

Merced: Yeah I came from California in 1969 I was a student who came up to play baseball up there. My previous experience was as a migrant worker. And being of Hispanic decent I also suffered many of the hardships that Hispanics suffer in education today. When I came up here I came solely to get an education and play baseball. But then I found in rained in Oregon, but I ended staying and become a schoolteacher.

What were some of the hard ships you faced as a Hispanic child growing up?

As I was growing up there was a lot of discrimination and racism. Many times we didn't have the access to educational opportunities as many students would today. In fact because one came from a certain language group or cultural group, many times were not allotted the same opportunities, and my first language was Spanish, and trying to move from one school to another, made it very difficult to get a continuous education.

So one of the biggest hardships was the language barrier?

The language barrier was one, because my family were migrants, they picked crops, moving from one town to another finding work, so those were two of the hardships, and also at the same time, people who didn't give opportunities . To people because they were of a certain nationality or race.

And you said you played baseball, did you have a better opportunity to play in Oregon or where you came from?

Actually I had a better opportunity to play down in California because I got full rides, to big Univ. in California, but I came up here because I really wanted to get away from an area where everything was big and crowded and I wanted to get away and start a new life in a different state, and I was very courageous as a young kid to come up here and do that. Because when you're a 18 , 19 on your way to a new state, you have to a lot of guts to do that. Once I got here, I starting making opportunities for myself.

What school did you attend when you came to Oregon?

I got my bachelors of arts at George Fox, and then I went to Linfield and got my Masters.

What do you know about what programs have worked with the Hispanic community and some have failed?

Well I think that some of the best ways that work, are making choices and not circumstances are providing parents, and getting them involved in school, and I think any time you have strong parental involvement programs where you get the parents to get involved in the school, I think those are the very first things that need to take place, and you need to demystify this whole thing that school is a crazy place, it's a good place for everybody to be, I think that good quality programs like bi lingual education programs where your learning the English language, and you know if a student is a Spanish speaker, the best way to for that person to learn english is to learn there native language, or use Spanish or whatever that person needs to learn English.

I think that other programs that are successful and extended day programs, that I have seen, where you provide after school programs, where students can have extra time to complete assignments, also programs that supplement students education, and also good quality programs that make school fun, and its not all about academics, you need good quality sports programs and after school programs and that type of thing.

Do you know of any specific groups or organizations beneficial to the Hispanic community?

Well I think the relationships that I have with groups around the state. Clubs like for example the Oregon Assoc. of Latino Administrators, that's a real good one, I'm involved with the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement, its also good to be involved with in these types of programs, but you have to be balanced, you also have to be involved in local organizations, and also at the national level, I also belong to another group the national community college Hispanic council. And I also been a member of the NCLR(Nation council of Larassa). And org. like that cause you need to get involved in groups at the state level. Plus you need to get involved in comm. Org. like the Red Cross. You need to do all diff. Kind of sides. You need a good mix of Non Latino Groups and Latino groups.

Have you seen these programs change over the years in the way that they essentially affect the Hispanic community, like if they made any specific changes?

If I could go back about the 80's, and that's along time ago, if you look at the programs that began, we didn't have a lot of support, like when we started the Oregon Ass. Of Bi lingual Education. We had a lot of opposition, who did not feel that the rights or the education of the Hispanics was a priority. And when I lived in Cal. We had a lot more advancement; Oregon is a lot more Green, Oregon seems to run about 20 years behind Cal. In what they do. And what I saw you didn't have a lot of support for minority groups and if people of color whether they African American, Mexican decent, Latin decent, or Asian decent, we didn't have a lot of support, so what you had to do is but yourself together and fight, cause any time

you try to put something forward you would have some type of opposition, example when we tried to put together this group, and we tried to change a law, many times we were swept away by the speak of the house or maybe by a lobbyist that didn't think we were that important, its not until recently we started making a lot of noise that they are now reckoning with groups of color?

Did Oregon ever see any student or Parent protest as in Cal.?

Well you know Wash. County , was the area, the bedrock of a lot of things, because there were a lot of people that wanted to make changes, in Woodburn and Hillsboro, parent groups that went to the schools wanting changes, and administrators did know what to do .And this is not just Hispanic groups, but also African American groups in the Portland area. But in the Hispanic community you had a lot of activists in the Hillsboro School District that went before the Board, went before administrators ,in some cases things were changed, sometimes not. I know we use to be very upset with people from Hillsboro, because of situations of INS coming in the district , and get on buses, and be very upset , and eventually the district made some change on policies, they were pressured by outside groups, to make changes, but for many years, we had many problems with people not just in Hillsboro but all over the state because they didn't want to comply with the with the civil rights of people.

So with the racial tensions dissolving over the years, it would be easier for groups for Hispanics to sprout?

I think its a lot easier there is a lot of opportunities, we still face some of the same challenges, there's people thinking that were taking over too much. That Hispanics and Latinos are trying to get into everything. The bottom line is, that the numbers are growing tremendously. I once worked for Portland Public Schools as there Chief of Staff, and we were concerned of the number of students leaving Portland, whether there going to Washington county or east Multanomah County, where I work now at Mount Hood, and we have seen the number of Latinos jumping like crazy, some folks feel that were trying to take over, but all we want is our share, but as we look at our opportunity we see some roadblocks, so its been a fight, also as an educator, we have to continually prove ourselves, that we can do it just like any body else.

What are some of the opposition's tactics in trying to limit what you're trying to do?

A lot of people say that there's no money, or we cant hire people because there's no money, or we cant expand our programs because if we allow you to do it, we have to allow others to do it, for example if we want a project and we see its going to be a great after school program and its mostly delivering services to the Hispanics, well then the African Americans are going to be upset and want the same thing.

Another tactic is org. say that we cant do that cause its not going to work, it will upset folks, because a politician might not like it, or a school board member might not like it, its not someone's pet project so it will falter.

What are some of the failures of what your doing and some programs that haven't succeeded?

Well I think that if you look at some of the programs that have been successful, cause even successful programs that have failed, often from internal strife, for example, in Latino groups, with a disagreement within, so sometimes if there's no unified idea, some people will sabotage an idea or program, in order to get there way. We have seen that with some of our leadership programs, and then people will say why should we give money to that organization when there's a lot of in siding. And you see some of that taking place. And you see some of the weaknesses, and you maybe it was something a group wasn't very proud of, or an idea that people didn't like, many times if you have people doing something successfully, and working as a team, its real easy for it to falter. In the end it really hurts a lot of people, more specifically students and their families.

Do you have any specific examples of programs that didn't work?

One of the things is we use to have a leadership program in Salem called The Oregon Hispanic Leadership Institute. It was very well funded, we had private owners, private monies involved. There was some program personal that got very jealous about it. We had some org. that moved the programs aside because they thought it was a hassle, and instead of expanding it, the downsized it to a point werhe lesser students received opportunities, we were growing from 30 students to 60 to 75, now its getting smaller, and they have taken a lot of the opportunities , and nots its down to 25 students. It doesn't have the depth, the leadership, the partnership that we once had, the money that we had, the support that we had is not there, that's one example of how something very successful is now just a token for participation for Latino around the state.

Any examples of programs that weren't successful in HSD?

Theres a program, im not srue if it takes place anymore, yearsHillsboro was a place for many families coming from Texas and Arizona and Cali. We had a program called the secondary credit exchange program, this program allowed students from Texas who left early, came up to Oregon and enroll and many students didn't finish high school cause they didn't have enough credits. They did this so they could get credits accumulated and be able to graduate. This program went on for quite some time, this was the efforts of many people like deputy Super Indendant like Carlos Perez, it was a successful program that helped many students that you may know.

But those were successes that no longer exist cause of money and priorities that people may have. Hillsboro needs to be proud of that.

These leaders , are they considered main leaders in the Hispanic community, or have any others come out of HSD?

Theres one, he later became my boss, his name is Jose Garcia, he was a class room teacher, he was at Poynter, he later became the state director for migrant education. He was the first to fight off the activists , they dependent on him to make changes in the schools. And many times when you become the only latino in the org. there always looking to you to make change and brake down the barriers. He came from texas and retired in the system here. HSD have produced many Leaders, Josphe Ochoa who is a judge in Washington county, he has been quite big. Hillsboro School District far above any other districts in the state, has more latino administrators than any other distict in the state. That's something we should take pride in, you have Carlos Perez, Gus Balderas, Mario Alba, >>>>> Scofield, and or course Carlos Perez, who has taught, who I feel should be superintendant of your district, who might jump somewhere else, they are widely known,there very well regarded, and that's a effort in the district to find people of color who are good quality leaders.

What are some of the things these people have accomplished?`

Well I think for one thing they have improved test scores and created better opportunities for students, you know if there's only one way to learn for students, many students aren't going to be able to learn that one way, but they have been able to provide opp. Through curriculum development, , bringing in quality programs, going after grants, making connections with groups in Salem, and with the federal govt. to bring in funds, to dev. Programs that are diff. They have dev. Programs for students to partake. They have been very successful thinking outside the box, not kicking it aside, and make sure there making opportunities and making choices not circumstances.

And this is for Hispanic students?

Yes, and all students, I know that when you're an educator when you do something for one, your really helping the entire group

If you could make any improvements ?

The main thing is, when your in first place, you have to keep thinking who's your competition, you have to look at how could you better yourself, how could I be a better principal, teacher, or person, or how can I provide a better service or process, and I think that that's continually training and ability to learn more, and I think if

you go to a workshop you will be able to work with others, so I think if you do that that's key to becoming a better org. a better worker, a better place to be.

If you could rank the efforts of the HSD where would we fit in the state of nationally?

I know that you have some quality staff. You have bi-lingual bi cultural staff, and then people that aren't Spanish speaking, but just are quality teachers. But also your losing money just like everyone else.

Isn't some of the money coming federally?

Well the federal money supplements what you already have, the biggest pots of money that HSD gets is title 1 that helps students that live in poverty that receive free or reduced lunch. I think with those monies HSD is able to do some new creative things and then also provide additional help for students. But If I were look at HSD in the Top ten schools, it would be in the upper part of that top ten.

What are some of the things that sets us apart from the schools at the bottom of the list?

You have some quality Latino admin. , and the bi lingual bi cultural leaders you have, and the willingness of the admin. And the teaching force to make the students the best possible people and the best possible working force they can be once they leave the school.

Do you think the efforts in our district for latinos has led to the rise in Hispanic population in the district?

Well I think that education that they have received at Hillsboro , have helped them become better college students , better workers in the field, and in there career , and because of the education and support they have received. They go out to the world better prepared, I know a lot of Hillsboro graduates, that have left and done better.

Was Oregon schools ever segregated?

You know were Oregon schools looked at in some cases they still do, one problem we have people come from diff. Countries especially Latinos, gatekeepers will keep them from coming to school because they don't look like there from here, or they don't speak the right language., or there records weren't up to date. But when I was at the state office, I made sure that we sent out a letter to every school district to ensure regardless of civil status that received a fair and appropriate education, and still schools around the state denied students from entering schools. It's a shame

and awful. But I think that if its one of those things that in the past we have had situations in Portland where African American students denied enrollment. Back in 1980 portland schools entered into a voluntary desegregation plan. Where no student would be denied enrollment due to race.

And for Hispanics?

There separation was being denied education, when a student would come to class they would move then to the back to the class and have them color, or send them to the library and separate them. They thought that they didn't have speak the language. So those things have changed because the law says you cant do that anymore , because you cant separate because of race or color. So yeah its not as bad, but still you have kids separated because teachers don't want somebody. Also the school that a student wants to go to is on the other side of town, because the school isn't for them by someone else's standards.

When did this begin to change

It began in the 1960s when the civil rights movements began with MLK and Cesar Chavez. Who demanded good quality education, before the Brown v. the board of Topeka many groups had demands that led to others. But now with TV and media people see now that they want just as much rights as everyone else. There was a case Mendez v. Westminster that was led by a Hispanic, which led to Brown v. the Board. It your looking at groups of people, even myself, even to this day, I say you will not deny me of this. Or if there's a student in our collge student, ill stick up for them and fight for them. Its good for us to have advocate for students, in schools we should provide everyone with the same opp.

Have we made progress within the programs, do we have a long way to go, or are we good?

I think we need to do cosmetic changes, and reexamine, the face of students change all the time. We have diff. Students with diff. Abilities , and to look at a program and say its going to work till eternity is crazy. So I think that for example these a program that HSD receives money for a reading program, and to receive it, you need to teach kids English without bi lingual education. When you make a system so rigid, you will not have good success. I think HSD is always looking at good quality practices to help students learn in many ways.

Anything to add?

One thing is that they HSD has come along ways, that whole area at one point did not provide opp. At one point, you have many Hispanic leaders in that are, you have many efforts done by the community, and you the Health Clinic there, the community based org. you have many people that have been there for quite some

time that have made changes, and through the years you can tell with the businesses coming up, with the education and the administrators, you have a lot more graduates taking charge and doing something diff., you have a lot of people of Hispanic descent, but Hillsboro needs to be congratulated ,and to say the work is done, no no, there's still along way to go for everyone around the state, but Hillsboro School District has made some good efforts, and some good people there, who have made some positive changes for the district, yeah I can say you have produced some good people, and people that are leaders, not only in the education field, also in the legal field that are pretty well known, and also young people that are making changes and will become leaders in the future.