

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

JOSE A. CARBAJAL  
MAY 24, 1999

ROUVEROL: This is Alicia Rouverol of the Southern Oral History program. Today's date is May 24<sup>th</sup> 1999 and I'll be interviewing Jose Armando Carbajal of Durham, North Carolina, a native of Honduras. And this interview is for the New Immigrants project, which is part of Listening for a Change. And this is my tape number 52499AC.1. We're conducting the interview at the Encosh office on Guess Road in Durham.

Okay. I think I should move over this way so that the—tape can—the microphone can pick up a little better.

So, maybe you could start with when and where you were born in Honduras. And a little bit about growing up there and your experiences there before coming here.

CARBAJAL: Yeah, okay. I was born—I was born in 1957 in Cholotecca. It's in the south of my country. And I grew up there until eighteen years old. And I think I am a migrant in my country because I go from the south to the north of my country to get—because my dream is to go to the college, to get a degree. This is my dream.

And I moved because my—the ( ) in the south of my country is poor, more poor than the north. We have our ( ) industry and agri-business or something like that we have. But in a company I was—still right now they employ a lot of people. And they pay better than another company. But that does not mean because they are a huge ( ) that the—

AR: What was that?

JC: The huge—

AR: Struggle?

JC: Yeah, struggle.

AR: For workers to get to the—

JC: For workers to get this because about 1954 we have a very, very big--. It was having nothing to really relations between workers and employers. And since 1954 they make a huge stride. They stopped the country. And that's the reason they would get one—the last ( ) relation. And they got the rights to organize a union.

AR: Was that—was that connected to like the banana--?

JC: Oh yeah.

AR: Was that United Fruit?

JC: United Fruit Company. ( ) company. That's what they call it right now.

AR: Yeah. So that would have happened right when you were—just a few years before you were born—

JC: Yes.

AR: That was a pretty major transformation had just taken place.

JC: And I think in 1976 when I was eighteen years, I go because my brother--. I have two brothers. They live in the north. And I come and I can find a job. And I can go to the college by the night. But it was only a dream and never got the chance to go to the college. And I started. I started one year but the jobs ( ).

And the reason I lost the job was because they hired me by the contract at three months, or six months or something like that. And the assistant finished ( ). I had to leave the job. And the problem, too, because this--. I had to go to a private college and I had to spend a lot of money. And I came.

AR: Now was your family--? What was your family's background in history there in the southern part of Honduras?

JC: Oh well, my parents they are still very small farmers.

AR: Small farming.

JC: Yes. To survive they have the ( ) of land, some cows. We plant corn, cane, something like that.

AR: Did they own their own land there?

JC: Yeah ( ). They still--. Not exactly. They have the land but—

AR: They access the land?

JC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's just something they doing their whole life because—from generation.

AR: Yeah. How many siblings in your family: brothers and sisters?

JC: We are--. How many we are?

AR: How many brothers and sisters did you grow up--?

JC: We are nine.

AR: Nine.

JC: Five brothers and four sisters.

AR: And where were you—older?

JC: I'm the middle.

AR: Younger? In the middle, uh-huh.

JC: In the middle.

AR: Now did many of your brothers and sisters have a dream to get education or were you unusual?

JC: Yeah. Yeah, some, they had this dream to get an education. I don't know what--. About two, three of my brothers—one sister and two brothers, they ( ) education like I. I don't know. I come here sometimes ( ) a teacher. My sister, she's a teacher.

AR: Uh-huh, yeah. So you grew up--. How large, the town that you grew up in? How large?

JC: It was very small. They ( ) still a very small town. It's—I don't know—beach, fishing?

AR: A fishing village?

JC: Yeah. We, actually, we cultivated the land. But when we have a chance we go to fishing, too.

AR: So your family did both farming and fishing?

JC: Yeah, but exactly we're not trying to survive by the fishing. Just to get something to use in the home.

AR: Sort of to kind of add to the income or the food?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Something like that. And there still very, very small. But seeing it now, it looks beautiful.

AR: Are we talking several thousand people, ten—

JC: No.

AR: Not even that much? Hundreds?

JC: No.

AR: So it's really a villa.

JC: I mean, I think, there's a thousand or something like that. It wasn't much.

AR: Yeah, okay, pretty small, yeah, yeah. You went to school there in the village, did you?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah.

JC: Actually it was really hard to go to school because I had to walk about two miles in the morning. Going to the—and I had to come back for lunch. And the weather is very, very hot. And I was remembering when I was a very child I had to come back to take a lunch at my house and just finish [JC snaps fingers] and go back because the class would have to begin at one o'clock had to begin again the class. And sometimes we had—because we don't have a very good roads. Roads to the transportation and something like that. When there—when the fall rains begin and we get several problems. Maybe the water has come and destroyed the roof. Sometime the teachers, months and months, they do not come in to provide the class because they can't come to the top. And sometimes it's three months, four months. We lose the ( ).

AR: So was maybe a little sporadic?

JC: Yeah.

AR: And it sounds like you were working. What were you doing for work at that point? You were working while you were in school, too?

JC: Yeah, actually—

AR: With your family?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. In the home. We're going to plant and take care of the planting of corn, and rice or whatever we have in the home. And to take care of the cows, too.

AR: So kind of chores like family that work on the farm.

JC: Yeah.

AR: Okay. So then how old were you when you were eighteen or nineteen did you say?

JC: Eighteen, yes. And I moved to the—

AR: And you had two brothers there already?

JC: Yeah, yeah.

AR: How did your family feel about you making that leap, that departure?

JC: Well, yes, that's--. Because those two brothers, they are older brothers. And I am in the middle. I'm the first after this brother moved from the home. And, actually, right now I have a—my brother and another sister, they're still in the home with my parents. And I was very young when I moved.

AR: So they—some siblings stayed to care for them, and the farm and all that and some left.

JC: Yeah, I mean, because my father-in-law was very old. He can't work no more. But he's still going because ( ) customer. That's ( ). Not for to get food or something like that because they really like.

AR: So you're saying that they like the—you're talking about your brothers really like the farming or--? I'm not sure I caught you on that.

JC: Umm-hmm.

AR: Was that right?

JC: My brother, yeah.

AR: So they're staying in part because that's also the way of life they want. Is that what you're saying? So then you were trying to study in college and you were working at the same time.

JC: Yeah, in the factory. Anywhere I could get—

AR: What kind of factory was that?

JC: First job I get in the factory is the plant processing, banana processing.

AR: So it was banana processing.

JC: They make sliced, ( ) all this for exportation to here, to this country or another country. And they use this system to hire temporary people because they don't want to--. They tried to destroy the union. They don't want to--. If they get permanent, these people have to be a permanent union member.

AR: So then if by '54 the unionizing was made legal, what was going on then when you were working in the factory? Do you remember, I mean--?

JC: No. I don't get to be a member. Well, actually I had ( ) because I lied. I—well I remember when I ( ) because in '54, I was born in '57.

AR: Yeah, so right, of course. So it would have been many years later with the organizing.

JC: Yeah. I heard or read something about the history. Actually we have—in my country we have the books, more books, novella—small books relating to the moon. ( ) relating to the moon. And I was remembering how when I read actually and a few years ago like in '60 or '70, the government prohibited this book. We can't read the

book. The title of the book is Pristium Verdi. I think in English it's Green Chair or something like that.

AR: And was this about the labor movement?

JC: Yeah, the labor movement. Well, when I read about that I was really interested to ( ) the moon.

AR: Yeah. And had your family been involved in the movement at all or no?

JC: No. Just—

AR: Where they were located they were—

JC: Yes. And they did not have a chance in that day.

AR: So you would have gone eighteen—it would have been seventy—I'm trying to add here. Seventy-five when—

JC: Seventy-six.

AR: Seventy-six.

JC: I come into the north.

AR: Now in the eighties—I'm just. I'm wondering to how long were you in that northern part of Honduras. Was that where you were before you came up here?

JC: Yeah. I remember in '78 I get the job as head of department of my country. And these—because this is a problem ( ) and they hire me. This is the reason I got to here because the ( ) don't have a union.

AR: Because of the—

JC: They have a union already. They hired me. When I have, I say, ninety days period they give. After ninety days you'll be a permanent worker.

AR: After ninety days you'll be a permanent worker.



JC: Yes. And I will be coming to be a member of the union. This is how I became to—

AR: So then you became a union member when you were at the health department job not when you were in the factory job.

JC: No.

AR: No. Because it sounds like even though they had made that move in '54, there was still problems with the union and the factory. Is that--? Am I--? Is that so? The union wasn't that well established in the factory at that point.

JC: Well, I don't know. We tried to clarify. In '54 they had a big strike. They stayed out more than two months. They stopped work, our work in the fields, the banana company. And, actually, some people from the city they support with this working. After this ( ) the workers at the company banana they get unionized. They get the rights to organize a union. And they—the government—when the government saw the situation, they created the workers code, they call it.

AR: Workers' code?

JC: Yes. To regulate the relations between both.

AR: So sort of labor relations codes and things like that came into place.

JC: Because before the company put all—they ( ) they could.

AR: They could do whatever, yeah.

JC: Wherever.

AR: And so what were things like there when you started to work in the factory? What were things like?

JC: Actually, this year, in '76, from '54 the company they tried to destroy the union. And this is the reason because this factory is a new factory to make another—other products from the bananas for exportation. They hire people just only by the temporary contract.

AR: Temporary, right.

JC: And when you are temporary you don't have a chance to join the union.

AR: Right. So, they're—. Right. Okay. I see. So if they're temporary then they couldn't have the choice to join the union. Uh-huh. So, it sounds like there have been some improvements from '54 forward. But by the time you were there it was still very bad because of this temporary positions? Yeah?

JC: Umm-hmm.

AR: Okay, okay. So then you decided to leave that situation.

JC: Well, yeah, I leave because there's no—how is it. I can't say it. It's not—

AR: No opportunities—

JC: No—

AR: No stability.

JC: No stability, right.

AR: How was the pay? Do you remember how much you were paid an hour?

JC: Oh, yeah. It's very—I was making this year '75, '76, you get maybe \$3.00—now you say. Our money is we call lempira. And three lempiras per hour.

AR: Which would come to how much in U. S. dollars?

JC: And this time we were paid two lempiras for one dollar.

AR: Wow. So we're talking—

JC: About—

AR: Eighty cents an hour? Seventy to eighty cents an hour? Is that right?

Yeah.

JC: I think—

AR: Which in 1975 was not a lot of money.

JC: Yeah. It's like eighty cents or ninety cents an hour.

AR: So then you moved into this health department job?

JC: Yeah.

AR: And what had you been studying in school, in college, what did you study?

JC: Just like a—I no get—just to—what do you call it? How do you say it in English? After the elementary school—

AR: Elementary school. So education.

JC: Yes. We call it in Spanish basic education.

AR: Basic education

JC: Yeah. But I never get to finish. I try and I try. The problem was when I got this job with the health department I came because they moved from the town to another town where we stayed six months, three months or one in a small town and then we moved.

AR: So you moved around from town to town?

JC: Yeah.

AR: I see. Okay.

JC: And I didn't have a chance. And this is--. Actually when the health department problem we—( ). And the government that's what they were doing to destroy the union they just constantly ( ).

AR: They constantly--what was that?

JC: The problem of the and the ( ). The health department that we work in because this is a problem against six to yellow fever or something?

AR: Yellow fever.

JC: Fever malaria they call it in Spanish. And we tried to eradicate the mosquito.

AR: Right. Malaria? Did you say malaria?

JC: It's a little bit different. Fever malaria is a different from malaria, but it's the same problem. And they ( ) the problem. The only the game because they cancelled the program for a few months. And after they come in with another problem. They recently really ( ). They want to cancel the union.

AR: So they wanted to get the union out of the health department?

JC: Yes. And this is again, I worked about three years there. And then in '81 I get the job in a hotel. And ( ). And there another job with the government, I ( ) with the union. When I get the job with the hotel I ( ) very directly.

AR: With the union?

JC: With the union, yeah.

AR: So how did that experience with the health department affect your union work?

JC: Oh yes. It was a really bad experience because the--. It's the actions of the government. They are more—are really bad, bad employers. Because all this move about the politician.

AR: Who was in power at that time?

JC: At this time there were many army guys there that oppressed it.

AR: So it was the military basically?

JC: Military basically, yes. And we—after '82 we had the first election and civilian people came into power.

AR: So that would have been a tumultuous time I would think leading up to that.

JC: Yeah. But I think nothing changed when the civilians came into power because they are allied with the military. [Laughter] So they—I don't know which is better. If we have military power—I think because we have more bad people. They are really thieves.

AR: I thought that someone in '80—. Oh, I see. Was that Roberto Suazo Cordoro who came in in 1982?

JC: Eighty-two, Roberto Surso Cordoro.

AR: In '82, who was liberal. So it was civilian rule. But you're saying when he came in it wasn't that much better.

JC: Yeah. Actually when I was in the union because I was in the party Central ( ) of Honduras. It's a lot of unions coming together. And then I think it was in '84, he was elected in '82 and he planned to stay like coming like—how we call it—illegal to another period.

AR: I see. To extend his role.

JC: Yes. And our union we tried. We were ready to make the biggest strike in the country because ( ) military in the power. Because military, they stay for whatever the time they want. And these guys had come in with the same idea. And finally we don't make a strike because he decided to stop ( ). But because we make impression—we are ready to go to the strike in the whole country.

AR: Wow. In order to fight that?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. And so you, as a union organizer, you were active in trying to help them. Wow. Boy, what an intense time.

JC: Yeah. And there's no reason. But it's very--. When you are a very visible activist, it's very dangerous. They kill some people like ( ).

AR: Did you know people who were killed in the—

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Yeah. One they killed directly and one they died by an accident, but a suspicious accident. One I remember this guy—his name was Hector Pavone. He—I don't know. They say he had an accident with the gas stuff.

AR: With gas.

JC: Explosive.

AR: I see.

JC: But the house just totally disappeared and he died.

AR: How was it to do that organizing work having your friends experience that violence?

JC: Oh, yeah.

AR: It must have been scary?

JC: Yeah, really scary.

AR: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. But when people see the hard injustice happen they-- I think we had to take the risk.

AR: Yeah. There kind of wasn't a choice. So then you would have been-- Maybe-- Tell me a little bit about like what would you do in a day at that point? You were working—you had left the health department job and you were in the other position.

JC: In the hotel.

AR: In the hotel. Then you would be doing your union organizing, I'm assuming, after hours on the outside.

JC: Yeah. Because the union leaders it's not-- If we have the central, the big, a huge, a lot of unions, maybe we can hire two or three guys in an office. But when you are a small union just you doing your activity after your work time. All the time I do that.

AR: You would spend your time-- So tell me a little bit like you would be-- You'd go to the hotel and put in some hours there and then afterwards, in the evening, you would do other work to your union. Was that trying to locate people to work with you? Could you say a little bit what that was like?

JC: Oh, actually, it's a basic union that we have in the hotel. Mostly we try to resolve the problem when we have a problem within the hotel. And every day we have a ( ) because it will be different how the union functions there. You have a Sunday or two or three days, you come into the office and join them to spend the time. If the members have a complaint against the company, we try to resolve it. Or you can plan to sit at the meeting for the whole time because of the problems. The ( ) problems you have because many are the employer. They make many violations against the laws.

AR: Right. So they would be violating things like health and safety as well as how much work people were doing in a day and that kind of thing, wages.

JC: Many things. Sometimes they work just about an hour and they have over time. All of that. And many times the guy is very good union member, they sometimes they try to fire. And the last thing in my country if the employer fires you if they can prove any reason to fire you like if you lose three days of work in a week or month. Or if you come in drunk in the workplace. Or if you thief something from the company store they can fire. But there are many that are fired because they see us the people ( ) they stay here because they are very good members of the union. And we had to-- We're happy we had to go to—we call—like a labor department. But you have a lot of corruption because the company sometimes they pay this guy from the labor department.

AR: So they would pay off the labor department?

JC: Yeah. And I asked them, "What is it you know how to do?" They had to make action.

AR: So take an action against the company.



JC: Against the company. Like a ( ) that's right. This is the most powerful tool that the workers have and the union has in Latin America. To get here from the government and from the companies, too.

AR: Because it stops production.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

AR: And it stops exporting. Yeah. So then would they have known at the hotel that you were active in a union? Or did you have to be quiet about your union activity?

JC: In the beginning. In the beginning you had to be quiet like clandestine if you wanted to make a union because the ( ) of my country say, if you have thirty people sign to the petition to be a union in the plant, the labor department, they can recognize the ( ). You don't need to be bold like here. But you know what happens? When you got to make a union you have to be smart. And use many strategic--. Maybe you present the list with the labor department with thirty people, signed with the ID number and the name and the company. When they received this note, they write a note and send to the company.

AR: Oh, so then the company then knows who—

JC: They have to notify, yeah. And you know what happened? The company fired all of those people. But the member—instead the activist union had to be smart. And they can have another group's people. And this is--. Many times they--. And this pawn, this ( ) really ( ). To get they bring back these people they fired. Sometimes you get and sometimes you don't get nothing because they ( ).

AR: Right. So you have to really persist in the company to get the union in.

JC: And that's when they recognize the union, it's no problem. You can be a very visible activist. But you have to be careful, too, because they are still watching you. They try to--. They--. Actually we have laws in Honduras now. If you're in an activist union, you are protected by the laws.

AR: You're protected by the law if you're an activist.

JC: Yes. By your activities they can't fire.

AR: Who's in the union?

JC: Yeah. Activist union.

AR: In the activist union.

JC: And remember, too, that the activist union they have more protection.

AR: So there was actually a union for activists? Am I hearing you right? No. You're saying that if people were--. Maybe rephrase, yeah.

JC: Yeah. The union in my country, the board members—the union, they are activists. Did you understand what I said?

AR: When you're talking activists I'm assuming you're meaning like organizer activism.

JC: Organized, yes. That's--. They are protected. And they can fire you but the law ( ). They don't care. They fire.

AR: So they will just fire people whether or not they're—

JC: Yeah.

AR: If someone's on a union activist list, they're going to be out of there.

Yeah.

JC: Mostly if-- Well, this the reason the union activists have to be smart and very, very careful.

AR: So when you're talking about activists' union, what do you mean by that? The group of people who are activists working for the union. Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Because we have maybe ( ) unions and we have a guest member.

AR: I see. Okay. And what was the union that you were most actively involved with?

JC: It was general central ( ). I was a member of the federation because one is a central, one is a federation. A federation's compiled by a group of unions: five, ten, whatever. And in specific areas. The federation--I would be a member of federation food and drinking therapists.

AR: Uh-huh. Okay. So there were different types of unions for different types of work.

JC: Yes. Yeah.

AR: Okay. And you were working mostly with those that had to do with food and drink.

JC: Working in a hotel and restaurant.

AR: So that was the area that you worked most in?

JC: Umm-hmm.

AR: And so did they know at the hotel that you were a union member and a union organizer?

JC: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

AR: And there was a union there at that hotel where you worked?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. Okay. How was it to work at that hotel as opposed to working with the government or the health department?

JC: Well, I think it's not much different about it. The only difference is about the salaries. Sometimes when you're working with the government they—you don't get paid for over a time. And these policies that they used--. Sometimes there, sometimes it's more easy to resolve if you have some problem with the government because you can use a ( ) politician.

AR: You can use—

JC: You can make a price against how they do because they're looking for the ball, too. And the privates—like a hotel is a little bit different. You make an impression by trying—if you start to work they just ( ). But I mean it's like the youths there. Guys coming against the workers when they make a strike.

AR: So they bring out the military?

JC: Oh yeah. Sometimes they kill people.

AR: Did you participate in any strikes at the hotel or were the conditions better there?

JC: Yeah. Well in my period we never get—been on the strike. But three times we were ready to strike. We were committed to the strike. But finally we got ( ).

AR: So you had negotiations? Were you involved at any point in strikes down there? I mean beyond organizing them or even, I guess, organizing them.

JC: I was involved with--. We make enough noise in a short time. And a protest march in the street. It was not against two or the companies where I worked. It was against the government.

AR: A more of a protest march against the government?

JC: Yeah, the public would be there. We've got a lot of unions today, not just our union.

AR: I see. So it was a part of—

JC: Yeah.

AR: Okay. Yeah. So, let's see. How much were your—was your union activity and all of that affected by—as you got into the eighties by what was going on in El Salvador and Nicaragua. I mean were you aware of those struggles that were going on.

JC: Oh yeah, yeah. I remember because when I was working in a hotel, I think, it was in '85, when the situation in both countries was really bad. This affected the Honduras because many people from El Salvador, from Nicaragua are coming to the Honduras, too. And the policy the government has because they say, "Let's hop in the car. Let's hop in El Salvador." Because the government there they are very weak. And in Central America at this time if you are a union member you are communist.

AR: That's the definition.

JC: That's the definition. Yeah. You are enemy. And no matter if—well maybe in time, you may be a union member. But there are some people they don't have an idea of what I mean, communist. And they—

AR: So they may not have, you know, they may not be even radicals per se, but by definition they're perceived—

JC: And you're a communist. And you're a danger and—

AR: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. And this is-- I remember the names of the guys. He's the head of the army of the Honduras. He has a slogan, "A good communist is only the communist dead."

AR: A good communist is a dead communist.

JC: That's what he said. Actually he graduated from West Point with honors and then he came—

AR: So he was trained at West Point?

JC: Oh, this time, I think '82, '83, '85—it was '87 when I came for the first time here. It's really dangerous not only for the union member like a ( ). If you do something you want to make a ( ). Yeah. Because they put us and ( ) just disappear.

AR: Yeah. I've probably heard more about than in El Salvador and Nicaragua because there was a lot of—

JC: Yeah. You know more, yeah. But because they had a war and this happened in Honduras, too.

AR: Right.

JC: Actually sometimes in Honduras, sometimes they take and jail one of these guys or a member of the guerilla or something. You need to hear about them—( ). It's a river between Honduras. I think it was in '84. Between Honduras and El Salvador.

AR: Yeah. A river between the Honduras and—

JC: El Salvador. The people from El Salvador they've ruined it because their army guys they fight, again the guerilla. Apparently the guerillas--. Many of these people just died. They are very humble persons. Capasinosos. They are very poor. And they have to—they run. They cross the river to Honduras because they want to save their life. And the army from Honduras—they're on the other side—they shoot to this.

AR: Shooting across the other side, yeah.

JC: One is they get killed from the army from the Honduras but when they go back kill some. Lawrence—she has a magazine about that. She knows about that.

AR: Well, Witness for Peace—there's lots of different publications that have brought attention to a lot of abuses. But I do think you hear more about El Salvador and Nicaragua than you do Honduras. Or what you hear about Honduras is about, you know, the contra coming back across the Honduras. You know, you hear about Honduras as a site for a lot of operations that—

JC: Actually the Honduras' army is still in '81. They're still enemies over there with the El Salvador army because in 1969—

AR: The soccer war?

JC: Yeah. That was one, but this--. I think it was the Bush government or Reagan they ( ). What is the reason? Because this is important to have no problem between both governments: the Honduras and El Salvador. And I see they bring in '83 they opened the centers to the ( ) in Honduras to try and solve—

AR: To train the soldiers, yeah.

JC: Salvadorian soldiers, Nicaraguan contra. And this is a real violation of the ( ) of our country because they are not asking from the congress for permission.

AR: They just did it.

JC: No, just do it because the guys in charge of the army for Honduras says, "Okay, you bring."

AR: So were you aware that those kinds of trainings were going on at that time? I'm going to have to flip the tape here. I mean would people generally know that that was going on?

JC: Oh yeah.

AR: Yeah. I'm going to just turn it over.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

AR: So it's interesting to hear about what was going on there, you know, at that time. I mean from people who were actually there.

JC: And this is the part where I really don't like the international policy of this country. No matter the most important ( ) is interest. That's hard.

AR: It's the economic interest.

JC: Yeah. The economic interest ( ). The people they don't care about the human people. And I was remembering when they opened this center in Honduras they call—oh, I forget the name—Crane. It's the center to the training of army people.

AR: Is this part of like the School of the Americas because they had trainings. That was maybe earlier in the sixties. They had a lot of trainings.

JC: I'm not sure of this part. But because you know what happened? They opened the center and they used the lambs of the guys, U. S. A. citizen guys in Honduras. And after they do that they make a—how is it? They put the suit against Hondurans



government. And this time— don't know how to say—the government here to give some million ( ) dollars to Honduras.

AR: Right. Gave money to support the training.

JC: Yeah. But the guys bring the case of the court here in this country. And finally, the court they—the decision was in favor of him. But when they give the money to the government, they ( ) about forty million dollars to pay off this guy. How you say—I think it's a ( ).

AR: Law?

JC: Yeah. They give it to Honduras about sixty, ninety or a hundred million. But when the final decision of the court of those America guys in Honduras-- He lived there. He had a reason for this case. He deducts this forty million from the money—

AR: From the money that was given

JC: To--. And the Honduras had to pay.

AR: Wow. And so what was the case? Let me make sure I understand the first part. I understand what you're saying at the end. But you were saying that someone brought a case against—

JC: Yeah because the ( ) of the land, they used it to put this center ( ). It—the guys, Puerto Rican guys.

AR: It was his land?

JC: His land, yeah. And they say, "Why? You abuse. You take my land." And he put a suit against the Honduras government. Do you understand that?

AR: Yeah.

JC: How'd he get the money? Who put the army guys there? They're saying it's government because they ( ) nothing. They won't appear and they say that it's an American city. The government protect the interests of American city and they ( ). I don't believe this. That's was not the—

AR: Right. Right. So then all of that must have been affecting you as you were going about your work.

JC: Yeah, really, because I'd seen-- Well I think it's danger. But I think I said, "How I can leave if I can suffer this situation?" I say, "I have to fight. I have to be organized for the group because we need to--." If you don't fight, you don't get the respect. And the abuses still continues in my country, in Latin America. It's a sad situation. ( ) our host government.

AR: Yeah. So you would have been-- Where were you at that point then by like 1987 when you first came over? Where were you living at that time?

JC: I lived in Parasula. In the hotel because the hotel is there and it was in Parasula where I was working. And I had to leave the job because they make very-- I think they persecuted me. They see that I had a real ( ) because sometimes I-- Some guys, some army guys, they watched my home because I live in a small building on the second ( ). Sometimes, because I don't know. I hear before ( ). I know the guys, they kill. So I have to go back by the ( ) and go to another side because I have to be—to take care of for myself.

AR: To be careful, yeah. To take precautions. Yeah. So was your place being watched there?

JC: Yeah.

AR: How long did you know that you were kind of under surveillance?

JC: Well, I think about one year, more than one year. Yeah. Because I was helping the guys, the partner from another union, he was very good. Really wonderful organizer. And finally he came, he put the police or the army they take and put in jail many times. And they abuse him.

AR: Did they torture him?

JC: Yeah. Many tortures and finally he died about that. And this is a guy's advice to me. "You have to be careful when you drive, when you walk. Every time you watch in your neighborhood in the corner." To be familiar with the people. If you meet any stranger, you be careful. You be careful. And actually after they put-- If you be a member, a union member, they put in a—they call the black list.

AR: The black list.

JC: Yeah. You can't get a job anymore. You can't get a job in the country. Nobody can give you a job, too. Unless there's a reason they start to working on ( ) with a company ( ).

AR: Had you actually been black listed there? I mean did you lose your job or were you able to keep your job at the hotel?

JC: No. Finally I quit because I saw the dangers because I was really scared they—it's possible they come to kill.

AR: At the hotel or just in general?

JC: Not in the hotel, but—

AR: I guess what I mean is were you by working at the hotel were you in danger?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. Because your job there--. Were you--? What were you doing exactly at the hotel?

JC: I worked in the storeroom.

AR: Okay. So the position there but you would have been active in that same union. So the setting then would be dangerous.

JC: Yeah. Actually the most scared I have because the army guys they are very powerful in the Honduras. They create the bank. Actually right now they ( ) and industry. And they come and be a part with the hotel. They have an action in the hotel. They buy. They are owner of the hotel. And there are some more.

AR: So you say they bought? Am I hearing you right?

JC: Yeah, they get an association with the hotel.

AR: So they got into an association with the hotel?

JC: Yes. On the roof all the time you see army people there.

AR: So then that must have really been unsafe.

JC: Yeah.

AR: [Laughter] No wonder you left. Oh boy. That's scary. Did your family know that you were a union organizer?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. Were they worried for your safety?

JC: Oh, yeah. They knew. Actually right now when I talk by the phone to my brother I say ( ) very similar with the union. They're--. And he told me, "Why you still

like that?" He said, "Why are you still like that?" And well, I say, "Because I like it."

And I think ( ) yeah, because.

AR: No room.

JC: ( ) because when I come in the union, woo, I'm really ( ) about what happened in my country.

AR: You're really blank. Are you saying blanking?

JC: Blank. What did I say, blank?

AR: You're forgetting.

JC: No.

AR: No.

JC: I can see the relative.

AR: Yeah, you can see the—

JC: Blind or blank?

AR: Oh, blind. Being blinded to?

JC: I'm blinded to my country really.

AR: You were at that time? Is that what you're saying? Or now?

JC: No. Before when—before I—

AR: I see. Okay, before you got involved you were fairly blind to what was going on in your country. Yeah, yeah.

JC: I know we have a saying, a lot of people--. There are people in my country with this situation because they don't know political. They don't know ( ) exactly. And this is the reason they don't find because they are--. It's okay. The waiting--. All this is coming from the government. And in my country any government

they don't care what happens with the people. Just they go to the interests to protect his interest. Who's coming to the government other than rich people. No, no, the poor people never can the procedure to be ( ).

AR: So when you came in '87 you say you were black listed. Have you tried to get other jobs and you weren't able to get them? Or what does black listed mean in Honduras. It has a particular meaning here

JC: Yeah and with the company if you go to look for the jobs—if you say, "This is my name." "Where were you working before?" "I was working at this." They have this so they say you can get the job.

AR: So they would have been able to find out about you.

JC: Only if you do something by sign because they notice something like that. If you go to the company to find a job, they won't give you a job. And once my friend he said, "If you want to work on a passenger ship--." I had no idea what does he mean that. And I can get contract. And he get--. And I get a visa and I come to work in Miami, from Miami to the Caribbean. But it's a--. I supported the situation because I need the job to survive. It's a huge, huge exploitation that I never see in the world.

AR: Even worse than you'd experienced.

JC: Oh really more bad. So bad because this ship you have only responsibilities, you don't have no rights. Just to get salary that's it. You don't have a right to process. You don't have any rights--. Just you work eleven hours and you don't get overtime. And this is a huge industry in this country. And they exploited people from around the world. Because they bring from Africa, Asia, Central America, everywhere there is ( ). With the permission of the government of this country really ( ).

AR: Well and there's no--. I'm assuming they're not unionized those folks that worked there.

JC: No.

AR: Unless they would be international, right? No?

JC: Some companies they have a union but only two or three. And they have a server company.

AR: Did you try to unionize when you were working on the ship?

JC: I was having conversation with the crew. I was remembering last year working for this company. I talked to them. We were having about three meeting, clandestine meetings. But I think it's really hard because the union sometimes they come to the port to give a flier to the passenger saying, ( ). They try and there's no getting unionized. I think—

AR: Too hard to unionize in that setting maybe? Well, how long did you work there for the—

JC: From 1987 to '92.

AR: To '92.

JC: That's the—

AR: For five years?

JC: Yeah, oh, yeah. It's really hurt when I ( ) there. I think I never want to go back to that kind of job because you're working twelve, fourteen hours every day.

AR: And you were on a—were you on a visa that whole time or just initially? The whole time?

JC: Yeah. Because I go back to my country.

AR: And renew it. Yeah, yeah, okay, yeah. Then how did you end up coming from Miami to North Carolina?

JC: When I had no work anymore on the ship I spent some time in Miami and I go to San Francisco, California. And then in '96 I decided to come in here.

AR: Now in the little booklet that I read about you, you have some family is it in New York and California?

JC: In California and ( ) or something like that.

AR: Did you go out in part because you had family or—

JC: Yeah. This is the reason I moved from Miami. And they say, "Come to here ( ) a job."

AR: What kind of a reception did you get in San Francisco? What kind of a response did you get from people coming into the community as a—

JC: I don't get involved in the community in California because I have a really hard job so I work by the night. I worked all night.

AR: Where were you working?

JC: In a restaurant.

AR: Restaurant, yeah.

JC: I was cleaning restaurants and it was a really hard job because you work by the night. And I hear about the organization I was around because I was living in California, in Oakland. They are very close. And I hear about the organization of how they work and they do it with migrant people. We have several organizations there, big organizations. But I did not get the chance because I was more worried to get the job to get money and send the money home to my family.



AR: Because you were--. Were you sending money back when you were on the cruise ship, too?

JC: Yes, of course.

AR: Yeah. So then how long were you in San Francisco?

JC: From—yeah—well Miami I spent about three or four months from '92 to '9--. No. In San Francisco I come in 1984, two years. And in '96 I come in here.

AR: I see. So you had five years in Miami, two years out there.

JC: Yeah, but Miami—

AR: Did you got back to Honduras?

JC: Yes.

AR: How was that to go back after a while?

JC: It's good. This is the reason I keep this job because I can go every year to my country to see my family.

AR: That's good. Yeah, yeah. How did you end up—or why did you end up coming from San Francisco to North Carolina?

JC: Well, because I see the situation in California and you have more opportunities of the jobs. First of all I worked in a restaurant cleaning and I decided well, this job is no good for me. And I'm looking for the job and I get a job with a big company doing movie duplication.

AR: Movie duplication, like tape—

JC: Tape.

AR: Tape duplication.

JC: They're huge. We'd get thousands and thousand of tapes by the day. Because they say—one of the supervisors would say, "Do you speak English? You can work like a crew day." And they give me—when I begin they pay me \$5.50 an hour just work. And after they give me the position of crew, they give me \$6.00. That's all I get.

AR: Fifty cents more.

JC: Yeah. I was working more than one year and I see how I can get—  
increase my salary. And I said, "Well, I'm--." And I hear around me all the people's sad situation. They say, "Well I think I need to move from California." And they're so—my friend he's--. Well, he lost the job. And he said, "Well, he had some relatives here." And he said, "Do you want to go? We can go to North Carolina."

Well, I was ( ) another friend. He told me about he's going to move to Arkansas. He said, "My sister lives there and she has a good job. Her husband has a good job. We can go there." And I liked the idea. But this friend said, "We can go to North Carolina."

I didn't hear nothing about North Carolina. And he told me his wife is here. She was here, and one day he stopped by the farm and I got to speak with her. And she said, "Why are you not coming here?" She said, "I'll get the job about three blocks from my house in a factory." She said, "I don't need a car. I can just walk. And it's easy to get a job here." And I said, "Well, I don't have nothing to lose. I'm going to try." And this is how in '96 I came here.

AR: Wow. Now when you were in California, how did—what was the—there was a lot going on, a lot of anti-immigration legislation that was starting to go on. What was your response to that because Proposition 187, I think.

JC: Yes. I think when the Proposition 187 I had about five or six months to come in from San Francisco. Well, this is the reason I just only hear, but I read in the newspaper ( ). But my understanding because I say when I read the history of this country I read a little bit. They say, I think, I say, in this country the constitution is first. Many of these people, I say that. If the 187 wins the election then I don't think this proposition's coming ( ). But I say there's a good part. But the problems--. How the policies from the governments' office and the fear of the people because many American people there, they really hate Latino people.

AR: Did you have experiences that brought that home to you, things that happened there?

JC: Well, not personally with me, but I hear. And I see it because--. And I met a lot of people that's killed on the job. And they never get the progress, good salary, good position. No matter if they speak English.

AR: So people who were being discriminated against on the job, is that what you're saying? They weren't able to move up.

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah.

JC: But it does happen anywhere. But a small ( ) in this case in California. And not only in California because I think you've got close to the border, that happens in Texas and in California and other states that—

AR: The relations are different probably and strained because of that border relations.

JC: Yeah.

AR: So what did you think about North Carolina when you arrived here? Were you—

JC: [JC makes loud noise.]

AR: What happened when you first arrived?

JC: When I come here I said, "What?" Because I was living in San Francisco or in Oakland they have a lot of crime.

AR: Umm-hmm, yeah, ( ).

JC: Stolen cars and everything you can see. When I came here I was surprised when I see sometimes the cars with the windows open. I said, "Wow. This state's very safe because they leave the windows open." This is in the beginning. But after three months I hear about the crimes that are ( ) against the Latino people. And I say, "Well." But I think it's so much different. It's not the same situation like California because of the gays. And the east is very huge there. And I think because here it's more ( ) to use crimes against a Latino.

AR: So you're saying it's a small group that's making crime against the Latinos not a larger kind of--. Not like a statewide, anti—

JC: I think we have crime in Durham against everybody. It's not only against Latinos. But it's not--. I think it's about the bigger of the city. The bigger city the more bigger the problem. That's the reason I think. And there's a reason when I ( ) with Ruiz ( ). We hear. We come in some meeting and the Hispanics enter. And we hear about the crime, but we don't see the response from the city or from the police department. And I think that probably here is because the city or the state, they don't really worry to improve the ( ) to eradicate this.

AR: So what you think--. Can you repeat that, the last part? You said the city—

JC: Or the state, yeah, they really don't worry to do something to resolve the problem.

AR: Right. So they're not taking enough steps is what you're saying towards all that.

JC: Yes. You have the case like housing issue. It's the ( ) is the problem with the crime.

AR: The housing and the crime are linked is what you're saying?

JC: Yes. Because where is the Latino going to ( ) because where is the people? Like if you see a group of young people coming to ( ). From here they are very close ( ) with a Latino person. And that's a reason the Latino people are targets for these people.

AR: How do you feel about how the experience of living here as a Latino versus San Francisco in terms of like the discrimination issue. I mean it sounds like you're saying crime and housing are a problem and they're not being addressed. But how's your experience been here in terms of how you've been treated on the job or, you know, just generally?

JC: Well, I think I don't see the most change because maybe I try to be understanding. Here we don't see more discrimination because here they need it, Latino work. And this is a ( ) in the future. Maybe ten, fifteen years we've gone out of ( ) situation like in California.

AR: Do you think it's likely that there will be?

JC: Oh more is possible. I think so.

AR: Are there ways that you think that that could be changed? Could the story unfold differently?

JC: Yeah. It's possible. But I think it's a good time that they ( ) maybe we can make the difference if we're working close and together with African Americans. And other groups too, not only with African Americans. But I think it's because African Americans, now they are in the same situation with us. They are minority and they are poor people like Latinos.

AR: And how does that affect the relationship between the two?

JC: Between Latino and African American? Oh, yeah, I think it's affect because sometimes the African American they see us—we're coming to replace in the work place, maybe in the housing, too. And in a society I don't know what ( ). But I guess it's important that we need to be together and ( ) because if we're united maybe we can change. We have power. But I think this is a hard part. Well, I think we have a good relationship between organizers of both groups because I met an African American and I really—for me, it's wonderful to meet those people. And they understand very clear the ( ) is the problem. But that's what we need to transmit to the rest of the community.

AR: That's a really good point. So there is—people are coming together on a leadership level?

JC: Yeah.

AR: But not necessarily on the community level.

JC: Yes.

AR: What steps do you think would need to happen for the people to come together on that community level?

JC: Well, I think that's a good question because I don't think I have the right answer. But maybe I can--. Well I think it's good that we still continue with the communication between organization and about community. But with the intention to go ahead, how can bring together ( ) community. Can understand we are in the same situation.

AR: That's what leaders out in the African American and Latino communities have talked about that. That there needs to be bridges built because there's a lot of common ground.

JC: Yeah. That's been happening there for some time. They get support from ( ). I hear about in Los Angeles some African American association coming together with the Latino organization to get some change in the community. And I—well I read that's happening too in Chicago. Many Latino with African American ( ) doing something and they get ( ).

AR: So there are then some examples of where people are coming together.

JC: I think actually this is what I read about in Chicago. It just happened a few years ago or twenty years ago. Actually a Mexican with a Puerto Rican—they don't want to come in together. And they are both Hispanics. But where the problem comes in is with huge ( ) both are united. And after they come with the African American they have been successful in some neighborhoods with housing issues. This is outrageous.

AR: So that could be a model here. Maybe we could talk with—in terms of the time—how are you on time? Are you okay to go a little bit longer still? There were a couple of things I wanted to touch on. Or is it getting too late here?

JC: We can stay here or maybe we can go at ten minutes to seven?

AR: Okay, great, because that would be, what, another half an hour. Did you say ten minutes to seven? Seven o'clock?

JC: Oh seven o'clock. That's okay.

AR: Yeah, half an hour from now is great. That's good. The two areas that I thought it would be nice to cover would be maybe since we're talking about this, we could talk about how your work here is similar to or different from what you were doing in Honduras. Because your father says to you, "Oh, you're still doing that." And maybe talk about your work with Casa. And also I was interested to know: were you granted political asylum to be here?

JC: Umm-hmm.

AR: I'd like to talk about that because that's not always easy to secure. My sister has worked sort of in immigration issues trying to help people to get asylum and things like that and to fight immigration law. She was saying, you know, that's not always easy to do. So I was interested to hear more about that piece of your story, how you managed to do that.

JC: Well I think--. The tape's running?

AR: Yeah. Is it okay or do you want me to shut it off.

JC: Yes.

AR: Yes, turn it off?



JC: Yeah.

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

AR: So you got your asylum, your political asylum in '95 before the last change because which we were saying was very fortunate.

JC: I think so.

AR: So that means you are now a U. S. citizen or permanent resident?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Both?

JC: No. I came because I need to pass--. I can't apply for the citizen. I have to wait after five years of permanent residence and after apply. And I hear the rumor they want to increase the time, maybe want to put, have to wait for eight years.

AR: Really?

JC: Be a resident to apply for the citizenship.

AR: You know I know someone who I interviewed on a project. Actually, he's in prison right now. It's a project I've been doing in prison. And he never became a U. S. citizen. He's been here for seventeen years. And it's because he didn't want to lose his Mexican citizenship. And so it made me curious about the relationships that you have with your own countries. And how much someone wants to be a U. S. citizen and how much they want to maintain their own citizenship. Do you have a feeling either way? Have you—how do you feel about being a U. S. citizen when you have this strong link to Honduras still?

JC: Well, it's—that's a—I don't have a problem to answer the question. It's--. I think my visa is sort of different when they think about this citizen because which one

are they keeping to decide to be a citizen of this country. Because many of—now we tell lots of immigration—the people, they are citizens. They can't lose. Seriously, if they are involved in some crimes. And they can get deportation, too.

AR: Deported, yeah.

JC: But many of people who are here, it's hard to go back to your country. Not only for the economic situation, too, because when times pass and pass there, the situation becomes more difficult. And what do you do if you're still an organizer. If you go back to your country and try to do this, put in practice to organize, this is really a danger, too.

AR: So for you to ever go back in that way—to go back to really live--. How was it to go back and visit? Were you okay with that?

JC: That's okay. It's okay. Yes. It's okay. I can go back. But if I were involved in any organization like a union or something like that it's I think it's going to be a danger again because the policies of the empowerment never change. If you're doing—if you tried to do something to change the situation, you are the enemy of the government. But I think, I might—my understanding, if I meet in really good conditions with my family and my job, it's the country, I want to be there.

AR: So if you could be there you would be there.

JC: Yeah. But if I can't have my family in safe conditions, where we can food and something like that. No matter, if I can—if this is—if I can't have this here in this country, that's okay for me.

AR: So if you could have your family here?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. So you're okay—so it's okay for you being here is what you're saying.

JC: Yes. No matter if I'm resident or citizen, if we can't stay together in a really good situation. It's good for me.

AR: So it sound likes it's less your identification with Honduras as much as it is your family if I'm reading you right because you can't do in a world what you do here for work in your activism.

JC: This is the part I really like here. It's the first time to get to pay for the job.

AR: You're getting paid for what you're doing all the time now, right? How did you manage to land here at Encosh.

JC: Well, years ago I was to have a meeting with Mukasa ( ) and we ( ) because he ( ). And when I talked with him—because he told me he spent some time in Nicaragua, Honduras—and I tell him, “Well,--“. When somebody introduced me, I said, “I was labor union in the Honduras.” He said, “Were you?” “Yeah.” “Well, it's good to—because we're looking for some person—“ he told me with these skills to organize a union or something like that because we plan to organize a group with the Latino because we have several people coming in our office looking for help. And they hired me just for part-time.

AR: And how long ago was that?

JC: In March of '98, yeah, '98 they hired me part-time. That's in October of last year I got full-time.

AR: That's great. That's wonderful. And what kinds of work do you do here with Encosh.

JC: With Encosh, my specific job is to develop Latino working association in North Carolina, to organize Latino workers because several people have come in with complaints. But there's only one thing I have to do because when we get a lot of people coming to make a complaint, like for wages and hours, safety in the work place or workers' compensation, too. Mostly in the construction area we have several problems because if some Latino worker get injuries many of these—some companies and the contractor, they know.

Why not give the basic rights to workers' compensation because this is by the law. The law says if the employers have more than five workers in the industry area, they have to provide workers' compensation. And we have this problem.

Many people ask—they come in after a month, six months, they get injuries and many of these contractors or the companies, sometimes they get doctors recommendations. He can work, or he has to work light duty. And these companies or many of these contractors they say, "Well, you come in here you stay in the office and we'll pay all week no money if you don't work."

But you know what happened? They won the case we reported to the industrial commission. And what happens in the future if you get injured, permanent injury, you can make a complaint because you lose your right when you're coming to work in the office area. They ( ) because they don't make a report.

AR: So they would make a report—

JC: To the industrial commission.

AR: To the industrial—you mean that the company doesn't make a report.

JC: Yeah. But by the workers' compensation law say the company can split up the form nineteen and the workers have to fill out form eighteen. And Latino people they don't know that form exists. They don't know this. And this is a part of my job. I have to make workshops to try to explain what did the ( ) say. What is right no matter what is the legal situation.

AR: So trying to help them to understand their rights so that they know when—

JC: We encourage these people to be groups organized too because it's not enough do you know your rights. They're right up there but you have to fight to have your rights.

AR: So you're trying to help organize the workers in actual unions—are you trying to help do a union.

JC: We have a relation with some unions.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

AR: This is Alicia Rouverol of the Southern Oral History program and this is a continuation of the interview with Jose Armando Carbajal. This is tape number 52499AC.2 continuing from tape number 52499AC.1. Today's is May 24<sup>th</sup> 1999. We're in Durham, North Carolina and this is for the New Immigrants project, which is part of Listening for a Change.

So we were talking about the work you do with organizing some of the workers here and working with USW. What does that stand for?

JC: UFW means United Food and Commercial.

AR: Oh, UFW. Okay, I thought—

JC: UFCW—United Food and Commercial workers.

AR: Yeah. I thought you said USW. Yeah. So—

JC: But not here in ( ). We do because they have a union there. And that's—

AR: ( ) is it?

JC: In the hope country. This is what I do with the union. And the board members in ( ) we have, I think we have seven or eight union activists and they are members of the boards of Encosh.

AR: So you have a lot of activists in your union ( ). Yeah, yeah. And how did you end up getting involved with Casa? How did you meet the first time? Because it's interesting to me how everybody's come together to ( ) this organization.

JC: I met Louisa in, I think, December of '96 in the Hispanic Center. I came to that meeting when they were talking about several assaults.

AR: About the crime, the meetings they were having about crime?

JC: Yeah. At the Spanish Center. I remember some police officers out there. And after this meeting the people decided, the group decided to go talk with the city council. And I tried to go to the meeting but I couldn't because the kind of job I have here does not give insurance.

But as far as after this meeting the people were coming in with the city council they let some people talk about the situation but the city council—they said, "Yes, we're going to do it." But they don't do nothing.

And that's why we were talking with Louisa by the ( ) and he told me where it was necessary to—. He sent me there back to the meeting in his house because we talked

before about the idea to create an organization because we said, "Well, I think the Hispanic Center is not enough here in Durham because we have several Latino people." We need another center to do something like that. And this is the reason I'm coming to this house and get to present idea. And I said, "Well, let's do it." And we have a meeting for several months in his house to plan and in May of '97 we come and inform the pueblo. This organizer named Pueblo, you know. We start to speak with the people and say we are in the process to be in there that Latino section over there.

AR: Yeah. So then you've really been a casa from the ground floor.

JC: Yeah, Louisa told me and other guys, but he's still doing about three months with us and after he left he's having a hard time.

AR: How do you describe Casa's work as opposed to El Centro's work?

JC: I think we have different because El Centro, he working—the people are coming to the Hispanic Center to get ahead and ( ) service. And I think we try to do leadership development ( ) trying to tell the people how they can solve their problems if they have problems. Not only to just come, we're going to help. You—but supporting these people can learn and how to resolve the problem. And ( ) people in the community.

AR: So you said then there is a lot of effort then to try to do more development of leadership it sounds like. How do you go about developing that kind of leadership?

JC: Well I remember the first meeting we had with the people in our neighborhood. We walked the neighborhood with a flier and said, "We are here. We have several problems in this neighborhood. We've identified the problem and we're planning to have next week. We'll try to come here to talk with the people." And this is



the way we made the first meeting and ( ) Avenue with some people on Geary Street.

The street I live.

AR: Geary Street?

JC: Geary Street. I live on Geary Street. And because a few—maybe a few days ago one Latino family they suffer assault. One Saturday at eleven o'clock two young guys come into his house with a gun.

AR: Is that assault?

JC: Assault.

AR: Really? Wow.

JC: In the meantime the husband, Latino guy, he fights against the guy because they come in with a gun. And he said, "I want your money." And another guy, he's still in the living room trying to take care of the woman, the wife of the Latino guy. And another guy says, ( ) to the bedroom because he said, "Where do you have the money?" He said, "I have only thirty or forty dollars. That's all I have." And he's still looking for more money. But finally these people—they'd gone. They shot him. They tried to. It's get hard. But they no get. And I said this is the reason we make meeting now when the neighborhoods—

AR: I think I remember hearing about that.

JC: Including the t. v. is coming. I don't know who's to say about the police department.

AR: Yeah. You know I've heard different accounts of that whole story about that meeting. You know the newspaper talked about how other people tried to come to



that meeting and they were told that it was Hispanics only. There's just press that came out of it.

JC: Oh, well, I don't know exactly because we made another meeting, too, because we ( ) and minor for Holloway Street. They call the Melitas, a huge apartment complex. And we do several meeting to try to solve it when the people—

AR: Well the press made out—it made funny kind of—what's wrong with Latinos getting together to try to solve their own problems. You know what I'm saying? It's like it got presented in a way that was controversial.

JC: You know what happened? After that meeting about a month ago we had—we were having another meeting in the ( ) Manor with some big, rich people. And this woman, this guy Sol, she came into the meeting. So we are in a meeting one ( ) come and work. He came just to watch us. And the woman said, "This is the guy. He assault me in the home." And then we called the police. The police came and took the guys. This really very young guy.

AR: Yeah—

JC: But they're—how do you say. I don't know how to say in English. He's, I don't know, seventeen years old.

AR: Yeah, pretty young, a teenager.

JC: Fifteen, yeah.

AR: A teenager.

JC: They can take men—I think it's one—a few hours a day and that's it. But they go.

AR: So, and you know, I interviewed someone from the police department actually on a project. And talked a little bit about this issue, you know, of the Latino community. And they say they're making efforts to try to get, you know, Spanish, Latino officers and Spanish speaking--. And what's your sense of what the—what is or isn't being done?

JC: This is between you and me.

AR: I guess I should turn off the tape recorder if it's between you and me, or--.

JC: Whatever. I don't think they really make an effort to hire because they--. If they want to hire they have to ( ). They have to look at the people out of the state because we don't have much time to spend here in North Carolina. Why they're going too far? When I saw they have to ( ) because they want to bring someone from Florida or New York. The people can move from there. If they go there they find because you have a lot of bilingual people because they were born there and they grew up there. But if they want to go move to here they need incentive.

AR: So that they have to hire someone from out of state and it's more expensive?

JC: Yeah. But, they say, "Oh, we're looking." And that's true. They put—if you go in many Latino around here, they put in paper say, they're looking for the officers. But how long is this because we once had a meeting with the city manger just about a year and a half and they no hire. They no hire one officer. I don't think they really want to hire.

AR: The proof is in the pudding is an expression. It's what you do or what gets accomplished. So we were talking about your work--. This meeting is what helped to

give rise to Casa. So your work with Casa then is similar to what you're doing here at Encosh but more hands on. What—how's—how would you describe your work with Casa?

JC: Well, we have some difference because—some difference but they are very similar because the problem-- Who are the people with the problem within the community? Latino people. And they are workers, too. They ( ). But only the difference is because sometimes I'm going to visit the neighborhood Latino to make—reach out to try to help the people. But I don't spend much time on that because sometimes I'm really, really busy here because we have people to come in here to the office with these problems. And, too, the part of the job I do with Encosh is to do something together with another organization. Right now I participate with Flock ( ) Against Mount Olive. I'm part of the committee that organized a march.

AR: Have you been involved in both of those through Casa or--?

JC: For Encosh.

AR: Encosh. Yeah, yeah.

JC: And actually I—last week on Wednesday we are in ( ) conference. Do you know what I mean ( )?

AR: Noah.

JC: Noah is the National Urbanizer Alliance. This is where groups meet and they make conferences every two years. And they bring a lot of Latino organizations ( ). It's a huge conference with about five hundred people.

AR: Where was that? Where did that take place?

JC: In Black Mountain.

AR: Wow. Great.

JC: They finished yesterday ( ). And I would make a march of protest in Asheville, in downtown Asheville, Thursday.

AR: Did you?

JC: A lot of people. Yeah.

AR: Good for you. That's great. So it sound like you're getting good work done. You're probably tired. Speaking of which, let's—we should probably wrap this then. What time is it?

JC: Yeah. Seven.

AR: Seven. Okay.

JC: Seven past nine minutes.

AR: Nine minutes past seven. Is there anything you want to add about--? I guess, you know, to come back to this thing of--. Maybe to close out you could say something about how—

JC: Do you plan to do the books like that?

AR: Well, we might, yeah. I'll talk with you a little bit more about that when I shut off the tape. Maybe we could close by talking a little bit about your—how you feel about having immigrated to the States by coming here. And how you maintain your connection to your home country. How do you--? Are you an American now? Are you a Honduran American? Are you Honduran in your own thinking?

JC: I am Honduran.

AR: You are a Honduran.

JC: Yeah. But I've adapted to here in this state because I think we have a wonderful opportunity here in this state. And, right now, we are really fortunate to do something. To change the situation in the future because it's good to me when I hear this Latino conversation, doing something. Doing something or just Latino situation is coming up because I think there's several jobs we need to do. To prevent this situation that's happening in California for another state because I think it's not really-- I can't understand. Oh it's possible I understand because why the people here in this country maybe when they have bad feelings against us. Because ( ) Latino people are coming to look at the job and we're working. It's very, very less if you can find some people Latino to ( ) or ( ) or ( ). But as far as coming to work, we come to it to the better of this country.

AR: You hope—what was the last thing.

JC: Contribute we.

AR: You're contributing to develop this country.

JC: Yes. You have a very great example floating up from California and New York how we can help our world we can help to the States.

AR: So that Latinos are helping to develop this state is what you're saying?  
Yeah. That's very true.

JC: I think this is something that's very clear. Everybody can see.

AR: That's part of the new face of North Carolina.

JC: Well, I think it's not a few years that they, you have a-- Well, the part is good or maybe the part of sad because I really—because the first time was in Asheville,

North Carolina. It's really a beautiful mountain they have. But we grew up, we developed many of this part, the beautiful part of North Carolina were gone to us.

AR: It's getting developed is what you're saying?

JC: Yeah.

AR: Yeah. So the costs of development.

JC: Yeah. That's—you're right.

AR: Is there anything more you want to add or should we go ahead and close our interview? Is there anything we haven't covered about your experience immigrating to North Carolina, to Durham that you think is important that we've left out?

JC: Well, I think this is the only thing I want to say. Well living here in North Carolina, is a very particular city in North Carolina, Durham because we have many different things. If we have a problem with the crime whether we have opportunities to do the jobs to prevent this situation. And I think it's the challenge to work together in the community.

AR: Yeah. So there's opportunity in that. That's good.

JC: Always. It does not matter where. A group any group of white, African American, Latino, Asian, wherever.

AR: Yeah. That's part of what makes it a great place to be.

JC: Yeah. I think so.

AR: I think so, too.

JC: Yeah. This is because Durham is a small city but I was really surprised because the—

AR: It's diverse.

JC: Diverse, people you can find.

AR: Yeah. That's good. Well, great. I thank you very much.

JC: You're welcome.

AR: And is Jose Armando Carbajal your official, your given name?

JC: Yeah, but in my family everybody just calls me Armando. If somebody calls me Jose maybe I—

AR: Okay. Great. Okay. I'm going to close this down. This is Alicia Rouverol with the Southern Oral History program and Aramando Carbajal. And we're here at the Encosh office, which is actually--. I had said before it was Guess Road and it's actually Broad Street we're on. And we've just finished our interview for the project. Thanks. Appreciate it.

JC: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW