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Juan Pineda oral history interview by Mark I. Greenberg, May 20, 2003

Juan Pineda (Interviewee)

Mark I. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
Oral History Program
USF 50th History Anniversary Project

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TRANSCRIPTION

G: Today is November 19, 2003. This Mark Greenberg, the director of the Florida Studies Center at the University of South Florida. I'm with Juan Pineda, who is a student at the University of South Florida, and is also the president of LASA, the Latin America Student Association. We're here together today to talk about his organization as part of the history of the university and it's celebration of fifty years. Juan, thank you for coming in today. I appreciate you being here.

P: Thanks for inviting me.

G: I want to start with a couple questions about you, before we turn and talk about LASA. Where did you grow up?

P: I was born in Columbia. I was brought to the United States by my grandparents. [I was] raised in Miami.

G: Were your parents able to come with you?

P: My grandmother was living here, so I came with my grandfather. They're basically my parents; they took care of me since I was a little child.

G: I understand. Was most of your schooling in the Miami area?

P: Elementary school, and part of middle school was in Miami.

G: What did you do for high school?

P: For high school I did it in Miami, but I had a combination of Columbia and then back to Miami. I lived in Columbia for four years.

G: Interesting. As you were thinking about graduating from high school and were looking to the next step in your life, what kind of schools were you looking at? Was college something that you always knew that you wanted to do?

P: College was something that I wanted to do to make life better for my family. According to some people, I wasn't going to be able to make it. They didn't believe in me. When I went to apply to the different universities, they basically told me, Juan, you've been wasting your time. I had a student government teacher who told me, don't listen to that person. Go ahead, apply to wherever you want to go. USF was one of the opportunities that opened up to come during the summer by a program called SSS, Student Support Services. I was given the opportunity to start and I really enjoyed it.

G: Did you struggle in high school? What do you think attributed to the fact that you didn't get any support?

P: High school was kind of difficult because the education system in South America is completely different than the one here in the United States. What happened, was that I was used to learning in one way, and then when I got here to the U.S. they told me, you can't use that method anymore. You have to use our method. That put me back a little. I was an average student. I had a 2.9 GPA in high school. What helped me a lot was that I

was very, very involved during high school. When I submitted my application to the university, that's one of the things that they took into account.

G: What kind of things were you involved in in high school?

P: I was secretary of student government. I was co-chair for Hispanic Heritage. I did one year completely in Hispanic Heritage, then I also was in the class of 2002 officers. There were many, many activities. I also participated in the activities department. That was one of my classes that I got to do community service through them.

G: When did you arrive at USF?

P: I arrived at USF in the summer of 2002. June 24, 2002 was my first day here at USF during the summer. My grandmother came and she dropped me off. It was terrible because that was the day that was my birthday and college was starting and I had just graduated. A lot of things were going on at the same time and it was pretty hard at the beginning.

G: Were there other schools that you had applied to? What was it about USF that made it particularly exciting to come here?

P: I had applied to UF and UM, also. Miami Dade and FSU. The reason I applied to USF was when the person in charge to advertise for USF in the different high schools came, she made a picture of USF that was so incredible that I just had to go there and try it out. I didn't get into UF's summer program, and obviously UM was kind of out of the economic proportion that my family could afford. Miami Dade, I didn't see it as an option, because it would just be like high school once again. When I came to USF for the first time, that was the first time I had touched this campus and visited the campus.

Basically, I came to USF blindfolded.

G: Interesting. Tell me about the picture, though, that the person who was recruiting students. How did she describe the university?

P: She was describing USF as a university which is a multicultural and very diverse. It's a big campus, and how people got along, and there were different organizations. How USF has so many things to offer, and so many resources in which they can help you, which was one of the facts that really caught my eye and my attention towards this university.

G: You arrived in June, 2002, on your birthday. Tell me about your first impressions.

P: I have to say, I was really, really nervous. Obviously, being from Miami, coming to Tampa, we got lost on the way. I was telling my mom, okay, I have to get to USF, one way or another. When we got here, it was amazing. I felt that I was in a city itself. It was so big. I was like, Mom, what am I going to do here? How am I going to get from one class to another? They just dropped me off in Castor Hall. I met my R.A.'s, and they helped me move in to the room. Then other students started arriving for the summer program and I just started to interact. I have to say that I was very, very homesick during the summer. I felt like I wanted to leave USF and go back home, but then my advisors for Student Support Services, they were telling me, don't, don't leave. Wait until the fall. When you come back in the fall, a whole new chapter is going to open up and you will see what the real USF is like.

G: Tell me about that summer program. What went on in the summer and what sort of things were you learning and doing?

P: In the summer program I took some classes that I had to get out of the way in order to

meet the requirements for USF. What they were trying to do was to prepare me for the load that was going to come in the fall, and get to know the university better. I took the University Experience course, which was pretty good. I learned about what was in the university, what were the resources, how to go about in finding them, how to get help, which was really interesting. They showed us around the campus, and showed us how Tampa itself works. Obviously, if you're here for the first time, you're lost. One thing that I remember when I came to the first seminar for SSS that we had, our advisor said, right now, your past is high school. You're starting from scratch. Whatever you did in high school, we don't care. Now is your opportunity to prove all of those who didn't believe in you, wrong. That was a lot of motivation for me.

G: Which high school did you graduate from?

P: I graduated from South Miami Senior High.

G: I assume that there must have been a very diverse population in your graduating class. Was there a group of people, friends, that you were in discussion about what you were going to do about college? Did you come with anybody else? Where did your friends end up going to school?

P: I have a big, diverse group of friends. Most of my friends went to UF. Some of them went to the University of Chicago. Some of them stayed in Miami. I came up with one of my friends, Denise Hernandez. She started in the fall. What I learned in the summer, I helped her out in the fall, so she wouldn't be so lost. The discussion about universities was very, very big in high school. Basically, they were the ones that helped me out, and made sure that I wouldn't give up just because of what one person was telling me not to

do. The fall came around, and obviously the university exploded in size. There were a lot more students.

G: What kind of classes were you taking? What were your interests when you enrolled? I'll ask, after that, what other non-academic things did you get involved in?

P: My interest was pre-med. I started taking a math class that I had to take, Prep-Algebra, through HCC. I took Copy 1101. I took World Regional Geography, a whole bunch of different classes that showed me about the world and different things. What changed my major was that Prep-Algebra was so hard, I was telling my advisor, I don't think I could do pre-med. It's a lot of math. I am ready to switch majors. Obviously, there was 39,000 students. I never thought there would be 39,000 students in a school that I would attend. You would see them walking around. It was like, everything was alive. The whole university was alive. Academically, I did really good in the fall semester, continuing in the spring. I learned a lot of things. I got involved in an organization called CAB, Campus Activities Board. They had movies on the lawn, and all these events that go on in the university. I was still feeling lonely, but I was getting used to the university. When I came about a woman by the name of Norma Cano-Alvarez, who was the coordinator for LASA. She took me to what is LASA, the Latin American Student Association. They greeted me as another family member. They made me feel like I wasn't missing anything at all. By working with LASA, I started doing community service with ENLACE. I went to the middle schools and the high schools and talked to the students about going to college, which is very important, due to the fact that not too many Latinos go in the pursuit of a college education.

G: We'll come back and we'll pick up little parts of what you've been talking about. The Campus Activities Board. How did you get involved in that? Was there something about that particular organization that appealed to you?

P: What appealed to me about the Campus Activities Board is that I thought of it as the big activities department that we had in high school. Events, obviously, were ten-times bigger, because in high school we had about 5,000, 6,000 students, and here we have 39,000 students. They had movies on the lawn, they had concerts. Basically, I was just trying to help out and learn how the whole campus works. Put some fun [in it], other than just studying twenty-four-seven. Something different.

G: How about dorm life? Did you remain in Castor? Are you still in Castor?

P: I was in Castor for the summer. For the fall, it's not co-ed, so I was moved into Beta Hall. Dear Lord. That, I think, was the worst hall I have ever lived in. It was pretty old, but still the R.A.'s and resident director tried to make it the best of the best. They would throw activities on the weekends. We would decorate the hall for Halloween and children would come trick-or-treating and we would have candy for them. I did run into maybe roommate situations, which we all have. By the end of that semester, I was ready to move somewhere else. The only set thing about Beta, was that the day before I had to take my math final, there was a fire in the building around 1:00 in the morning. There goes all my studying. When we finally got back into the hall, it was around 4:00 in the morning. [I] had to get up the next day and I took the test. I don't know how I did. I guess I did pretty well. Then they told me, oh, you could have told your professor there was a fire, because we sent out an email. [I was] like, how come nobody told me this?

Then from the end of that semester I moved into [a] new hall, to a single room. The state of the carpet, and the way the building looks, it's not that great, but you try to make the best out of it. You do meet a lot of people in the dorms, which is a surplus, because if you want to be roommates maybe in the near future living off campus, that's how it can work.

G: You got introduced to ENLACE, and then LASA. Tell me a little more about ENLACE. You mentioned some of the things that it did. Can you talk a little bit more about the schools that you went to and who you've been working with? You must have a relationship with Donna Parrino; talk a little bit about that and the importance of ENLACE.

P: ENLACE is Engaged in Latino Communities for Education. I became involved with ENLACE through Norma. I also met Donna Parrino. I would go to Marshall Middle School, or Tomlin Middle School, Plant City High School, Leto High School. They would take me to a crowd of ESOL students, and I would talk to them about how important it is going to college. I told them my story on how, when I told my family I wanted to go to college, they opposed, because I was leaving home. I wasn't staying at home to help out the family. It was a hard decision that I had to make, but they saw that their families would be in the same situations. My perspective on viewing this, was if they could see that I was capable of making it to college, that they could do it, too. I always like to finish with a story. I would tell them, I'm handing down the pen to you. Now it's your time to write your story. You're the ones that are going to write the end of the chapter in your book. You either take the easy way, which you don't want to go to

college. You end up working at McDonald's, getting minimum wage, or you can go to college, get a degree, and help your family out in the long run.

G: What did your family do? When they didn't want you to go to college, what did they imagine for your future?

P: My grandfather imagined for me maybe getting a job and working and going to Miami Dade Community College part-time. Basically helping out my grandmother economically, obviously because she's of age. Life hasn't been easy for us since we came to the United States. That was his mentality. I just got very angry at him, and he told me, well, if you go to college, you're no longer going to be my son, or my grandchild. I told him, well, if you prefer me working the rest of my life, saying can I take your order at McDonald's, then we have a very wrong misconception that I'm not going to do that. If I have to leave, and you won't accept me as your grandson or your child, then that's what it's going to have to be.

G: Had there been anyone in your family who had gone to college?

P: I am the first generation to go to college. Unfortunately, we lived in Columbia, and I was the only child from the marriage. My parents passed away and then my grandparents took over. My uncle didn't go to college. He just went to high school. In Columbia, we had everything. My grandfather was very well in politics, and he made some money. We didn't really have to worry about college that much.

G: Had your family left for political reasons? When did they come to the United States?

P: We came to the United States after I started asking for grandma, and I would call her Mom. They said that I wanted to be with her. I was two-and-a-half years old. So he

basically packed our stuff and we came to the U.S. because he didn't want me to be away from my mother. Here in the U.S. we encountered problems with immigration and other stuff. We had to live in the streets for about two or three days because my grandmother's brother threw immigration on us because his daughter didn't want to go back to live with him. My grandmother told him, over my dead body, you're going to take her. Those were the consequences. I have to say that I'm very proud of my grandmother and all the stuff that she did. She worked very, very hard, and she's still working hard. What I want to do, is to succeed and be able to take care of her.

G: Those are wonderful goals. Come back and talk about LASA. One of the things that occurs to me is the Latin American Student Association, you're Columbian, with Columbian heritage. I'm sure there are students whose nationality is different. What makes LASA LASA? How do the various students with the different national backgrounds come together? What do they share?

P: What makes LASA LASA? The first day I walked into a LASA meeting, what they thought was that I was another Anglo, a Caucasian. When I started speaking Spanish, they were like, whoa, you're Latin? I'm like, yes, I'm Latin. They welcomed me. Even though they didn't know that I could speak Spanish, they still welcomed me as the person who I am. I wanted to go and learn about different cultures. Now, if you're Latin, you know that there's a big diversity within the Spanish community of Colombians, Mexicans all over. If you're Latin, you're learning about the different cultures. If you're not Latin, you're welcome, and you learn about everything. Instead of just knowing about one culture in specific, you're learning about a whole bunch. At the same time, you're

educating us about what your culture is and how it works.

G: What sort of things does LASA do?

P: We have tons of events. For example, this semester, I have to say, was the most challenging. This semester was when we've made the most change compared with the past. We had an event called Salsa Giving, which we turned into a community service event. We asked students to bring canned goods, so we could donate them to needy families for a Thanksgiving feast. We had an event during Welcome Week that was Salsa Con LASA. We teamed up with the Spanish Club and the Salsa Club and we were teaching other people how to dance Salsa, Meringue, La Chacha; give them a little more of a culture experience. We had an event with Hillel and Sigma Lambda Beta, so we stepped out of the Latino community and decided to do homecoming with them, which is a first for LASA. As soon as I became president, I wanted to start stepping out of the Latino organizations and going towards the other people so we can show them, okay, we're LASA. Just because we're Latin, doesn't mean that we can't work together. LASA stands for Latin, which is everyone who can speak Spanish, or is of Latin descent. American, everyone in America. Students, because we're at USF. Association, we come all together. That's what some people have a hard time understanding.

G: Besides the different activities, one of the things that I've asked when I've spoken to different students, especially students who are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Did you find USF a welcoming place when you arrived?

P: Yes, due to the fact that when I got here, there were Asians, there were people from Europe, from South America, from Central America, from Canada. There were people

from all over. It's a very, very diverse university. You get to meet different people, learn about different cultures. I never in my life thought that I was going to go to a mass that the Jewish have. I never thought that I would be in one. I stepped out of my boundaries and they invited me to one. I went. It was pretty interesting. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but it was fun. You learn from the Islamics [Muslims]. You learn so many different things. You learn about the Koran, you learn about Salsa, you learn about belly dancing. You learn about so many different things. It's a very, very diverse university.

G: Is the administration responsible for that? Or are the students responsible for that? Or is it a combination of both?

P: I think it's a combination of both. By the administrative part, because they're the ones that accept the students into the university. They want to mix a variety of nationalities into the university. It's also up to the students, because if they close up and they don't want to open up and teach others about their culture, then you're not getting anywhere.

G: Good point. You're the president now of LASA. How did you rise to the presidency? Tell me about your movement through the organization.

P: I started as representing LASA in the ENLACE core meetings.

G: What does that mean?

P: ENLACE core meetings are basically, different student organizations come, and we usually have, every two weeks, a meeting with Norma Cano-Alvarez, and we talk about events that we might want to throw. For example, ENLACE said that we bring students from the ninth through the twelfth grade into the university to have a workshop on grants

and classes and a students panel, so they can know what college is really about. They can pursue their higher education. I started off in that position and doing homecoming and all these other events that they have. At the end of the spring semester, the ex-president of LASA comes up to me and he asks me, so, what are you going to run for LASA? I'm like, I'm not thinking of running. I'm a freshman, next year I'm going to be a sophomore. There is no way in this world that a freshman is going to get elected into office for his sophomore year. Forget about it. He thought that I really wanted to do it, but then at the same time I didn't. When the nominations came in, he said, I would like to nominate Juan Pineda for president of LASA. I turned around and said, are you crazy? I'm not going to win this. I said, okay, I accept the nomination. We had elections, and then when you least expect it, congratulations, Juan Pineda, you're the new president of LASA. I'm like, what? Is this even possible in the history of student organizations that a freshman becomes president for his sophomore year? They're like, no, you're the first one. Congrats.

G: Why do you think it was?

P: I guess what it was, was they saw my involvement and my commitment to the organization and how much I appreciated all the things that LASA had done for me, and how I had worked with ENLACE. Through that, through working with LASA and ENLACE, I got a job with the SSS program during the summer as a peer counselor. Student Support Services, which was the same program that I had come in that summer before. I got to do the same thing that the peer counselor did for the students. I had activities for them, cheer them up and tell them about the homesickness and how they can

overcome it. After doing all that, another position opened up for a job, which was a tutor and mentor for ENLACE, which I obviously accepted. Now I tutor and mentor in the high schools and middle schools. I started as a freshman working at the College of Arts and Sciences dean's office. For Dean Khator, who is a really great person. [I] ended up in the ENLACE office, working as a tutor and a mentor.

G: How did you get hooked up in the dean's office with Dr. Khator?

P: What happened, was I went to the communications department and I was looking for a FWSP job. They told me, we don't have the listings here. You can go check out in the College of Arts and Sciences, in the dean's office. They'll have a list of all the positions open. Obviously, I went, and I talked to Joyce Waterman, who was the office manager at the time. They had a position open. I went to an interview, and they liked me a lot. Then they hired me. I got to work with Dean Khator. At the beginning, I didn't know that much about her, and she looked like a real serious person. I was like, oh, I don't want to have any trouble with her. She is a serious person, but she cares a lot about her staff. She likes to make sure, that if her people are happy, she will be happy. She wants to make sure that everything goes the right way, and make sure that everything is correct, and that if you do something wrong, you pay for the consequences.

G: From the College of Arts and Sciences, you ended up doing some work with ENLACE; and the tutoring and the mentoring and that sort of stuff. You're still taking classes, so what kind of classes are you taking? What is your goal for your degree?

P: My degree right now, I'm trying to get an international studies degree so I can go to law school, hopefully. This semester I'm taking fifteen credit hours. I'm taking Italian,

American History II, Intro to Art, and there's another class that I just can't remember right now. I'm taking four classes for a total of fifteen credit hours. I have to say, this semester has been kind of tough, but I'm still hanging there.

G: This is your sophomore year?

P: This is my sophomore year.

G: It's the first semester of your sophomore year?

P: The first semester of my sophomore year.

G: Where do you go from here? You're already the president of LASA. I should probably ask, also, are there any other student organizations you're involved in?

P: I'm involved in the Italian club. I have to say, that also through LASA and ENLACE, another opportunity opened to be co-chair of Hispanic Heritage here at the University of South Florida, which was really a shocker. In high school, I did it for 2,000, at the most, of Hispanic students. I'm coming here, to a big university, which is so diverse, and throwing a celebration for, not 39,000 students, but 41,000 students, which I believe is the new amount of students that we have here at USF.

G: Are there statistics of how many students are Latin on this campus?

P: There are statistics on what percentage are Latin and what percentage are black, but I'm not too sure about those.

G: It's in the thousands.

P: It's in the thousands. There are a lot of minority students here at the university; especially Latinos.

G: Where do you go from here? What's next? Can you be president for multiple years?

Would you want to?

P: You can serve as president for two terms, just like a regular presidency, meaning this year and next year and next year, if I would want to. Obviously, there's been a big change in LASA and its reputation is getting bigger and better. If I see that there is someone that I can train and they want to step in and help them out to be there, I'm willing to step down so that person can come up and help LASA be even bigger and better. What I see myself doing, maybe in a couple of years, is running for student government president, and being the first Latino student government president here at the University of South Florida.

G: That's interesting. I hadn't thought about it, but I didn't realize there had not been a Latino student president up until this point.

P: There hasn't been. And Norma Cana-Alvarez, who's basically my mentor, we were talking about all the things that is going on, and all of the stuff that I had done so far. She was telling me, why don't you consider for the near future, becoming president of student government. I was like, that's something that I have to take into consideration. As I went to the Marshall Center on the second floor and looked at the pictures of all the presidents and started reading last names. I was like, there hasn't been one Hispanic president for the student body yet? There's so many Latinos here at the university. So I told her, maybe I would like to run, to make a difference. To show that Latinos can do it, and they can succeed in college.

G: Will you get more involved in students government, do you think, to lead up to running in the next couple of years?

P: In the summer, when I first came into USF, I began attending Senate meetings. For the near future, I would like to attend more Senate meetings and get more involved with student government so when I run for president of the student body, I have some awareness of how the system works.

G: Good. Your graduation date as it sits right now is when?

P: Hopefully, it's 2006, but you never know that because due to all the budget cuts, some of the programs are being cut. Some classes that go towards your major, you can't take them the next semester. According to USF statistics, in order for you to graduate in four years, each semester you need to take fifteen credit hours. [That] is not a lot of credit hours, but sometimes you can't afford it. Like, for example, I can't afford fifteen credit hours next semester. I can only take twelve. Hopefully, two or three classes will be towards my major.

G: But you've been able to work, pretty much all semester? Has that helped a lot to be able to afford school? My bigger question is, is USF affordable? Have you found, with LASA, or some of your other networks of friends, difficulties that students are having affording school?

P: I was a peer counselor, I had one of my students and I saw her last week. She was telling me that she felt that she was working so hard in school and out of school to try and pay for her tuition. She was going back home. That really hit me hard. We worked so hard for her to be here at the university, but at the same time, she can't afford it, so she's going to have to go back home. I have found myself in really tight economic situations here at USF. In the fall semester, I wasn't given a meal plan because I didn't have enough

financial aid. According to financial aid, my family made a whole bunch of money, which we really didn't. Until this point, it's still affecting me, the financial aid situation.

It is an affordable school, but like every other school, you have your little problems with financial aid.

G: The hope, then, is to graduate in 2006, and to go to law school? Why law school, and what do you want to study? What would you like to see as your career as an attorney?

P: I picked law school because most of my family is involved in politics in Columbia. I want to make a difference in people's lives. For example, I might study corporate law, or I might study family law. Those are two fields that I like. Corporate law, I like due to the fact that I might get to travel all around the world. Family law is because there's a lot of problems within the family, and if you can be a lawyer and try to settle the things down in a calm way, then everything would be better. One of my dreams is to maybe go back to Columbia one day and run for senator or governor or maybe even president and make a change in my country. If there is one thing that I am proud of, it's being Columbian. What is going on over there just breaks my heart.

G: I want to come back and talk a little bit about LASA again, about the diversity. Where are students from? Tell me about the people that belong to LASA; where they're from, and what kinds of programs you've done to celebrate the different nationalities or backgrounds of the different Latino communities.

P: LASA is very diverse. When I started working with our Listserv, I realized that there's about 300 members in LASA, including members from the past that still want to know what is going on with LASA. We have a vast variety of students. We have African

Americans, we have Latinos, we have Anglos, we have Asians, I mean, they're from all over. How we participate in celebrating their heritage, is through the office of multicultural activities. We signed up to be part of the office of multicultural activities. We take part in the Martin Luther King celebration, the holiday celebration which we had on Monday that basically explains how Christmas is celebrated all over the world. For example, [if] the Indian Student Association might want to do an event with LASA, or the Black Student Union wants to do an event with LASA, all they have to do is send us a paper telling us the day and what they want us to do, and we would happily do it if it fits our calendar. We've done a lot of activities with Greeks. For example, a caliente picnic with Lambda Theta Alpha. A Latin fest with Sigma Lambda Gamma. That Latin fest, the Caribbean Cultural Exchange also participated and the Black Student Union. We combine our efforts into one big family.

G: Have you thought about Greek life? Are you a member of a fraternity?

P: I'm not a member of a fraternity, and yes, I have thought about Greek life. I don't know, after I got to interact with the different fraternities and I got to travel with one of them through ENLACE, that some of the guys are tutors and mentors. I learned a lot of things about Greek life, and how it really is. It's not the picture that people try to throw out there. That, oh, they're the big tough ones, and then during rush week, they treat you really bad. Some people try to terrorize you about what Greek life really is, when that's not it. It's not it. What attracted me about the Greek life, is that they try and help each other out. It's not that you're buying your friends, because I already know all of them. If I want, and if I join a fraternity, it's not that I'm buying my friends. I already know them,

and it's just like brotherhood. What I find very amazing, is when Shannon Mohammed, who belonged to Lambda Theta Pi, passed away, how all his brothers came together and they went to his family's house. They were there with the family, and they did a memorial. For me, that was just incredible, on the union and the bond that Greek life creates.

G: As you look towards LASA in the future, what sorts of things would you like to see LASA doing that it's not currently doing? Or to continue doing that you've started or was started before you?

P: I would like to see LASA working more with different organizations. [I would like to see] more community service. That's obviously something that I have kicked off this semester. Last year, we didn't have as much community service. That's one thing that I wanted to change during my presidency. Fortunately, we've done about six community service projects, which not too many student organizations do in one semester.

G: What are they?

P: We did Lenia De Juda with ENLACE. Basically it was in Univision and it was answering phone calls regarding HCC and USF on how to get in. We did Volunteer USF's Community Plunge to go and plant trees on the east side of Tampa. We did one for homecoming. I don't remember the title of it. We went and we painted a house for a group. What just got me, was how happy they were when we were done. How we had gone and we had also planted some plants in their backyard. Just a hug is enough of a compensation. Salsa Giving was a community service project. There's been a lot during this semester. What I like about community service projects is, I don't care what people

say or if you need to get paid. When I do it and I see the shine in people's eyes, the smile on people's faces, and that big hug that they give you, that's enough compensation for me. I'm making a difference in someone's life.

G: You've done a lot of mentoring work and have been really involved with younger students of Latin background who are having to decide, like you did, what are they going to do when they graduate from high school. Based upon your experiences, or what you've seen at USF. Does the Latin student community face different kinds of problems or issues that maybe are unique to Latin students at USF, or in general, anywhere in the country?

P: I think in general, students face the same problems as other students, being Muslims, being blacks, being whatever they are. They face the same problems. Some problems might be more inclined one way than another way. For example, the Mexican American Student Association, they were banning Taco Bell because of the tomato pickers, which I believe, was a good fight that they were doing. Now, Lambda Theta Pi, LASA, and MASA are working on a project to stop, well not to stop, because the merger already took place between Clear Channel and Hispanic broadcasting stations. We want to split that apart due to the fact that they are trying to invoke one vision of what a Latino really is, when there is not one Latino. There is all sorts of flavors and tastes and nationalities. We're very diverse. You can't just put us as one. What the merger is doing is showing one side of what Latinos really are, which is wrong.

G: I've run out of questions. I want to thank you for coming today. I appreciate the time that you've spent with us. We look forward to your history being part of the official

record. I think that students down the road will come and they'll watch this oral history, and like you said earlier on, they may surprise their parents and surprise themselves and go on to do great things with their careers. I certainly hope that for you, and I know the university hopes that for you, too. Thanks, Juan. I appreciate you being here.

P: Thank you very much for having me.

End of Interview