

Interview with Marle Guzman, Student in ESL 2 at Century High School

Interviewed by Sam Allen and Andy Kilger.

SA: This is Sam Allen and Andy Kilger Interviewing Marle Guzman on May 25, 2004, for the local history project for Ms. Duyckinck's AP U.S. History class. To start out the interview, I first want to know if you and your family were born in the United States or if you came here from another country.

MG: I came from another country.

SA: And what country would that be?

MG: I came from Mexico.

SA: Can you describe your family situation in Mexico, before migrating to the United States?

MG: My family was living all the time there, but my father always came to the United States to work. And he sent us money to study and not work there.

SA: So, your father's business prompted you guys to come to the United States to live?

MG: Yes.

SA: What was your trip here, to the United States, like?

MG: It was something scary because when we came to the airplane, all the people speak English and we didn't understand. And we said 'I don't know what he said.' And it was sometimes sad and scary.

SA: So, what caused your family to choose to live in Hillsboro?

MG: Why? Because my father lived all the time here. He always comes to Oregon and Hillsboro since fourteen or fifteen years ago.

SA: So, what are your feelings on the education system in the Hillsboro School District?

MG: It's very different from Mexico, the classes are more easy to pass and get credit than Mexico. And also the classes here are not required, some credits you need and some you don't have to take anymore of this class.

AK: How far were you in school in Mexico? What grade were you when you came here?

MG: 11th grade.

SA: So, does your family emphasize education?

MG: Yes.

SA: So, I kind of want you to describe your first experiences first coming to school in the United States.

MG: My first experiences were excited and at the same time, scared. I didn't know anybody and I didn't want to come to school the first day.

SA: So, that comfort level that you felt on the first day being here, being kind of low, how do you feel in your school today? How comfortable do you feel?

MG: I feel better. I understand all that people say. It's difficult for me to speak better. I understand and I can read. I know what I'm talking about and something different and I learned a lot.

SA: So is there anything that you feel would make you feel more comfortable at this school?

MG: Yes, if we had more classes with American people who can help us. And also, people who don't laugh about us because we don't pronounce and understand what the teachers say, because there are many races in every school and we feel uncomfortable.

SA: So, do you feel that racism and stereotyping in our school is a problem? Just, describe a few of your feelings.

MG: I feel angry when the people discriminate and they feel better than us or the different cultures because they can speak and explain to other people in their own language, than us because we have problems with the pronunciation and everything. And I think that this will be better and we can stay together all the peoples.

SA: So how do you think the ESL program has helped you to feel more comfortable in school?

MG: It's very comfortable because many of the people in this class doesn't speak very well English, so we help us and we learn together.

SA: So, do you feel that the Hillsboro School District has provided adequate support for Hispanic students who are struggling to learn the English language?

MG: Yes.

SA: So, in what ways do you feel that language and cultural barriers have affected your schooling?

MG: We can express the feelings and what we think. What I want to say, I can say because I'm thinking about what I say but I can't say... I mean, we want to explain everybody in class what we are talking about, we want to express our selves in class, participate in class. Sometimes we can't do it in a different language.

SA: So, in your experience do you feel that the teachers and staff of the ESL program have helped to prepare you for life and for speaking English in an English speaking country?

MG: Yes, most of them speak Spanish but I think that the Asian culture has more problems because few people speak Vietnamese, Chinese, or other languages, and we have a lot of people who speak Spanish and can translate the classes and help us.

SA: So, what are a few specific ways that the teachers help you?

MG: I have classes in Spanish and English and there are, how you say, translators and people who help in class by, most of the time they only translate some parts. And so we have to understand and we should not help us, only when we really need help and we feel we can't say the word or speak something, but we should speak English in our classes.

SA: So, how do you feel taking classes in both English and Spanish at the same time helps you learn?

MG: It can help because we can share ideas and how to improve our English but I think it is something bad for us because we have a class where most of the class speaks Spanish and we don't speak English sometimes.

SA: So, do you feel that the opportunities provided by the District are equal for Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students?

MG: No.

SA: So, why is it you feel that way?

MG: Because Hispanic people have more programs, for example, summer school for the migrant people is free but Americans have to pay and this I think is something unfair. And the lunch, the Americans have to pay and most of us, we have free.

SA: So, our research question is to evaluate and analyze the Hillsboro School District's response to a growing Hispanic community in Hillsboro, is there anything else you can add that will help us answer that question?

MG: I think the American people can learn a few Spanish because when we learn both languages we are some able people because we speak... we sometimes offend the American and they don't understand what we are talking about and we discriminate them. Something like that. We need to learn respect, and overcome all the struggles we have. And get a better education to improve in this country.

SA: This is Sam Allen and Andy Kilger signing out.