think, and that is how I operate.

EM: What were some of the changes that you've seen over time with the people that live here?

MV: Ahora yo veo que muchas matanzas en las escuelas. Este, los padres en contra los hijos y los hijos en contra de los padres. Este, lo que se crían ahora son más desobedientes, no tienen mucha moral para este, hay un cambio bastante trágico este, porque en los tiempos míos había mucho respeto mucho--se honraba mucho el papá y la mamá. Ahora, como que es muy diferente la educación, en el hogar, porque la educación empieza en el hogar.

NO: Yes, I am noticing a lot of changes in society, especially here. There are lots of killings in schools, which is something we didn't see back then. I am noticing now that there is a lot of pitting against each other, such as children against their parents, parents against their children, they don't respect each other. It's as if no one has any morals anymore. Back then, when I grew up, we respected and honored our parents, and it's a very tragic change that I've noticed over the years.

EM: When you were here, did you go to visit New York a lot? Did you travel within New Jersey?

MV: No because--sí, yo fui a Nueva York a la Estatua de la Libertad. Fuimos a visitarla allí. Mis hermanos me llevaron para que viéramos a la Estatua de la Libertad en Nueva York. Y para mí todo eso era nuevo, era bonito y algo que yo nunca había visto anterior, y me encantaba todo eso. Me encantaba.

NO: Yes, I did travel a little. I didn't go to many places, but I did go to the Statue of Liberty. I was taken there by my brothers and I loved it. It looked beautiful, everything was new, it was such a change, it was a new place. It looked really nice. I had never known or seen anything like that or like this.

MV: Y mientras los años que estoy viviendo en América yo he viajado bastante. He viajado a diferentes sitios, diferentes lugares. Como a Hawái, he ido a Jamaica. Fui a un crucero a las islas del Caribe, fuimos a Canadá, hemos ido a bastantes sitios.

NO: Yes, and over the years, my years of living here in this part of the United States, I've traveled extensively. I've gone to places such as Hawaii, Jamaica. I've gone to a Caribbean cruise a couple of times. I've gone to Canada a couple of times. I've traveled with my family, I've gone to several places, more places than what I've stated.

EM: How did that feel for you to be in New York, by the Statue of Liberty, and did you know what the Statue of Liberty was before that?

MV: No, ahí fue donde yo conocí que la Estatua de la Libertad era bien importante para nosotros, los que vivimos aquí. Y que traje a libertad de aparte de que ellos dicen este, pero era bello. Todo esto es precioso. Aquí si nosotros vamos a darle gracias a Dios por todo lo que vemos, y lo que hacemos, y lo que disfrutamos es una bendición grande.

NO: Of course, when I went to the Statue of Liberty, I saw then how important it was to those who live here. It was very beautiful and very nice, and it's important because I also give thanks to God for everything, for all of this, for what we see, what we do, this is all important, and I give thanks.

EM: You came here, you've been here since the '60s and you've lived here all this time. You've lived through very trying times in our country, so I want to ask what it was like for you, if you remember, what it was like during the Vietnam War and what the culture was like here and how it felt within your family?

MV: Well, I know it was a bad, bad war because we never had one like that one before. Pero sí sé que eso hizo mucho daño a la América porque perdimos muchos hombres y mujeres en esa guerra. En especial ahí se perdió muchos y muchos Hispanos, también. Y daba pena aver que toda esta gente tenía que estar ahí peleando y matándose unos a nosotros. No creo que en una guerra hay ganancias, si no cae perdidas.

NO: Of course, that war was very damaging to everyone. There were so many losses. There were losses of many men and women, and many Hispanics died in that war. It's a shame that they all had to kill each other in that war. If you think about it, no one is a winner, no one wins in any war because there are losses on both sides.

EM: So, did you know--did you have any family members that went to that war?

MV: Yes, I had my--yo tuve a mi cuñado, José Luis Otero que fue a esa guerra.

NO: Yes, my brother-in-law went to that war, José Luis Otero.

MV: Y mi hermana, la esposa de él sufrió mucho cuando él se fue ahí y trataba de que él volviera a la casa porque tenía tres niños. Y se le hizo muy difícil a mi hermana, mientras vivía y él estaba por allá por la guerra.

NO: Yes, it was very tough, that war on the family, especially on my sister, his wife, she had a really tough time, she had three children and she did her best to try to see if there was a way to try to bring him back home. So, it was really tough on the family, she suffered a lot.

MV: Yes, she did.

EM: During that time, did she stay with you? Or how did your family support her during that?

MV: Que yo recuerdo, ella estaba bien. Ella vivía cerca de mi casa y toditos nos soportábamos unos a los otros. Nos ayudábamos como se pudiera. Yo le cuidaba el niño o, yo le cuidaba a los niños cuando ella trabajaba. Siempre había como ayudarle, pero ella sufrió mucho, mucho y yo nunca me olvido de eso.

NO: Well, she did fine. I mean, we all lived close to each other, and sometimes I took care of her kids, her son, her daughters. I did my best, but my sister suffered a lot. She suffered a lot.

EM: I want to go back, I want to speak more about military service in this family. Do you have any other siblings or anyone else that served in the military?

MV: Yes, I did have many nephews.

EM: In the United States military?

MV: Muchos sobrinos, sí. Tuve a José Luis, este, también, Thomas Vargas, Donald Medina y el otro, unos cuantos de ellos, como seis o cinco, algo así. Estaban en diferentes guerras, en Kuwait, en Iraq, en todos los lugares.

NO: Yes, I had several nephews who were in the military. One is Jose Luis Otero Jr., Thomas Vargas, Donald Medina, and several others, I believe there were six, and they did, they fought in wars, such as Kuwait, Iraq ...

MV: Desert Storm.

NO: Desert Storm.

MV: My nephew, Oscar, was there too. Mi sobrino.

NO: My nephew.

EM: How was that dynamic for your family as a unit, to have people go to war?

MV: Era, daba miedo porque la guerra de Storm, de Desert Storm era bien difícil y dicen que era una guerra muy fuerte. So, sabía que teníamos tantos sobrinos ahí, y daba lástima saber y daba un temor de vez en cuando uno pensando que ellos estaban allá y que estaban matando a tanta gente y que era una guerra tan fuerte.

NO: Well, that was really scary because, for example, Desert Storm was a really tough war on our nephews and we had so many family members there, so many of my nephews. So, there were times when we felt a lot of anxiety and fear for them, if we sat and thought about them, it was really heavy on us.

EM: Was your brother in any war as well or any of your brothers?

MV: My brother, Dionisio Medina, was in World War II or I, World War II, I think it was, yes. La guerra numero dos.

NO: He was in World War II.

MV: Sorry, I don't remember too much of that.

EM: Okay. Let's get back to you working here. You worked the teaching assistant job until when, teacher's aide?

MV: I worked in that school for about six or five years.

EM: Okay.

MV: Or seven, something like that. After that, I worked for Frigidaire Company, it was factory work, but they used to pay--ganabamos más dinero so yo me fui de allí. [We made more money, so I went there.]

EM: So, the factory job paid more than the teacher's aide?

MV: Yes, in that time. En ese tiempo.

EM: What was it like working at the Frigidaire company?

MV: Oh, it was horrible. Era un trabajo bien fuerte, era un trabajo que había que usar una pistola de aire con tornillos para hacer los aires acondicionados y era una línea que venía uno detrás del otro, so no era fácil. Pero, yo me aguante ahí 25 años.

EM: ¿25 años?

MV: Porque después me cambiaron el trabajo y era más fácil.

NO: That job was very difficult because there was a lot to do. I had to work with an air gun to screw air conditioners together, and because we worked on an assembly line, it was very fast

work because one piece came after the other. So, it was not easy. It really wasn't easy doing that type of work.

EM: What were the other workers like in there? Were there other Latinas?

MV: Había muchos Hispanos, habíamos mucha gente Hispana. Había una mezcla de todo, pero había bastante Hispanos.

EM: Do you know where they were from?

NO: There were many, many Hispanics who worked there.

MV: Eran de Puerto Rico, del Ecuador, de todas las naciones unidas. Había de todo ahí.

NO: They were from Puerto Rico, there were people there from Ecuador. It was many, many united nations.

MV: Yes, many people.

EM: Did you connect with just the Puerto Ricans, or did you connect with all the Hispanics there?

MV: I used to connect with everybody, everybody equal to me. Todos éramos iguales, nos amábamos, hacíamos café, tomábamos, comíamos, y todos estábamos unidos.

NO: We all loved each other, we were together, united. We would make coffee, we would eat together, we loved each other.

EM: Did you have any other siblings that worked there with you?

MV: Yes, I had--mi hermana Isaura Acevedo trabajaba conmigo, mi cuñado, este, Iván Ríos, no cuñado, el esposo de mi sobrina. Yolanda trabajaba ahí, Yolanda. Y también trabajaba, Herminia, mi hermana, Herminia, y trabajaba el hijo de ella, Angelo. Habíamos unos cuantos de mi familia que trabajaban allí.

NO: Yes, there were several family members who worked there with me. For example, my sister, Isaura Acevedo worked there with me. Also ...

MV: Marilyn.

NO: My niece Marilyn, which is her daughter, my sister's son-in-law, Ivan worked there, Ivan Rios. Also, her daughter Yolanda Acevedo worked there. My other sister worked there, Herminia Medina, Herminia Medina, and her son Angel Maldonado ...

MV: Maldonado.

EM: At your job, were there any unions?

MV: Yes, we had a union. Teníamos una unión que nos ayudaba cada vez que había un problema ellos tenían una gente allí que ayudaban al que tenía problemas.

NO: Yes, whenever we had a problem, the union would help, so there was always a person there present from the union who would assist us.

EM: Were there many problems there that the union needed to step in for?

MV: Sí muchos problemas. Mucha gente tenía diferentes problemas. Como siempre, siempre habían los que querían más dinero, el otro que tenía más tiempo allí, y al otro le habían dado el aumento. Habían discusiones así. Pequeñas, pero las habían.

NO: Yes, there were many, many problems there, but they were all different problems. For example, one person wanted more money, better pay, or if someone with more seniority would be there and then they would promote a newer person or give them more pay, that would also start a problem as well. So, yes, there were many, many issues.

EM: Did you hear about the job from your family?

MV: Yes, I did hear from my sister. De mi hermana Herminia, que fue y mi hermana Isaura, que estaban primero que yo.

NO: My sister Herminia and my sister Isaura, who were working there before I started.

EM: I don't fully understand. In the factory, you were making refrigerators?

MV: We used to make air conditioners.

EM: Air conditioners.

MV: I was working the line assembly for air conditioners.

EM: Where was this factory?

MV: It was in Edison, 27, Edison.

EM: Oh, okay, Route 27.

MV: Route 27.

EM: You worked there for twenty-five years.

MV: I was laid off for ocho meses, estuve en layoff. Luego mi sobrina, Marilyn Acevedo, trabajaba en Image Remit, y me dijo, ella trabajaba conmigo en Frigidaire. Las dos estábamos

fuera del trabajo. So ella me dijo, "Ven, ven para acá, que te van a coger acá porque ya hablé para tí." So, ahí fui yo, en Image Remit, y ahí trabajé como seis años o cinco años.

NO: Yes, I was laid off from that job for about eight months, and while I was laid off, my niece, Marilyn Acevedo, was working at a place called Image Remit. So, Marilyn put in a word for me and said to me, "You should come work at this place, Image Remit." So, I ended up working there for about five to six years.

EM: So, when did you get ...

MV: Pero, la razón que tuve layoff fue que cerraron la fábrica y la mudaron a Japón o a China, Japón. Entonces nosotros estuvimos todos afuera del trabajo.

NO: But I wanted to add that I was laid off at that other job for about eight months because that factory shut down and moved to China or Japan, I think it was Japan.

MV: Japan.

NO: It was Japan, and we were out of a job.

EM: So, your sister got you the other job at Image Remit.

MV: My niece, Marilyn.

EM: Your niece, sorry. What did you do at the job? Where was it?

MV: It was in North Brunswick, 205 North Brunswick, and we were doing like, processing checks. People used to pay their bills, you know, and we used to process the checks and whatever comes. I was a machine operator to open the mail and processing the checks and putting in the invoices and the checks and the papers together and opening up some mail.

EM: Where was this job?

MV: That was in North Brunswick, 205.

EM: How long did you work there for?

MV: I worked there for about five years.

EM: What years was this?

MV: Wow, that was after I had, let me see, that was like 2005, I think that was like 2006 or something like that or '07 that I started working there.

EM: I want to go back to what was it like in New Brunswick culturally at the time. When you were here and you were going through your high school ages, your teenage years, your twenties,

were there any particular places where everyone hung out? Were there Puerto Rican-only places? Black-only places? Or what was it like?

MV: Cuando yo viví en New Brunswick, los primeros años de mi vida eran buenos, eran felices. Caminábamos a las ocho, las nueve, las diez, las once de la noche y estábamos "free," libre de cualquier problema.

NO: When I first arrived to New Brunswick, everything was nice, everything was great. We would be in many places at any time, we would walk the streets at eight, nine, ten, eleven o'clock at night and we just felt free and safe. It was different, it was beautiful.

MV: Íbamos al pueblo a pie de mi casa, al pueblo que era en New Brunswick. Mi hermana y yo, todos y disfrutábamos de las paradas que había, disfrutábamos de las navidades, y era una belleza estar en New Brunswick.

NO: Being in New Brunswick was just very beautiful back then. My sisters and I would go downtown; we would walk from my house all the way down into town. We were safe. We enjoyed the parades in town, we enjoyed Christmastime here in town.

EM: What parades were these that were there?

MV: Había una parada que la daban todos los años. Y no me recuerdo el nombre de la parade, pero era una tradición que la hacían todos los años. Después, pararon esa parada porque ya no se podía hacer más. De los problemas.

NO: There was one parade that they used to have, it was an annual parade. It was the tradition of New Brunswick and they completely stopped that parade, I don't remember the name of the parade. But it was because of the problems that would ensue.

EM: Did you go shopping in the *pueblo* too?

MV: Oh, sí. Me encantaba ir a comprar en las tiendas. Había una tienda que se llamaba P.J. Young que era una tienda fina, bien bonita. Estaba una tienda que se llamaba The Bridal Store de comprar trajes de novia, ahí fue que yo me compré mi traje de novia, en George Street. Estaba la Lipman store, donde mi esposo me compró el anillo y era, era bonito, era un pueblo diferente que lo que vemos hoy.

NO: Yes, I loved going shopping, especially at this place called P.J. Young, which is a place that had fine merchandise, very pretty. There was also a bridal shop, which is the place where I bought my bridal gown, it was on George Street, and Lipman Jewelers, which is where my husband bought my wedding ring. I really loved it here, it was very pleasant and beautiful, it was a really beautiful place to be.

MV: We used to walk any time.

EM: Were there any places where people came together? If your family was to throw an event, where would they throw it? In the house?

MV: In the family house, brothers and sisters together and the children. Era como una cosa familiar, yes.

NO: It was always a family event when we got together, we always did everything together on special occasions. It was just a family thing.

EM: Were there any special clubs in New Brunswick that a lot of Puerto Ricans went to?

MV: I cannot say anything about clubs porque yo nunca he ido a los clubs que ellos tenían, pero no se nada de los clubs.

NO: I never went to any of those clubs, so I couldn't say, but there were those types of places here.

MV: Pero había el Zoom Zoom club ...

NO: But there was a place called the Zoom ...

MV: Que ahí fue que yo me casé. Hice la boda mía ahí, la celebración ahí fue.

NO: There was a place called the Zoom Zoom club, which is where we all would all get together, and that's where I had my wedding reception, after the ceremony.

MV: I made everything for my wedding by hand.

EM: What did you have? What decorations did you make?

MV: I had paper decorations, like flowers from papers. I made little things for decorations, like memories, I made it myself. Yo lo cosí con los tulle y la pegaba la cintita. I did everything for my wedding.

NO: I sewed tulle, pieces of tulle, with ribbon and pin it on my guests for my wedding.

EM: Wow.

MV: It was a custom to do that. Una costumbre de darle eso a la gente.

NO: It's our custom to give them that.

EM: What is that exactly?

MV: That is something that says the day you got married and the name, your name and your husband's name, bride and groom name and the date you got married.

EM: That is a tradition in your family?

MV: It was a culture for everybody in those times.

EM: In those times.

MV: For the Spanish people.

EM: What is it called exactly?

MV: Le llamaban, ¿Cómo le llamaban? Cápias, las cápias, le llamaban. Sí, eran unas cápias.

NO: It was called a Cápia, C-Á-P-I-A.

MV: Sí, que tenían nombre del novio, nombre de la novia, y el día que se casaban. Y eso era como una tradición para que ustedes lo guardaran, la gente lo guardaran de recuerdos.

NO: It was a ribbon ...

MV: It was like a memory ribbon.

NO: A memory ribbon, and it would contain the name of the bride and groom and the date of the wedding.

EM: Wow, that's so nice. [laughter] I want to go to after you worked at Image Remit. What was your next job after that?

MV: My next job, it was Rutgers University Dining, Brower Dining, dining, restaurant in College Avenue. I was there for ten years.

EM: What did you do there exactly?

MV: I used to do everything. But since I started to work, I was working the takeout. I stayed there for ten years, in the takeout, where I used to work. Trabajaba horas extra, me ponían en otros lugares y yo hacía cualquier trabajo, en el piso, en el dining, en la cafetería adentro, o si no, fuera a los parties. A mi me encantaba ese trabajo.

NO: I did everything. I used to work on the floor, in the dining hall, I used to work parties, I was all over the campus, wherever I was needed, and in the takeout.

MV: I did the takeout for ten years, every day. Todos los días.

EM: When you started here, what were the other workers like? Who did you work with?

MV: I used to work--yo trabajé con mucha gente muy buenas. Y como yo no era una persona de problemas, so, yo me llevaba con todo el mundo y la gente se llevaba conmigo. So trabajábamos bien unidos y bien comprendiéndonos unos a nosotros.

NO: It was very good working here. I worked with everyone and got along with everyone. Since I'm not that type of person who likes to start trouble or have issues, we got along and we were very united, the people who worked together.

MV: Y si alguien tenía un problema o una situación pues, "Olvida de eso y vamos a trabajar. Que nosotros veníamos a trabajar. No hacer ningunas situaciones difíciles."

NO: If someone had a problem, we would talk to each other and say, "Listen, really? Okay, just forget about that because in the end, you came here to work, you didn't come here to have problems. So, come on, let's work, let's get together." That's what I used to say.

MV: Lo más importante para mí ahí eran los estudiantes de Rutgers.

NO: The most important thing for me over there were the Rutgers students.

MV: Porque la razón que me dieron ese trabajo a mí era para ayudar, para servir a los estudiantes. Para que yo esté ahí para ellos y yo estaba ahí para ellos.

NO: You see the thing is, I was offered that job for me to come here and serve the students. So, I came here to be here for them of service.

EM: Were you also in a union at Rutgers?

MV: Sí, yo estaba en una unión en Rutgers. Cuando había cualquier situación difícil o algo, todos íbamos a la unión y cualquiera que tenía la situación difícil, iba a la unión, y la unión le ayudaba con cualesquiera problemas que haya sido.

NO: Yes, I was part of a union at Rutgers, and the union helped us out with any problem or issues that anyone may have had. If there was an issue, we just spoke with the union and they took care of it.

EM: How did you get this job? Did you have other siblings working here with you?

MV: Yes. Yo tenía mi hermana Arcilia Otero y ella me dijo, "Marcella, ven para acá que aquí te van a coger el mismo día." Y como mi hermana tenía un buen récord, era tan buena trabajadora, y trabajó tantos años ahí, yo no tuve que--solamente fui, llené los papeles, y me llamaron el otro día.

NO: Yes, my sister, Arcilia Otero, worked here, and she was the one that said, "Hey, Marcella, come, come work here. If you come here, they'll hire you right away." Since my sister had such a good record, she was a hard worker, she worked so many years here, all I had to do was come in, file my paperwork, and they hired me right away.

MV: Yes, *por ella*.

NO: Because of her.

EM: What were the students like when you were here?

MV: En la Brower, oh my God, los estudiantes para mí eran todo. Ellos eran feliz conmigo. Ellos eran locos conmigo, eran muy satisfechos con mi trabajo, y como yo los trataba a ellos.

NO: The students were everything to me. They meant everything, I mean, I served them. They appreciated me, and since I came here to serve them, they treated me well and I treated them well.

MV: Y yo les hablaba a todos. Los saludaba con cariño porque yo sabía que ellos estaban afuera de sus hogares que necesitaban a alguien que le dijeran, "Buenos días. ¿Cómo está? Es un buen día hoy, y cógelo suave," o algo así. Yo siempre les decía palabras de levantamiento.

NO: I always spoke with every student, you know. Since these kids are away from home, I spoke to them with great love and affection. Because they were away from home, I would try to uplift them and tell them, "Have a good day, have a wonderful time. Just be positive."

EM: When you were working at Rutgers, did you see any Latino students? Did any students speak to you in Spanish?

MV: Yes. Muchos Latinos que me hablaban español. Muchos Latinos con mucho amor y con muchas necesidades hablar su lenguaje con otros. [A lot of students who would speak to me in Spanish. A lot of loving Latinos and a lot who needed to speak their language with others.]

EM: Really?

MV: Era muy bonito ver que habían Latinos ahí. A mí me daba alegría cuando me hablaban el español.

NO: It was very good to see Latino students there because they would speak Spanish and I felt really proud to serve them and to be around them.

EM: Do you know what kinds of Latinos, like where were they from? Were there a lot of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Colombians?

MV: Sí, yo preguntaba muchos de ellos, "¿De dónde tú eres?" Muchos eran de Puerto Rico. Muchos me decían que eran de Colombia, pero la mayoría eran de Puerto Rico.

NO: Yes, many of them were from Puerto Rico when I asked them, and many were also from Colombia, but the majority of the ones I met were from Puerto Rico.

MV: Había muchos de Santo Domingo también.

NO: There were also many from Santo Domingo as well.

EM: You were there during 2008. Many things happened during that time, the Iraq War, the financial crisis. Did you see anything in the students during that time? Were they feeling any kind of way? Were there any student actions on campus? Do you remember overhearing them?

MV: Yo se que cada estudiante tenía sus propios problemas o sus propias dificultades en sus vidas. Pero, yo no podía entrar en todo eso, pero en su carácter, en su mirada, en su manera de ser, sabía que había algunas cosas pasando en las vidas de ellos. Y yo todavía les daba palabras de satisfacción, palabras que decían, "No te preocupes que van a ser mejor hoy día, o mañana va a ser mejor, o las cosas pasan." Y eso eran las cosas que yo les decía a ellos.

NO: Yes, I saw many students come in and every student came in with their own problems and difficulties. And how I knew? Well, I saw it in their expression, in their face. All I could do was offer words of satisfaction or something to give them some sort of support, such as, "Don't worry, everything is going to be okay, tomorrow will be another day," words like that, words of encouragement.

MV: Muchos venían estresado porque tenían que hacer las tareas del colegio y decían, "Ay, qué tengo este examen." Y yo decía, "No te preocupes porque tú lo vas a pasar. You're gonna do good. Tú vas a estar bien." So eso les daba a ellos, me imagino, palabras de levantamiento.

NO: So, I would also give them uplifting words because I would see many of them come in so stressed, perhaps some sort of homework or exam that was on its way. So, I would say, "Don't worry, you're going to do well. You're going to get this. You're going to do great. Don't worry."

EM: Do you remember working with any faculty too? Did you see any other Latino faculty when you did events or anything like that?

MV: Sí, muchos. Me gustaba trabajar con ellos y siempre había esa comunicación del uno al otro. Había buena comunicación y podíamos ayudarnos unos a los otros en los trabajos y en todos. So, no había nada que no podía hacer si no estábamos unidos.

NO: Yes, there were many, and I liked working with them. I always worked with them. There was always good communication with them too. So, there was never really an issue, because as we helped each other and we united in that way, everything was always made better.

EM: Towards the end of your time working at Rutgers, did you retire from here?

MV: Sí, yo me retiré a los 70 años de Rutgers. Trabajé 10 años y me retiré hace un año de Rutgers. Este, me hace falta mucho los estudiantes porque cuando me retiré, todos estaban ahí para mí. Me trajeron regalos, me trajeron una bufanda, otras me trajeron tazas, me trajeron flores, y me besaban, me cogieron el número del teléfono, me decía que me iban a llamar, y yo sentí que estaba dejando a mis hijos ahí.

NO: Yes, yes. I miss mostly the students at Rutgers. I worked there for ten years, and I retired a year ago, 2018, I was seventy years old when I retired. They were all there for me during my retirement, bearing gifts, such as a mug, flowers, a scarf, many kisses, hugs, we exchanged numbers. I felt warmth from them.

EM: You retired a year ago. Do you ever miss Puerto Rico? Is there anything that you miss in particular about being there?

MV: Sí, me hizo mucha falta mi isla, siempre me hizo falta. Para mí, la isla era mi cuna, donde nací, donde vi las primeras, la familia crecer, donde vi tantas cosas bellas y también las dificultades de vivir en esa vida que se vivían antes. Este, nosotros siempre estábamos unidos, comíamos todos, siempre había comida, pero también había tiempo que estaba la escasez, o cuando hacían esas tormentas bien grandes que nosotros teníamos que irnos corriendo a una cueva.

Ahí escapábamos de la tormenta porque la cueva era de piedra, so la tormenta no se le iba a llevar. So todos, nos íbamos a esa cueva y después qué pasaba esa tormenta, una fue Santa Clara que yo me recuerdo, y estábamos, todos mirando, ¿que paso? ¿Que se calló? Los árboles. Como se cayeron las frutas, los árboles. Y era una tristeza también, porque se caía mucha de la comida que nosotros teníamos para comer. Las frutas, se destrozaban muchas cosas.

NO: Yes, of course. I remember the island, and I always miss my island. That was my island, what I like to call my crib. That was the place where I was born, I grew up there. My family was there, we were always together. Puerto Rico is a place of great beauty. I'm not going to lie, there were some difficult times too, but we were always united. There was always food for us, there was no lack.

If there was a time of lack, it would only be probably during the times of big storms, where my family and I would go and spend the time during the storm in a big stone cave that was on our land. I remember after the storm, a big storm named St. Claire, there were many losses such as fruits from trees, and many of the foods that we ourselves consumed were lost in the storm. So, that proved to be very difficult for us. [Editor's Note: In August of 1956, Hurricane Betsy, known as Hurricane Santa Clara in Puerto Rico, hit Puerto Rico and other nations in the Caribbean as well as parts of the eastern coast of the United States. At its most powerful, the storm reached 120 miles per hour.]

EM: You said that you were in caves. What caves were they?

MV: That cave was on my father's farm. We had quite a few caves, but this one was the biggest one. Esa era la más grandota de todas. Eso era como una casa, Dios la hizo de esa manera, nadie puede hacer una cueva. So, tenía el primer piso de la primera entrada, era una pared como este cuarto ahora, bien grandote. Entonces, en un lado tenía una puerta que tú subías y mirabas el rayo del sol que bajaba.

EM: Wow.

MV: Entonces, por eso ahí tuve esa claridad. En este otro lado había como una puerta y entrabas a otro, como un cuarto, como una casa con diferentes departamentos. Entonces, entrábamos en ese primer piso, era grande. La primera entrada, después tú sigue entrando diferentes cuartos con diferentes tamaños de grande. Era la diversión para nosotros, aunque en esos tiempos no era una vida buena, pero para nosotros era algo bonito para los niños. Nosotros regocijábamos en eso.

NO: Well, I'm going to say that during the storm we did have, there were many caves on our family's land. My father had one cave, there was one cave on the land, which was the largest, that's the one where we spent the times of the storms. God made that cave that big because it was very big, as big as a house. It was situated in this way: there was a main entrance where we'd all go in. It was really large, so it was in a higher area. That room was really big, and further into the room, where that area was an opening that had an opening to the outside where you would see the sun rays coming in and it was amazing.

Then, once you turned and walked over further more, there was another room and then another room in that cave, and we would store our animals there. But let me tell you, it was something so fun. I mean, I know that for adults it wasn't that fun and it was probably something a big deal or scary. But for children, it was always fun, that's always exciting.

MV: Lo mismo entrábamos por la entrada que también puede salir por donde estaba brillando el sol, que era una salida o una entrada. Pero era una piedra bien alta, tú tenías que poner un pie aquí y otra allá hasta que salía afuera.

NO: You would come in, in an area, but then you can also climb up and exit that area that I mentioned, where we saw the sun rays. So, in order for us to exit through there, we had to climb up through different rocks. It was like a set of stairs, natural stairs.

EM: Did you and your siblings play in there a lot?

MV: Yes. Sí, jugábamos, nosotros, los más pequeños, pues claro que sí que jugábamos. Encontrábamos una tierra que era fina, como una arena y decimos que eran viejitas. Y ahí jugábamos con eso, siempre jugábamos con esa tierra. Eso era una diversión para nosotros, era, siempre había juegos para jugar.

NO: Yes, especially us children, we played a lot in there, and we played with dirt mainly. There was this very fine, very fine dirt, it was like sand, but we used to call it like old dirt. We enjoyed that, we touched it. It was very fine.

MV: También en esa cueva, había una piedra que bajaba agua. Estilaba agua, es cada cosita en algunos lugares, donde estábamos así también había. Estilaba agua, y caían gotas de agua, y nosotros hasta lo tomábamos. [laughter]

NO: While we were in the cave, there were stalactites. The stalactites were on the roof of the ceiling, or the ceiling of the cave, but through those stalactites, water would drip from there. So, we would even drink that water. We drank it.

EM: This was all on your father's farm property?

MV: En la finca de mi papá era todo esto.

NO: All of this was on my father's farm.

EM: You said you put animals in there during the storm?

MV: Yo creo que sí que mi papá guardaba algunos de los animales allí. Porque habían cuartos divididos y yo creo que él guardaba las vacas, los caballos en cuartos. Entonces nosotros dormíamos en otro, si había que dormir en esos lugares.

NO: Yes, I believe my father did put the animals there. There were different rooms, where we stored different things. There was even an area where we would sleep if we had to sleep in there. But in one room, he would keep his horses and cows.

EM: Is there anything else that you miss from Puerto Rico that being here, you think about often?

MV: Wow, I miss everything. La familia, the family because we left a lot of family--muchacha familia atrás. Este, la cultura, esté, la comida, esté, el ambiente que vivíamos. Todo eso a mí me hizo mucha falta y todavía me hace falta. Porque era un ambiente y una situación muy diferente a la que vivimos en América desde que estamos aquí. No estoy diciendo que no me gusta la América, la América es bella para mí, a mí me encanta vivir aquí. Pero la cuna mía, allá atrás, se quedaron los recuerdos y el corazón. Porque siempre uno nunca olvida ese lugar donde uno nació.

NO: Of course, I miss everything. I left my family in Puerto Rico, many stayed behind, I also missed the food, the culture, the environment. It was a beautiful environment here. I miss it and I still miss it. I am not saying that I don't appreciate and love this place here, because America is great, I love America, I love it here. But it's just different. That is my crib and I left my heart in my crib. A part of me is left there because that is the place where I come from.

EM: Speaking about food, when you arrived here in the beginning, did you find it easy to find vegetables and food that you were used to in Puerto Rico to cook with here?

MV: Since I came here when I was fourteen years old and I was living with my brother, to me everything was, it was different. I didn't see anybody buying the food we used to have in Puerto Rico. Even if they made the rice and the beans and all that, but the vegetables like the ñame [yam], the yautía, yo no veía eso so [I wouldn't see that], you know. No me acostumbraba en muchas de las comidas. [I didn't get used to a lot of the foods.]

EM: They didn't have like the vegetables, the yautia, the ñame.

MV: Y en Puerto Rico se comían mucho las frutas. Por donde quiera uno caminara había frutas. En mi casa había toronja, naranja, limones, dulces y agrios, las chinas, o el mango. Wow, allí había de todo, de todo, de todo.

NO: Well, of course, the food, I miss everything. I mean, in Puerto Rico, we have grapefruits, oranges, lemons, sour oranges, sweet oranges, mangoes, everything, I mean, all types of foods.

MV: The bananas, we used to grab them from the tree. [laughter]

EM: When you were here also, were you aware of any racism that may have happened? Did you witness any?

MV: Yes, sí. Cuando yo venía en el 1963, había un estilo de vida entre racismo entre morenos y blancos. Y habían para ese tiempo, habían en la Remsen Avenue en New Brunswick, habían peleas. Habían--rompían esto, rompían aquello porque había eso del racismo. Pero no era--era entre los morenos y los blancos. Yo no sé si eso puede decir.

EM: *Sí.*

MV: Sí, había racismo. Había eso.

NO: Well, yes, yes there was racism. But the racism that I saw here was between blacks and whites. So, there was an area called Remsen Avenue, where many fights broke out, and that's where I saw a lot of the problems that existed because of the racism. They were breaking things and oh--I don't know if I can say that here. Can I say that here? Well, oh, yes. There was racism between blacks and whites.

MV: Porque por ese tiempo, yo vivía en la casa de mi hermana Felipa, y ella vivía en la Remsen Avenue, en la 163 Remsen Avenue. So, por allí se veían cuando rompían las cosas o cuando lo que pasaba durante la noche.

NO: Yes, see at that time I used to live with my sister Felipa, and she lived at 163 Remsen Avenue. Nighttime is when the majority of those things happened, where there was breaking of things.

EM: So, Puerto Ricans didn't experience racism from the white people? It was just a black and white thing?

MV: I don't remember the Puerto Ricans did that too, I don't know, maybe there was also that.

EM: Did you experience anything firsthand at all?

MV: For me, no. Me in my life, no.

EM: Okay. Do you remember what it was like to vote for President Reagan, during that time, in the '80s?

MV: In the '80s? I remember, I voted.

EM: Okay, great. Do you remember how you came to register to vote and why you felt like voting? Did you feel like as an immigrant, as a Latina, that you had to vote?

MV: La gente me decían que era muy importante votar. En cuanto yo tuve los 18 años, yo empecé a votar. O 19, o 20, pero yo empecé a votar. Y yo no me consideraba como una inmigrante porque en aquellos tiempos no se consideraba uno inmigrante. Se consideraban uno o puertorriqueño o americano. Pero eso de inmigrante, yo no lo veía, en mi vida. Y, ese lo que yo siento, que no había eso de que hoy en día, tantas cosas con inmigrante y inmigrantes. Y todos somos inmigrantes de un lugar a otro, so. No sabemos, porque en esos tiempos, yo no sabía qué era eso de inmigrante.

NO: Yes, voting, yes. I started voting because people used to say back then it was very important. So, as soon as I turned, I think it was either 18, 19, or 20, I'm not sure, I started voting. I voted right away. But the thing about the immigration question, see, when you came here, you were either American or Puerto Rican. But there was never that talk about immigrants or I never felt like an immigrant. I was never, that was never a part of the conversation because we're not immigrants, but then we all immigrants because we all migrate or some of our people migrate from some other place. But that conversation about immigration or immigrant, that did not exist like it does today, at all.

EM: Do you remember who was encouraging you to vote? Was it family, was it coworkers?

MV: Yo creo que fue mi familia, la familia que decía que era muy importante, que tenía muchos derechos y que tú podrías hacer muchas cosas si tú votabas.

NO: I think it was my family because they would say that it was very important, and it brought a lot of rights if you voted. So, it was very important to my family.

EM: I want to kind of wrap us up a little bit. I guess one of the questions I would ask you is, how would you describe your race in this case, in coming here and living this life?

MV: I never go against my race, because my race is my race, and I know there's bad and good everywhere, no matter what kind of race. There are good and bad. If I come to see my race, I see my race is good in my way, but I also see that there's the other side. So, there is a good race in the Puerto Rican families, I believe so.

NO: This is the interpreter speaking, there's one more question. Would you describe yourself as, I understand you describe yourself as Puerto Rican, you are, that's your identity, but would you consider yourself as a white person?

MV: I consider myself as a person, as a human being. I don't consider myself a Puerto Rican, American, or black or white. I consider myself as a person, a person that God has created, has put me on this Earth, to do good.

EM: Are there any last things that you would like to say for the archive, for me, for anyone here?

MV: I encourage you to continue, and you're doing very good. Y yo sé que la universidad de Rutgers te ha dado mucha, mucha salud, mucha energía, para que siga estudiando y para que siga prosperando. Y yo te digo que por favor siga prosperando, no para aquí porque hay muchas cosas más que te esperan. Y hay un Dios que te ama.

EM: Thank you, thank you so much.

NO: Yes, I believe Rutgers University is doing really good for you. I think you should continue. Rutgers has given you a lot energy, you have health, and may it bring you prosperity, and I would suggest you don't stop here because there is so much more you can do.

EM: Okay, thank you so much for doing this interview.

MV: You're welcome.

EM: Thank you to the interpreter that's here. This concludes the interview with Marcella Vargas.

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Reviewed by Isabella Kolic 04/21/2021
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 5/17/2021
Reviewed by Ezekiel Medina 10/26/2021