

Tape 21b: Interview with Raymond Romero

Interviewer: Helen Krische

Date of Interview: 2006

Length of Interview: 8:49

Location of Interview: St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

Transcription Completion Date: December 15, 2020

Transcriptionist: Emily Raymond

Interviewee's daughter Lupe states on March 1, 2021: "He let people call him Raymond and other Mexican Americans who knew him called him by his real name Ramon. So his full name is Ramon Enrique Romero Sr."

Raymond Romero (Interviewee): [Murmurs]...grocery store that I knew of. That, uh, we done business with.

Helen Krische (Interviewer): Mm-hmm.

RR: They'd have something on sale and we'd go over there and get it. [murmurs]

HK: Did your family, um, do – did they put their stuff on credit and then pay once a month, or...?

RR: Yeah, when Johnson's, when Johnson's was open, I'll never forget it. They, uh, they'd give credit to working men. And...they would let us – let them run up so much. We didn't have no trouble then 'cause my wife was working, and, uh, we made it with five children.

HK: Mm-hmm. Do any of your children speak Spanish?

RR: Let's see – one, two, three of 'em speak Spanish fluently.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: And the other two: "I don't want to learn it." [Laughter] That's the end of that.

HK: Do you think it's helpful –

RR: Oh, yes.

HK: For them to know how to speak Spanish?

RR: Especially – especially the one that's a librarian.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: When she...when she graduated out of KU, she didn't know much Spanish, so she – her first job was down in, uh, Peace Corps.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: And she went to, uh...Ecuador. Quito, Ecuador. [Murmurs] The young lady might have heard of it. Close to the Panama Canal. And she was in Peace – her and her husband were there in the Peace Corps. And then, uh, they went to, um...Costa Rica, San Jose. They were there for a while. She – she got to teach there. And, uh, then they came to, uh, McAllen, Texas. Abilene, Texas. Um...there was another town that they – three towns in Texas. She taught school there. Her husband was, uh, had something to do with the court system. Probation officer.

HK: Oh.

RR: That's how she – they moved around. And she's, what, 59?

HK: What do you think of the situation today, with Mexican Americans?

RR: Well...I don't know how much you know about history, but when Spain was at war in 1936, '34, '35, '36, [Name _____ Franco] said: "We now have the first colony of all the Spanish." Alright, then he put up the second [colony?]. That bunch didn't believe in a lot of Francisco _____ theory A lot of 'em ended up in North Africa, Casabianca, [Place name], and Algiers [Place name]. There was a few of 'em in Egypt. And then [murmurs] throughout Ivory Coast.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: Just like the Mexicans are doing now, from Mexico. Yeah, the Mexican situation here is now, that these people are coming here simply because there is nothing in Mexico can offer. Because the politicians – you're a politician, you're a rich man, you know everything, and you gonna get hoard up all the money. Well, these poor guys...you heard of the expression in English? Crumbpickers. These guys were crumbpickers. And they said: "We're not gonna be crumbpickers. [Murmurs] since we know how to read and write. We're gonna go to the United States," and got up here.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: Some of 'em are well-educated, some of 'em are not. They're gonna have to change their way of their customs. I notice here in church, you've got –

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: Okay. To have the Spanish Mass, that's the worst thing they can do to try to teach our Mexican people how to learn the, uh...the, um, English language. By segregating 'em that way.

HK: Mm-hmm.

RR: They should just throw 'em in there, that's what they done in – to our – us, and our folks. When they came to church, they went right into the – to the, uh...English Mass, and stayed there

and learned what they did. If they died, well, [murmurs], funeral, last rites [murmurs]. Uh, let's see, what else? Um...oh yeah, that – five minutes?

HK: Five minutes. [Laughs]

RR: Is that all I got left, or did I run over?

HK: That's all you got left.

Interview Assistant: That's all you got left.

HK: So you better talk fast. [Laughs]

RR: Well, stop talking [murmurs]. Well, anyways, the only problem that you have with these modern Mexicans now, they're better off than their first [murmurs] father and mother [murmurs]. Because these guys know how to read and write. When my parents came over, they did not have those schools in Mexico. And, uh, most of them, their writing was just an "X." And that was it. I'll never forget one of 'em. one of 'em was working there on Santa Fe: "Juan! You signed – you forged that!" He says: "You signed my name! You supposed to write." He says: "Look, that's *my* name!" An "X." [HK laughs] Well, there you are. Now, what else?

HK: That's it. Well, thank you very much, Raymond. It's been really enjoyable, and I think that we learned a lot about history here.

RR: Did you meet the other kids yet? [Murmurs]

HK: Well, they did, but they don't go back as far as you do. So –

RR: I started in 1925.

HK: Yeah.

RR: Brought it up to the present time.

HK: So, yeah.

RR: That was only –

HK: It's been a pleasure.

RR: That's only eighty-six...eighty...eighty-one years.

HK: Well, that's a long time. That's a lot of history. So...

RR: There's some Mexicans older than I am here, but they were born and raised in, uh, one of 'em in Argentine, the other was in Emporia...I don't know...Ottawa. One of [murmurs] was, uh [murmurs]. That's the best I can give you. I don't know whether it'll help you any or not.

HK: Well, we appreciate it. And it certainly has helped us. So...yeah.

RR: Okay. The only thing that you left out is what did I go through in the war time.

HK: Oh. Well, see, we're gonna save that, because you're gonna do a – a World War II oral history with us, right?

RR: Okay. Okay.

HK: So, and we'll learn all about that then. So...yep. We'll be –

RR: Just – just don't ask me about French Indochina.

HK: Oh. [Laughs]

RR: I didn't know that they had cut all those [murmurs] countries.

HK: Uh-huh.

RR: [Murmurs] faster than I can [murmurs]. Well, am I the last one?

HK: You're the last one for today.

RR: Well, I hope I can help if you –

HK: Yeah – [tape cuts off at 8:24]

END OF TAPE 21B