



Urban Pioneers

VOICES OF THE WEST SIDE *Salt Lake City, Utah*

UNDERSTANDING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH TELLING AND HEARING STORIES



Community Stories from Residents of
Salt Lake City's
West Side Neighborhoods

<http://blog.urbanpioneers.org/>

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Community Stories Co-created by

West side residents:

Urban Pioneers (UP) and
Hartland Resident Committee (H)

University of Utah students in

the UNP Honors Think Tank
Community and Change

Tiffany Sandberg (UP)

Muna Ali (H)

Brad Hard (UP)

Amanda Moore (UP)

Abdi Mohammed (H)

Orrin Howell (UP)

Omar Hernandez (UP)

Ruby Chacon (UP)

Ron Jarrett (UP)

Juan Lopez (H)

María Garcíaz (UP)

Travis Outly

Randy Wood

Jessica Wilkinson

Kendra Richins

Caitlin MacDonald

Stanley Lloyd

James Egan

Wendolens Ruano

Eduardo Reyes-Chavez

Brayan Nava

Frances Tian

U of U Honors Think Tank facilitated by:

Sarah Munro, Ph.D.

Associate Director, University Neighborhood Partners

Research Faculty, Department of City and Metropolitan Planning

Kimberly Schmit, M.Ed.

Partnership Manager, University Neighborhood Partners

Trinh Mai, MSW, LCSW

Assistant Professor/Lecturer, College of Social Work

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John Huston (Les Olson Company)*

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INTRODUCTION

The stories in this book emerged out of the year-long University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) Honors Think Tank: Community and Change. UNP staff and faculty from the College of Social Work brought together 11 Honors students from the University of Utah and 11 west side community leaders (Urban Pioneers and Hartland Resident Committee members) to explore how people's life stories could be used to build community in rapidly-changing neighborhoods on the west side of Salt Lake City.

One of our guiding questions throughout 2008-09 was, "What does building community mean in today's society?" After examining the definition of "community" from multiple perspectives and addressing the question of how to create meaningful opportunities for community involvement for people from widely different backgrounds, we began our intensive community-based research with local residents in west side neighborhoods of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Our work focused on issues of demographic change, cultural norms of family, language, tradition, local decision making, and neighborhood involvement. Using principles of community based research, tools of ethnography, and methods of examining individual life histories, we went beyond an "ivory-tower" approach to identify and develop concrete and grounded strategies for addressing these questions.

This book (and UrbanPioneers.org) is a culmination of our final projects, including eleven life stories with complementary art covers which can also be seen as an art exhibit. It is our hope that these efforts will not only build community between the east and west sides of Salt Lake City but also among the west side neighborhoods.

Tiffany Sandberg
with

Travis Outly: *I am a Junior undergraduate student at the University of Utah, majoring in Biomedical Engineering. I am a Tongan-American 27 year old male. I come from a large family and grew up for most of my life in North Carolina; however, I have lived all over the country including: Utah, California, Minnesota, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Pennsylvania.*

I am in an Honors Think Tank working in association with the University Neighborhood Partners. We are documenting and creating stories of residents of Salt Lake City's west side neighborhoods. These stories are being compiled to show the many positive people and aspects of the West Side as well as to inspire change and create a sense of pride for West side residents.

I had the honor of interviewing Tiffany Sandberg, a resident of the Fairpark Neighborhood, the North West area of Salt Lake. She has been a resident of the Fairpark Neighborhood for over 18 years and has been an active leader, serving in many capacities to help strengthen and better her community. I have known her for several months and have worked with her in a small group on another project documenting the Salt Lake Fairgrounds during the Fall semester of 2008.

Although Tiffany and I are different in so many ways: ethnically, religiously, age, gender, etc; we share the common goal of wanting to build a stronger community. In my experience, it has seemed that the West Side of Salt Lake City has a reputation of being dangerous or "ghetto" and is often represented in the media in a negative light. It is an extremely diverse area. However, it is my feeling that this diversity often causes people to misunderstand the west side and even fear it. I hope that through reading Tiffany's story, strangers to the west side will see the west side as I have come to see it. The west side is a great place! It is a community that actually

has so much to offer its residents as well as a community that has potential to do and be more.

This interview was conducted in the Warnock Engineering Building at the University of Utah on the evening of January 29, 2009. It was conducted in a quiet private study room. Questions asked in the interview were a compilation of questions created by the UNP Think Tank students and facilitators as well as a couple of my own.

On the Move

I grew up in different parts of the United States. I was born in California. My dad was in the army and so we moved a lot the first few years of my life. I lived in California, part of it in Utah, Texas, and Maryland. And then came back to settle in Utah before I started school. We moved back here permanently in 1971, into Salt Lake. I was 5 years old

At first, because my dad was just getting out of the military, he was trying to get a job. So we lived with his parents up here on St. Mary's circle, up above the zoo. My parents' first home was in what's now called East Liberty. I started my school years up at Emerson Elementary on McClelland street and 13th South. We lived there until I was 8. Then we moved up the street quite a bit to a house on 15th east and about 15th south. I went to Uintah Elementary and I actually finished my public education in that house. I went to Uintah Elementary, Clayton Jr. High, and East High School... graduated in 1984.

Any Neighborhood Has Potential

I moved to the west side shortly before we had our oldest daughter. So, my husband and I were a newly married couple. One of the things that my husband and I both love is old homes and fixer uppers and projects. We had started saving some money for a house. Not much because we were still starting out ourselves. He still had student loans to pay and you'll see how all that is [laughing]

We needed something that was affordable and we figured that some of the coolest old homes we'd seen were in the Capitol Hill area. We knew it'd be years til we could be able to afford a home there, even a fixer upper. So we were just kind of biding our time. One day, my husband's cousin called him. She was working as a building inspector on the west side of Salt Lake at the time. She said, 'I found this great house, you guys need to buy it.'

She told him a little bit more, that it had been sitting vacant for five years and that meant that it was condemnable by city code. So, in a few days, she was going to put a condemned sticker on it and then the house couldn't be bought or occupied at all. At that point, the city would turn the house over to the fire department who would use it as a teaching tool. So this beautiful house that was built in 1896 was going to be set on fire! [Laughing]

And then the city would sell the lot for somebody to build a home on. So essentially, we saved our house from destruction. The purchase price in 1990 was, I think, forty five hundred dollars and it was just back taxes.

The first time I went to see the house, being a girl growing up on the East side, I had my own prejudices against the West side. My husband said, 'You gotta come and see the house, it really is cool and I think you'll like it.'

I drove out there one day after work and I walked into the house. They had just started doing the construction phase of putting it back together and making it livable. I walk in and I looked up, and I could see the sky because there were huge holes in the roof. And it was just... I couldn't imagine how this house was ever going to be livable. I told my husband, 'Thanks, thanks for showing it to me.'

I got in my car, and I drove around the corner and I sat there and I cried for 30 minutes thinking, 'What the hell have we gotten ourselves into? I'm gonna have a baby in May! I can't bring a baby into this house!' And so I was really discouraged and upset and just thinking, 'this was stupid, this was stupid, this was stupid, this was stupid.'

But one of the things that I liked about the neighborhood when I did drive around the block and have my melt down was there were a lot of neat old houses. And a lot of them needed work, but I thought, 'You know, any neighborhood has potential.'

We're still in the same house today. It's been through a lot of different phases. At first, our goal was just to get out of the apartment and into the home, so we weren't paying rent. We had to take out a mortgage to do the improvements. I think the final purchase price of our home at that point was \$32,500. Even in 1991, that was a darn good price!

Good Neighbors

My first impression of the neighborhood was that, people were really keeping to themselves in my immediate neighborhood. But, we were the new guys. So, I would go out and I wasn't as outgoing at that point in time as I am now. Plus, I had a brand new baby I was taking care of so I didn't get out much either.

One evening, we hadn't been there quite a month and I was out front planting some flowers. A neighbor walked past from two doors down and introduced herself to me. She was my first neighbor to introduce herself to me. She still lives there. She's in her 80's now and unfortunately, fairly homebound because of medical issues. But, I'll never forget that day when Beth took that opportunity to introduce herself to me and welcome me to the neighborhood. That really struck me as a good thing because when I lived on the East side and we moved, nobody came and introduced themselves to us. It took me going out as a young child and playing to get the other kids to say, 'Hey there's a new kid.' And you know how all that goes. I really liked that aspect of the neighborhood a lot; that somebody was willing to stop as she was walking past and introduce herself to me.

Our neighbors to the south of us emigrated here from Mexico. When Jeff was working on the house, Rosa and Andy would bring hot tamales and hot coffee to him in the morning to eat. Rosa would come over and check on him and make sure he was ok. At that point, Rosa

didn't speak very much English. She was pregnant with their youngest daughter at the time. So that was kinda cool cause, while I was still home on maternity leave, Rosa brought home Angelica.

Angelica and Jessica were very good friends the whole time they lived there. They had this little language of their own that they'd come up with that was kind of half Spanish and half English. It'd be really funny because my Spanish is horrible and they'd come running in the house and they'd start talking to me in this, I called it Spanglish, asking for water and cookies and things like that. It was really fun to watch those 2 grow up and how much each one of them learned from the other one.

We've had some really good neighbors to the north as well. Right now we have an older gentleman and his son living there. And they've been there for probably, I think, five years now. They've taken incredible care of the place. They actually put a yard in because it was all dirt. The landlords are slumlords and they don't care; they just want their rent money. But Ray and Dali have really shown that they love where they live. They've put in a yard. They've painted the exterior of the house. They've done all kinds of improvements on their own that the landlord would've never thought of doing.

A Very Friendly Place

Well, compared to the East side, the West side was more friendly. The people who lived there were more friendly, more open. I know my neighbors. Granted, I've been there for 18 years so I should know my neighbors at this point. But, I know my neighbors. I got Ray and Dali next door, and then there's Clarence and Beth, and then there's Ponch and Elisía, and then there's Kevin. Then, across the street I got Christy, and I got Donna. So, that wasn't something I always knew on the East side. Everybody seemed to stay in doors a lot. The kids would go out and play but it never seemed like the adults intermingled.

So to me it's just a very friendly place. It's a lot more friendly and open. It just seems like people don't judge each other as much. People are a lot less judgmental.

PTA - Getting Families Involved

I started out my involvement in the neighborhood by being PTA president at my kids' elementary school. Jessica was 9, so it would've been in 2000. I was the PTA president there for 5 years. We did some really neat things during that time and that's what really got me more involved in the community.

My husband and I felt that a lot of families thought that PTA activities, and the PTA, and the school community council weren't for them. They didn't understand that these were both organizations that were going to help them have a better say in their children's education and what goes on in their children's school. We were all about trying to educate other parents who had moved here from other countries and parents who had even lived inside of the United States their entire lives but just felt that, you know, 'They don't want me to be involved.' And it's like, 'Of course we want everybody to be involved.'

So, we started an activity called 'Family Fun Night' at the elementary school. One Friday evening a month, at first, we would do a family activity. We would invite everybody in the school to come. It ranged anywhere from showing a movie, to playing bingo, to having different presentations done. We brought Global Art Ways to do an art project with the kids once a year. The only rule was you couldn't just send your kids to be babysat, you had to come with them because it was a family event. Our goal was to not only introduce some parents into ways that they could help with the school and participate, but to kind of force families to spend an evening together... not in front of the television.

We had some really successful nights. Christmas Bingo was a big one. At the big ones like Christmas Bingo and the Thanksgiving party we would have over a hundred people show up. The Halloween Carnival which was the big event every year; we'd have

about 600 people show up. That wasn't including my volunteers that I had.

It was all funded through donations. For Bingo I would go to All a Dollar and they would donate a hundred items for me. Then, I would go to Albertsons and I would get gift certificates and turkeys donated. We would have people donate bicycles. Besides having the bingo game, we would have a raffle. Nobody ever paid for anything. They'd just walk in the door, each family was given a raffle ticket, every person was given a bingo card, and we just played bingo for a couple hours.

For the Halloween Carnival, we would fund that from the proceeds from the previous Carnival. My big deal with that was I wanted to make sure that every kid in that school could participate, no matter what their income was. So we would sell tickets. If you pre-bought your tickets, they were 5 for a dollar. If you bought them the night of, they were 4 for a dollar. But everything at the carnival was a ticket. If you wanted to play a game, it was a ticket. If you wanted a hot dog, it was a ticket. A bag of chips was a ticket. So, it was an affordable night. The whole family could come, they could feed their family, the kids could play games, everybody could have a good time, and it didn't cost much.

Each year we'd see more and more families show up to participate. Each year I'd have more and more people volunteer. By the time my youngest daughter was in sixth grade and it was my last year at the school, I didn't have to solicit volunteers for the Halloween Carnival. I had people lined up to come and help us.

These days, the Halloween Carnival does continue. I'm not so sure about the rest of the activities. I had a concern that when I left, things might not continue happening. But I knew that if I came back and started doing it all, nobody else would ever step up to the plate and take over. So, I just sat back quietly and heard through the grapevine that the Halloween Carnival was happening. And really to me, that was the only event that really mattered; that the Halloween Carnival

continued. Everything else, it didn't matter. But that had to continue on.

WLI - Finding the Leader Within You

There was a little newspaper on the west side that was being put out once a month by a friend of mine. I received it in the mail one month and I opened it up and inside there was a flier talking about finding the leader within you. I thought, 'I'm a leader.' And it was called the West Side Leadership Institute. So I applied and got accepted.

That must've been 2004 then because I graduated from the West Side Leadership Institute in 2004. I graduated from the WLI in 2004 but I was still at the school through 2005. I graduated from this program thinking, 'You know, I'm a leader, but I need better leadership skills because I know that there's more that I could do in my community.' Working in the school, volunteering in the school like that really inspired me that there was more work to be done and that I was the right person to do it [laughing].

The WLI was a partnership at that point between University Neighborhood Partners, NeighborWorks Salt Lake, and Salt Lake City Weed and Seed, which is a program that no longer exists. It was a really fascinating class to take. It was a nine week course and each week we learned about a different subject; about being a leader and conducting meetings and so on. Each one of our courses was taught by a university professor. I just thought that was amazing. I mean, I paid \$30 to take this 9 week class and being taught by university professors.

So, I started networking through that. One of the things that I loved about the WLI was that I got to meet other community leaders and community activists who also saw so much potential and wanted to continue the growth of the west side on the right path. It was very inspirational to meet these people and be able to network. Oh well gosh, if I need this, I can call this person, I can call this person, I can call this person, and so on.

I Was So Set Up

In the middle of that I also became a Girl Scout leader. I am still a girls scout leader today. I love Girl Scouts! One day, I was at the school delivering girls scout cookies [laughing] and one of the teachers came running down the hall and she said, 'Tiffany Tiffany, somebody's here who wants to see you.' And I'm like, 'Who the heck knew I was here?'

And I turn around and it was this man named Daniel Pacheco. He was a kind of community organizer or advocate at Neighbor Works Salt Lake at the time. He said, 'Oh I'm so glad I found you. I have something I want to show you.'

I looked at him and I said, 'Ok well I'm delivering cookies, can it wait?'

He said, 'No, I want you to come right now.'

I said, 'Ok.' So I go out in the parking lot with him and I say, 'Well what?'

He said, 'Come here I need to take you for a quick ride.'

And I'm going, 'What the heck?!'

So, his daughter's with him, he's in this Neighbor Works van and I'm like, 'Ok well that's not too creepy.' [laughing]

So, I get in the van and we go for a ride and we get a block away from the school and he said, 'Look, somebody's doing something to this building. There's finally a business moving in.' It was on the corner of 8th West and North Temple.

I was like, 'That is a really horrible pink color. I can't believe somebody paint the building that. So I wonder what the heck it is.'

So he goes, 'Well let's go find out.' He takes me over to these people who were working on the building. He knew exactly what he was doing. He said, 'So, what kind of business is going in here.'

This guy looks at me and says, 'Well, it's the Blue Boutique'

I just completely stopped. I was like, 'Oh my God, this is one block away from my children's school! You've got to be kidding me!'

Daniel said, 'Come on Tiffany, come on Tiffany.'

I threw over my shoulder, 'It's a little close to an elementary school don't you think?!' And Daniel put me in the van, took me back to the school, and I was going, 'You've got to be kidding.'

So he and I met really quickly with the principal and I was going, 'We have got to stop these guys from moving in. It's too close to the school!' I said, 'You know, even if it were a few blocks down the street, it would be better than right here.'

The next thing I know I have all these reporters calling me to talk to me about the Blue Boutique going in. The principal had sent out a news release... [laughing] ...about this, and put my name down as the contact! [laughing] I was so set up...

So I called and I organized a community meeting and I called together the community. And I went and I talked to the woman who was in charge of the Relief Society at the local church and asked her to get people involved with this. I talked to the Tongan church on the corner and I had them get people involved. I went to Our Lady of Guadalupe. I went to all of the churches. That's the best way to get information to people, I think... in short time. Because if nothing else, the gossip circle's gonna start. [laughing] Even if you miss a Sunday service, the gossip circle will start and you'll start getting people involved and interested. As the school community council chair, my husband sent a letter home to all of the parents in both English and Spanish saying we were gonna hold a public meeting to find out what we could do about this.

At my public meeting, the media was there. I had two people from the city office to talk about codes and what was legal, what wasn't legal, and what we could do at this point. The meeting ended up being very long because we did have everything translated into Spanish. And of course, everybody was very upset and adamant that we didn't want the Blue Boutique there.

Unfortunately, everything was too far into the process there was nothing we could do to get the business to move. So we changed direction in our thinking and decided that we would just make sure that they remained good neighbors and that their displays weren't

outrageous. And that they were upholding the law and keeping their back area closed and not allowing any minors in there.

They pushed it a few times, and community members immediately called the police to get their window dressings changed. They've been very good about that since then. I don't know if they've ever had any problems or gotten in trouble for minors being in the wrong places in the store. And then, everything kinda turned around and every year, they make a hundred dollar donation to the Elementary school for the Halloween carnival. So I have to say that one good thing happened with the relationship with them. But another good thing that happened was our community council formed what was called a Business Committee.

The business committee tries to work closely with the city. I was a member of the community council, but I was not on the executive board at that time. They formed the business committee and my husband ended up being the chair of that. They would work closely with the city, keeping an eye on the vacant buildings and finding out what kind of permits were getting pulled for businesses so we could jump in on things prior to licenses being issued.

Now we know what's going on. I mean, we haven't heard of anything that we would feel was inappropriate coming in. But I think that letting the city know that we're very interested in what's moving into our neighborhood has helped a lot.

So there was a big community council meeting shortly after that where an attorney from the mayor's office and a bunch of people from the planning department, and so on, came to talk to our community council about if we had any legal recourse to get rid of them and to define to us what an adult business was and what was and wasn't legal again so we could be watch dogs. And we discussed putting covenants on buildings so that businesses like that couldn't move in that close to a school. We discussed all kinds of things. Basically, our hands were tied except that we could police them and make them be good neighbors. And we have. Yes we have.

And then it was shortly after that that I got elected on to the executive board of the community council. That would've been 2005. So I've been part of the executive board of the community council since 2005.

Community Change Since Involvement

I've seen a dramatic decrease in crime in my community. I think a lot of that has to do with the increase in home ownership and decrease in rental units within the neighborhood. It also has to do with having police chiefs who are very proactive recently. When we first moved into the neighborhood, there was a police chief who was not a good cop in my eyes. And he did not force his staff to be good cops either.

When I was working at St. Marks Hospital, I was working on Sundays because I liked to have a weekday off to spend with the kids and deal with, you know, doctor's appointments and all that stuff. I got up one Sunday morning and there had been... the neighbors next door had had a party. We have no off street parking, so I ended up parking my car down the street a little bit; no bit deal.

Before I had went to bed, I asked my husband to move it back in front of our house so that it'd be right there when I got up. I woke up in the morning and I have a straight shot... I can see from my coffee pot in my kitchen, through my front window, to where my car should've been. And I looked out there and my car wasn't there. I was like, 'uh... that lazy guy! He didn't move my car.'

So I finished my coffee. And then I thought, 'No, I know he went out and moved my car.' And so I went out there and there was this big pile of glass where my car should've been parked.

And I looked down the street and there was no jeep. And I looked the other way, and there was no jeep. I was like, 'Humm... somebody stole my jeep.' [laughing]

So we called the police to report it and about three hours later a police officer called me back and he said to me that he was just TOO busy to come and take a report and he was TOO busy to go out and

look for my car and that if I really wanted to get it back, this is where it might be and that I should go and look for it myself.

Yeah, he knew where kids were taking jeeps and four wheeling them and just leaving them when they run out of gas and that I should go and look for it myself if I wanted to find it.

Can you even fathom that? I didn't even know what to say! I was just like, [pause], 'Ok?' And I hung up the phone and I'm like, 'I can't believe it.'

My husband said, 'Well what did he say?'

And I said, 'He told me to go look for my damn car myself!' So I got in my husband's truck and I went to look for my car and it wasn't there.

About a week later, a detective finally called me who had been assigned my case. [sarcastically] It took only a week... only a week later. She called me and she said, 'Well, I just wanted to let you know that I'm the detective assigned to your case and here's your case number.'

I'm like, 'Why did it take a week to get me a case number? Shouldn't I have had that the day I reported my vehicle stolen?'

'Well the case number was there...'

I said, 'Then why wasn't I given that case number?' You know, I had never had anything happen. I'd never had to call the police before. I had no clue of what I was doing. I've called them since for different things. But um.... So, I just thought, 'this whole thing is just screwy, it's so screwy.'

The week after that she calls me back again at work and she goes, 'Well I've got good news and bad news.'

And I said, 'Well just give me the bad news!'

She said, 'Your jeep's totaled!'

And I said, 'Ok, so what's the good news?'

She said, 'We know where it is.'

I was like, 'Ok?'

And she said, 'You wanna hear something really funny? Your jeep was actually impounded about an hour before you called it in stolen'

And I'm like, 'Ok?! Why was this never put together? Why has it taken two weeks?'

[Big Sigh]... 'Oh I don't know. Things are just really slow. They just move slowly.'

And I said, 'Ok, well can I go to the impound lot and look at it and get my belongings out of it? Have you guys already gone and done your detective work and gotten fingerprints and stuff?'

'Oh we're not gonna bother with that. You just go get your stuff.' They just didn't care! Just... didn't... care. I have no idea why except, I blame a lot of it on the police chief at that time because I just don't think he cared. So if the boss doesn't care, why would the employees care? It's all a trickle down thing.

So yeah, we went up there and we got our stuff out. Sure enough, it was totaled! Both axels were broken. They'd taken it up the hills in North Salt Lake and rolled it down.

When we get back home after we had gone and gotten a hold of our belongings that are left out of it, one of my neighbors walks around the corner and he goes, 'So did the police ever call you?'

And I said, 'About what?'

And he said, 'You know, I'm on Neighborhood Watch and the night your jeep got stolen, I had seen some kids hanging around it. And so I went and talked to them you know, You shouldn't be hanging out, it's two 'o clock in the morning. You guys should be inside, it's not safe to be out this late.'

He said, 'The kids razzed me a bit so I just went back home.' Then he said, 'And I was doing my rounds again and they were still standing out there so I called dispatch and told them.' So it was completely preventable. But it didn't get prevented. I was very bitter against the police department a long time... [laughing].

I believe in leading by example. I always feel that if I am active and involved, and I'm doing positive things for my

community... that other people would kind of jump on the wagon and start doing the same thing. I believe that's happened. People are much more involved at the elementary school. Their PTA has a huge membership now. I went to one of their school community council meetings about a year ago to make a short presentation and I couldn't believe how many people were there. The room was packed and it made me so happy because that's what it should be. That's what it should be.

I see the neighborhood is cleaner in some senses. Little signs that people care more than when we first moved in are everywhere. People are buying the homes, painting them, fixing them up, and taking care of them. There's a real sense of community. It's fun to go to the grocery store because I run into all these people, especially during the winter. My older neighbors who walk when the weather's good are not walking when it's cold and icy. So the grocery store's where I run into them now to check on them.

They Don't Know They're Welcome to be Involved

I think diversity just is my neighborhood. At my children's elementary school, Jackson Elementary, there were 23 different languages spoken in children's homes. You had kids from everywhere going to this school. That's one of the things that inspired our Thanksgiving project, Jackson Elementary Family Thanksgiving. It was a potluck and we asked everybody to bring a food that was traditional in their homes. It didn't matter the time of the year they usually ate it, we just wanted them to bring a food that they traditionally ate in their homes for this potluck.

And it was frickin' amazing! I mean, we had Bosnian food, we had Russian food, we had Polynesian, let's see, we had Samoan and Tongan, and Australian, American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Peruvian... I mean, just loads of different foods.

To me, it was just amazing to see people who had immigrated here from like say Bosnia, eating their first taquito. Which to me seems just like a normal food you know? [laughing] Or like people from Mexico eating their first peroghi, which is traditional in

Bosnia.... Which again to me seems like normal food. It was just, it was so cool. It was so cool. It really brought a good turnout.

So that's one of the things I love. I love learning about different cultures. I love being around different cultures because when you think about it... we were all immigrants here at one point, except for the Native Americans. Not one of us or our ancestors was originally here.

And I just think we have so much to learn from people that come from other cultures. It's a different way of thinking. In getting to know some of my neighbors that have emigrated from Mexico, they're school system is so very different than it is here in America. A lot of them just figured school systems were the same across the board. So they would send their children to school, knowing there's an afterschool program so their kids could be there til 5 'o clock at night. They assumed it was like school in Mexico where the kids would go til 5 'o clock at night and all of their homework and everything would be done so that they wouldn't have responsibilities when they came home to do homework... not understanding that the afterschool program was time to play, basically. So they couldn't understand why their children weren't doing well in school.

But they also didn't know that they were more than welcome to come to the school and try to figure out what was going on so that they could help. For me, you need to be able to help educate people on how the systems work because it is different. Try and give them a hand in figuring it out and learning how they can help and how they can help their families.

I almost feel like these things were inbred in me. You know, my mom was a PTA president, my mom was always involved at my schools and so to me it just seemed normal that that's what you're supposed to do. I realized that for some people, that isn't normal. That isn't the way things happened in their lives. And it's not that they don't want to be involved, it's just that they don't know they're welcome to be involved.

Yep, they just don't know. But, you know, the diversity brings a lot of neat things. One of the things I love is driving down 9th West from like North Temple to 6th North and looking at the houses. They're bright colors and they're cheerful. And they'll have like this bright blue house next to this bright pink house, right next to this bright orange house, and then... and I love it. I love the color.

I love to look at people's yards and see how they decorate them. You know, the people who love flowers a lot and so even during the winter, they've got their fake flowers out front. You know [laughing]. And different statues that are probably from where they were from originally and things. And it's just, I don't know it's quirky and it's neat, and it's funky and it's kitschy and I love it. I just love it.

Everybody Says Hello!

The immigrant population is pretty large. I was looking at the statistics recently. And it's actually kind of hard to figure out for sure because of legal issues for some people. They aren't here legally and therefore they don't get documented.

But thinking along my street, we have a family from Mexico. We have us, we're Caucasian. We have Ray and Dalí who are American but of Mexican descent. Clarence and Beth, Caucasian. Ponch and Elísia are Hispanic. Kevin, Caucasian, grew up in the house he lives in now. And then there's the duplex and there's such high turnover that I don't even know who's living there anymore. Then there's another Caucasian family and a Hispanic family.

The apartment in the corners, we have a lot of families that are refugees from Somalia living there which is really cool. One day we were driving home and they were having a wedding ceremony out in the front yard. We stopped. [laughing]. We stopped. I mean, here's all these Somalis in their beautiful bright colorful clothing and they've got these big fans made from palm tree leaves. And they're singing and they're happy, and it was like, 'How cool was that?' And this is happening down the street from me! [laughing].

And they didn't mind us watching. When I was in class last, listening to Muna, she was talking about how in her country people are very friendly and they say hello to each other and how she doesn't see that here in the States. You don't see that very often, unless you're in your own little immediate community because people are afraid of each other.

A lot of the folks who've emigrated from Somalia don't have vehicles and there's an Albertson's 3 maybe 4 blocks away. They walk there everyday to get groceries and then take them home. It is probably very common in Somalia to buy your food on a daily basis buying what you need. Every morning when I'd be out getting my car ready and getting kids in the car to go to school, some of these Somali women would be walking down the street. I'd always say hello to them and they would just light up because somebody said hello to them.

You know, their kids would be riding up and down the street on these cool new bikes they just got. I'd say, 'Hey guys!' And it was amazing what a difference that made because their faces would just light up and they'd smile and they'd say hello. I don't think many neighbors would take that opportunity. Because they're probably going, 'Well they don't speak English.' Everybody says hello! [laughing] All you have to do is say hi and smile at somebody. It makes all the difference in the world.

Everybody in My Neighborhood is Important to Me

There're always challenges. A big challenge we're facing right now is with the North Temple rebuild; and so Salt Lake City wanting to turn North Temple into a Grand Boulevard and an entrance to the city. I'm all for it. I think that's a good thing. I think it's been a long time coming because North Temple is the gateway to the city from the airport.

It's a shame that people's first view is as crappy as it looks. But the challenge in doing that is making sure that gentrification doesn't occur. Revitalization is good; gentrification, not so much. Because then you end up losing the people who are

already living there because they get priced out of their homes either through tax assessment and their property values going up, or because they no longer feel that they fit in.

So I think one of the challenges is to have this good development occur and have these hopefully good services that we're lacking on the west side right now come with that development. At the same time, I don't want my 85 year old neighbors to have to move out of their home because they can't afford their taxes anymore.

So I'd like to see the city do something like California did several years ago. I think it was called Proposition 1, where your taxes were grandfathered so that you could remain in your home. Because, everybody in my neighborhood is important to me. They're why I'm there. Clarence and Beth built their house almost 60 years ago and moved into it as a newlywed couple and raised their children there. They brought their grandchildren home to there. I'm hoping that's where their lives end because that's the way it should be as long as you're able to maintain and take care of yourself.

I don't want to lose those neighbors because they've seen the history of the neighborhood. They're the ones who told me all about the previous occupants of my house, you know. They knew all the neighborhood gossip. There are also young families that are just starting out the way we were, it's an affordable neighborhood still. The nice thing about young couples moving in is that it might be their 'starter' home, (which is what we said our house was.. and here we are 18 years later) but they might end up loving the neighborhood and seeing that they can actually really make a difference and participate in things and then they wanna stay.

In 5 Years

In 5 years, I would like to see TRAX going to the airport and North Temple revitalized. Revitalization will mean that vacant buildings will be filled with businesses. The city can usually turn it into a redevelopment area, a designated redevelopment area. This means that existing businesses can get low interest loans from the

city to do cosmetic changes to make their buildings and properties look better. It also means that a lot of times you can bring new businesses in because property prices and leases would be lower. We are currently missing services. We have no real mass retailer on the northwest side. The closest thing is Wal-Mart on the 13th South and 3rd West.

With the TRAX going in, I also think that that's going to encourage the community to become more walkable. I envision people walking to North Temple to get on TRAX and leaving their cars home. The nice thing about people walking in neighborhoods and being out and about is that helps deter crime because the criminals see that people are walking around and that they're keeping an eye on things.

In 5 years, I also see more owner occupied housing. I just have this gut feeling that more people are going to be moving back into the city from the suburbs because even though housing prices in Salt Lake City in general are higher than they are in the suburbs, you can usually get a bigger house, a bigger lot out South or out West than you can right in the city itself, I think people are getting tired of commuting.

I think that the whole City Creek project that's happening downtown is going to bring a lot more jobs into the downtown area and therefore more people are going to want to be moving into that immediate area so that they don't have to commute. The City Creek project, or Downtown Rising project, is where they leveled downtown and now they're building it back up [laughing]. 'Well we blew up downtown and now we're making it nice.' [laughing]

Expectations

Oh I definitely feel there are expectations. I think everybody expects everybody else to be a good neighbor. And in that meaning, keeping your yard looking nice, kinda doing unto others as you would have done unto you; living by the golden rule which is something we should all do. And pretty much that's it; I mean just maintenance type stuff. Which, again it's an education issue. You

know, you take somebody who's lived in an apartment their whole life, and all of a sudden they own a home. They don't know they're supposed to mow the lawn. They don't know they're supposed to be shoveling the walks. They've never had to do these things before. There's always been an apartment manager or a landlord or somebody who was out doing those things. So you know, a little friendly, [whispering] 'You know you're supposed to shovel your snow.' [laughing]

There are a lot of neighbors from other parts of the community that complain that people aren't doing it. And I say, 'Well have you told them they're supposed to?' [laughing]. I mean, you gotta think about it, did this person emigrate here from another country? Or are they a first time home owner who may not understand these things? I mean imagine their surprise when they start getting utility bills where they've never had them before because everything was included in their rent.

Take a walk on the West Side, People

If there's one thing I'd like outsiders to know about my neighborhood is that it's not scary! It's not scary. I wouldn't have stayed there for 18 years if it was scary. It's been through rough times, absolutely. But, people just need to come down and see what's there. I mean, there's so much that can be offered. And there're such amazing people that live there.

I really feel that my life is richer because I've lived on the west side. So, take a walk on the west side, people! [laughing]. But I think people would be... well, you read the blogs. You see what people say. And you see what people say whenever there's a crime committed, 'Oh deport them!' It's a white guy! Who's an American citizen! Where do we deport him to, Nebraska?

But you know, people's perceptions are really, really bad. Whenever the media shows something bad on television, you can bet that 85% of the time, it's something bad that happened on the west side. So even if that exact same crime or problem is happening on the

East side, they come to the west side and portray it being down there. I really hate how the media perpetuates people's fear of the west side.

I've had people, when events have happened at the Fairgrounds, come to park in front of my house and I'd be out working in the yard or something and they'll say, 'Is it safe to park here?' And I'll look at them and say, 'Well, I park there every night!' [laughing]. 'So, I kinda think it is.' [laughing]. 'But, if you're worried, you should probably pay to park.' Give them some revenue.

But yeah I get very frustrated with that. I get very frustrated with media representation. I get very frustrated with every time anything that does happen on the west side is portrayed in the media, immediately everybody thinks it's a minority who caused this problem.

I get tired of people telling me that my crime rates are higher than they are anywhere else. If they would take half a minute to check their facts, the crime rates in my neighborhood are lower than they are in Sugar House, the Avenues, Capitol Hill. We have one of the lowest crime rates in the city.

So, I wish people wouldn't just spout off what their parents used to say and what they've heard and instead look at facts. I hope that this project can help to dispel some of those misperceptions.

Abdi Mohamed

with

Caitlin MacDonald: *As an interviewer of Abdi Mohamed, I was required to consider my own positionality when listening to his experiences of community and neighborhood. I am in the majority within my own neighborhood - a white, middle-class member of the LDS church. I have never known hunger or been in the middle of a war. I have always been expected to go to college and live a comfortable life. And yet I consider myself somewhat of a minority - my international experiences in China and India as well as the opportunities I have had as a student at the University of Utah have increased my perspectives of difference. I understand that community can be a physical or geographic space, such as a neighborhood, but I believe, as Abdi does, that community can extend its reach outside of a physical neighborhood.*

I don't believe I will ever be able to truly understand Abdi's struggles in life, because we have such different backgrounds and experiences. But I am honored that he would share his journey with me and appreciate that his efforts have truly contributed to his community.

Abdi was born in Somalia, grew up in Kenya, and currently lives in Utah. His most significant experiences with community were in Kenya and at the Hartland Apartments in Salt Lake City, Utah. He currently lives in Murray and attends Salt Lake Community College. He is of the Islamic faith and is an employee at the University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) office at Hartland.

Communities:

Family

I have 23 brothers and sisters from age 43 to 5 months. Not all of them are from my mother, but I consider them all family. We are very

close. My family eats together, prays together, plays together. Everything we do, everybody knows. It is an open, safe, and comfortable environment. Say someone wants to purchase a car, then we all chip in to help. We support each other in every way possible. That is one of my communities.

I grew up in Kenya, but I was born in Somalia and came to Kenya in 1991. I lived there until 1999 and then came to America. My family left Somalia because of war - tribes were fighting against other tribes and we were in danger. We traveled through Ethiopia and went through many hard months before we were able to reach Kenya. That is the best stage of my life. We moved into a house and went to school. We learned Swahili and had friends.

Kenya

In Kenya the community is open, like one family. You can go to anyone's house anytime you want. The door is always open. At the same time it is a little bit challenging because some of the people don't have money to live so you have to help them because you are their neighbors. In Kenya, let's say you don't have sugar for tea. You just go to your neighbor and get some sugar. It was that kind of neighborhood. It was welcoming, comfortable, and safe.

As soon as we moved in, the community welcomed us by bringing food. We got to know everyone better. Sometimes we played hide and seek and you just go to any house. It's not in one house, you play in the whole neighborhood. It was very open. Say a dad gives his son some money, he has to give everybody some money. It was that kind of community. I was free. I didn't have to worry about anything. Here, the children don't have freedom. Over there (in Kenya), you could go anywhere and no one worried about you. There, if a neighbor saw you doing something bad, that neighbor has every right to beat you up. So you have freedom to do anything you want as long as you don't do anything bad. You can go anywhere, you don't have to worry about a

child getting kidnapped. Let's say in your neighborhood you have a dog, but it's not your dog - it belongs to everybody. That's how it is.

The community feeling in Kenya was way different from when I moved to Maryland. I was 14. It went from open, welcoming, friendly to closed. Nobody usually knew each other. I didn't speak any English so I just went to class, sat, and then went home. Then Tennessee was after that - it was way different because we lived in the projects. It was difficult and unsafe; there were gunshots everyday and drug problems.

Hartland

My mom moved to Utah in 2002. I lived with my aunt in Nashville to finish high school and then came to Utah in 2003. We lived in the Hartland Apartments from 2003 to 2007. The community at Hartland wasn't safe at the beginning. It was like back home but different - everyone wanted to be in a gang, everyone wanted to fight against a different group. It got better when some people moved out and so we stayed. It was safer and UNP-Hartland came in 2004. They really helped the community. At first I just went to school, came back home, and got on the internet. Never went out. But we lived just above the UNP office and one day my dad talked to Kim. We had thought that UNP was just for women because that's all we saw there, but after we talked UNP helped my soccer team and I began to get more involved.

Now, I talk to everyone at Hartland. If I walk outside, even if I don't know them, I will talk to them. No matter where they came from I see them as my family. One community, one neighborhood. Now people trust me. They trust me with their kids, they will give me passwords to their email on the computer - it's that kind of trust.

My favorite thing about the neighborhood is the UNP-Hartland center. Everybody comes together, they aren't afraid anymore. Now people are

comfortable with each other - there is one guy at Hartland who brings me food to take to my family. So that kind of benefit is huge.

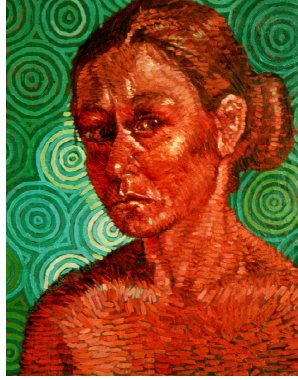
One challenge is the English language - not everyone speaks it. Two people can sit in the same room and communicate, but they can't understand each other. But since they are part of the community they can still come together. One day there was a lady from Somalia and another lady from Afghanistan sitting in the center, waiting for the English class. I don't know how, but they were talking to each other. Neither of them could speak the same language, but one lady invited the other to her home and they followed each other. I don't know how they communicated together, but they did. It is amazing.

Everyone belongs at UNP. One day I was outside and I saw a little boy, about 8 years old. I said, "How come I haven't seen you in the center?" He said, "I'm not welcome there because I'm white." I said, "How about you come in and I will prove it to you that you are welcome there." The social workers told him he was welcome, I showed him the computers and everything. He started coming. It's just one effort. It was funny.

I don't know if Hartland can get to the level of openness that I felt in Kenya, but it's getting there. It is a place where people can go and talk to each other, but people don't go to each other's houses. At the UNP center people talk with each other, they laugh, they relax, go to classes, use the computer - they can feel comfortable. It's getting there. No matter what you want to do, you are welcome.

I don't know where I will be in 5 years, or what the community might look like. I never think that far. I don't know where I will be. I might be dead, I might be alive. I might be in school. The community might change, I might still work there. I don't know. We say, "God willing."

Ruby Chacon



with

Wendolens Ruano: As a member of the University Neighborhood Partners Honors Think Tank Class, I had the privilege to have Ruby Chacon as my West Side Community Leader Partner. I am a second year student at the University of Utah studying sociology. I am Latina and have grown up in a low-income single parent household. Since we left our community in Oakland CA, when I was 13, I have not lived in any certain neighborhood for more than two years which made it difficult for me to build community there. I have lived in Utah for about 8 years and lived in Magna, West Valley, East Salt Lake, West Salt Lake, Layton, and currently living in the Residence Halls at the university. With my background, I did not have much knowledge of what a community consists of, which made me curious to know about Ruby's experience with the neighborhoods and communities she has and is a part of. Through working with Ruby, I have been able to have a greater understanding of the west side community, which I did not have before. I was able to better understand the preconceived ideas of the west side, due to fear of the unknown, how they are broken down, and better understanding that the west side of Salt Lake City is a community in which the residents

work together to create the best for their community. I have been able to understand what it means to be part of a community and especially the west side community of Salt Lake City. It has broken down prejudices I had in the past (the west side is "ghetto" or it is dangerous, etc) and been able to learn and grow (better understanding the communication there is, and the friendships/mentoring in the west side). I had the opportunity to interview Ruby Chacon at Mestizo's Coffee House on February 6, from about 2pm to 4pm. That interview helped me understand more about the goals that Ruby has for Mestizo's, her community, and herself.

Ruby growing up on the East Side

Ruby's Father took Ruby's mother out of the west side to the east side of Salt Lake City. Ruby shares her experiences with growing up on the east side of Salt Lake City, as well as the few minorities in Salt Lake City, as she was growing up.

"I grew up in a house in the sugarhouse area by the freeway and actually my mom grew up in the west side and my dad, see there is a perception of the west side even since then because my dad wanted to move my mom from the so-called "bad west side." we were pretty much the only people of color there were few other families of color in the neighborhood. I had a really big family I had my community in my little house but I didn't really have an outside community, I didn't have a community in the school."

"We were not part of you know the [LDS] church. We were poor [and] my mom was actually a single mom and she would have to work full time; there were six of us. And also we'd get help from the LDS church as well. So we had a relationship with the bishop in our neighborhood but we weren't Mormon and the more that they would help us the more the pressure my mom would get to send us to church. So I remember the one time my mom sent us to church and I remember feeling just like out of place, like we didn't have the nicest dresses, you know we

had second hand dresses (laugh at past) not feeling like we fit in. and then she (her mom) only sent us there one time, and then the more he (bishop) pressured her (mom) to baptize us that is when she sent us to Catechism and just kinda' like "I can't we are catholic" and so she would just kinda' like work for the church in exchange for food. Because we couldn't -she, she was just too catholic. She would never never make us change our religion. I think the more she got pressured the more she decided that we'd-she'd make us get more involved with the catholic church. So it was kinda' like that, we had like I said, I think it was more my community was in my little house rather than outside because we just never really fit in at all."

"I think a lot of those families lived down on the west side, and I think people probably, I think it was just fear, just because of difference. That is interesting, because I think that, that's the other experience that we had growing up, and I think my mom had growing up too, was because there where so few minorities, we kinda' added to each other, and we congregated together and even though our family lived on the east side we pretty much knew all the people of our age group. Not, not through school but just by parties and different things like that. And my mom was the same way, every time I would bring somebody home, a friend, somebody of color, especially Chicano families, the first thing she would ask is "who is your family?" or "who is your mom and dad?" and if they grew up in Salt Lake she always knew them because my mom, I mean there where very few minorities and they all pretty much knew each other in some way. They probably lived next to each other and then just kinda' moved, started separating. Just like my dad moved my mom out of the west side. Things started moving out and minority populations started growing little by little, and now it's way bigger than I ever could've imagined. I don't know where you're from it's probably all-relative, probably there are not from your point of view of somebody from another state. From my perception it's grown quite a bit, and it feels good."

Ruby and Education, the struggle and challenge

Ruby had immense struggles in her aspirations in education. She had the struggle of the lack of support and discouragement from her high school counselor made it a struggle to continue on to higher education. However with the support from college counselors, her husband and son, and her own drive she was able to attain higher education.

"My counselor [in high school] always told me from 10th to 12th grade that I wasn't gonna graduate, and she'd always tell me every time I went into her office why am I, because I fell behind in ninth grade and so she would tell me I'm too far behind. And I would always try to do day school, night school, and work to get all the credits to try to catch up, and she just said it didn't matter what I did I wasn't going to graduate anyways. I used to go home crying, so I would try to just avoid the counselor, and just kinda like prepare just to listen to her and just stay in school, even though there were many times I just wanted to drop out because she kept, you know the words that she would tell me. (After graduation, Ruby went with her friend who moved away a year earlier to Santa Barbara). So when we went to Santa Barbara and she introduced me to this counselor, he was a Chicano counselor, but I was still afraid. I knew when I was there, because I was going to be alone. I had two jobs lined up and was going to go to school full time. I was ready for him to tell me "why I couldn't do it" and just preparing myself mentally, but then he didn't tell me any of the that stuff my high school counselor told me, and in fact checked up on me at one point and told me, called me into his office, which made me really nervous because I thought he was going to, you know, say something negative. He told me that he checked my grades and that he was really proud of me 'cus I was doing really well and talked to my teachers. I was really amazed, I didn't realize that was the job of a counselor, and he was actually pretty amazed too because he, uh not amazed, but he was kind of, when he was working with me he would tell me what I needed to do and I'd go do it, and he expected

that he would have to help me, and I expected that I would have to do it on my own and so he would always tell me the things I needed to do and I'd go do it and I'd go back and he'd be "well lets go do it," and I would be like "I already did it 'cus you told me" and he would be like "you did? I was gonna help." So like it was just a weird experience growing up here in Utah and the things I had to teach myself to do in order to get by, and then, actually having somebody there to guide me, I was just not used to that, right? But the thing that was really important was that it gave me the vision that I could go to college because I saw myself, and I saw other students of color on campus, I had this Chicano counselor who was really doing everything he could to help me. I just never had that before. So when I came back here I just decided I was going to go to the community college."

Blessings in Disguise, Moving to the West Side

Ruby was able to find a true "blessing in disguise" and true community when she moved into the West Side of Salt Lake. She found community, communication, and a neighborhood she could call her home.

"We came here [Guadalupe Neighborhood], probably around the same time when we started the first Mestizo in 2002. That is also around the same time that we inherited our nieces. [Before moving to the Guadalupe Neighborhood] we lived in a two-bedroom apartment around the avenues and getting all kinds of complaints 'cus we had, at one time we had five kids in one bedroom. So we lived on the third floor and our neighbor was not always, just not very kind about it. My little niece, she's just a little kid, she'd run across the floor and she just, and you could hear. So we would just constantly get complaints and we knew we had to move into a bigger place and so we looked everywhere. So the west side was not an option at first, you know because of those perceptions and I grew up with those perceptions. My dad moved my mom out of the west side; you know the "bad part" of Salt Lake, blah, blah, blah. But the most affordable economical places we could find were on the west side, so, and Terry (Ruby's husband)

might have a different story, but for me I felt like I was forced to move in this neighborhood. First place that we found that was a three bedroom that we could afford, because honestly we just inherited kids, we were still building our careers, and we just kept, we were just barely surviving. We couldn't afford milk (laugh at the past), we in fact, Terry's brother, he used to bring us food from the food bank, and it was just like a big struggle cus we just wanted to keep pursuing our careers and it didn't help inheriting more kids that we didn't anticipate on, plus our son and to have to pay more in rent, and you know what I mean? So we decided, so the first place we found was where we live now, where we are buying now, is where we ended up moving because it was the most affordable. But I tell you it was a true blessing in disguise again, like our son. But it was a true blessing in disguise because it ended up being the best neighborhood that we could have ever imagined. We lived in the avenues for years and years and years and maybe would get to know maybe one neighbor, you know what I mean? But the first moment we moved here, we just got introduced to people and it was just like, "wow, people actually talk to each other in this neighborhood." (Laugh) I just, it was just the most amazing thing and then I remember the first night going to sleep and hearing the train and then hearing roosters early in the morning and I just remembered the stories. It brought back these nostalgic stories that my mother used to tell me about growing up on the west side that revolved around her experience with the train and how she got around them. Then the roosters I'd hear, and just like, you know that experience of going to my grandfather's farm and hearing those noises, it was like, I felt like I came home, and I didn't even know this was where my home was supposed to be. But that's the way it felt, the first night I was there it just felt like "oh my God this is a great experience, just the sounds and the people,"

"We still live in the very same place we moved in to rent, and we are buying it now, it's a duplex. I mean we get to know people a little more on an intimate level you know, rather than a friendly level. We hear

the stories all the time of the woman who used to live in our house, and about how Robert's (Rendon) son Jonathan used to just walk in and she would give him collared greens or something like that. I mean we just know them on a more intimate level, it really just feels like family where we live. It's great, I feel like it's the family...not to say that my family is not, you know. It's just a family that I discovered that I feel like, that has become part of my growth and my family's growth and being a part of something, rather than being apart from. When you asked me about the stories of growing up and the conflicts, I always had that conflict because we never fit in our environment in the context we lived. I feel like where we live now, we do fit and we are part of new...almost just a new family. It's just the greatest feeling. And it's sad because my mom (nervous laugh) she's bought into everything that has ever been told about the west side, and we fight, "east side is better" and I'm just like "no, west side is better." The one time my mom spends the night at my house we have a drive-by shooting, and I think, "oh crap now this is really going to give my mom ammo to you know, to...but no, I wouldn't move back to the east side if I were paid, because it just feels like family here. I don't know how else to describe it."

The West Side Community, Goals and Hopes

Ruby envisions the West Side Community to keep growing and that the negative perceptions and fears of the West Side can dissipate and there can continue being growth in the neighborhood, community, and art. She also touches on her own hopes and goals for growth along with the community.

"My ideal vision would be more value and investment in our neighborhood. That the perceptions would dissipate. (laugh) That the west side would be a part of Salt Lake rather than the "orphan" of Salt Lake. (small laugh) That we ourselves, that our kids that live here will be valued and perceptions would be gone, and everyone else outside of the west side that don't live here get to experience the beauty of the west

side, will see the value of the residents here and the fears would go away, and I see a lot of arts...murals, I don't know."

"I think its perception maybe, perception that is caused by fear of the unknown, and fear of change. Anytime anything is driven by fear, it can't be good. I mean we saw in the last administration a lot of fear based stuff. I think those are the challenges and then the constant legislation that goes along with fear that tries to hurt students, like undocumented students from going to college. Seeing them and their future being uncertain, To me that is just...I feel like we can either look at them as assets and make them a part of, or create a generation of (pause) I don't know how to explain...well exactly what my brothers and sisters did, you know? It's a different group of people that were discriminated against, know that...and its always targeted toward those that can't fight for themselves or are underrepresented. I feel what can happen is what happened to my brothers and sisters when they, you know, just fighting for their dignity and create something that is not good for the whole society you know? If we deny access to education, what else are they going to do? You are going to create a generation of people who want to fight back. You are going to create a lot more, there is going to be a lot more despair, and you know, fighting back outside of the wall, you know what I mean? It just isn't good for everyone as a whole"

Mestizo and the Community

Ruby explains her reasons for opening the first Mestizo coffeehouse in 2002, and the passion she has for Mestizo's Coffeehouse now. She also speaks of her plans for Mestizo and how she sees it as a space for the community. She also speaks of what she sees for Mestizo in five years.

"Yeah we started [the first Mestizo Coffeehouse] out of passion, right after participating in the Hispanic American Festival (my first time participating in that) we just started that. And it was mainly, my

nieces and nephews would buy into the stereotypes, and they all started creating the same pattern of...they all started to drop out, they all started to become teen moms, and they all, you know? So nobody was, like it wasn't ending. They started buying into that stereotype that you have to turn white to get educated, like the same internal conflict that I had. So we, then I had traveled, and I told you about talking to my grandfather, and going to research my roots, and going to New Mexico and stuff like that. I had experienced different things that I thought, made me angry that we didn't have anything like that here. It made me angry when I say my nieces and nephews buy into that stuff, but they had not experienced what I had experienced, so we tried to bring that experience here and that's why we created the first Mestizo, and that's why we created the coffee shop gallery concept, because we wanted to make sure that art was accessible. A lot of people I know, did not go to galleries, were not exposed to galleries, it's a traditionally intimidating space, so we decided that people we know would walk into a coffee house, and then we could introduce them to the art. That's how we thought we might be able to make art accessible. Then we would bring in artists that were culturally relevant to people like ourselves and other people who were underserved. Then we realized that it started out of passion, more than any sort of business plan, we didn't have a business plan or anything like that. So the whole time I was trading paintings, giving away paintings in exchange for services and different things like that. It kinda just put a whole in our pocket, and so it ended up being short lived. But then we ended up getting mentored, and introduced to other investors, and that's how we ended up. Mentored through the business plan, the marketing plan, through people we needed to talk to on how to have this grow, and María Garciaz is one of those people, who is one of our great mentors and you can tell I love her a lot (laugh) so that's how we ended up opening it for the second time."

"Even if it was our vision [to have Mestizo as a space for community]....it's a vision I don't want to control, I want it to be

about, because it's exactly what you were talking about the diversity, and if I set out to assume I know somebody else's story, then I will misrepresent a group of people, not intending to. So really it's about giving people the public space to be able to tell their own stories through images or stories from their own point of view, and not from our point of view, if that makes sense. There have been some that we've learned that we have to make it; we have to follow the lead of the community. We have to create the space and then allow the community to take ownership and decide on what they want to do. And that's a challenge too in itself.

"The challenge really is that people who have not traditionally been a part of aren't used to being invited in, so they don't know how to take ownership. So it's like "No, really you can do whatever you see possible." Like, when you are not used to that, then what do you do with that? That's the challenge is, that people that have traditionally been included know how to just take charge and do it, but people who haven't just don't know what to do with it. That's another learning experience in itself. That's the challenge. [To help diminish the challenge we] just consistently [invite] people, like when they have ideas, we are "yes you can use our space, yes do it." Just constantly having those conversations. It's kinda' like testing the water and then ok...well maybe, and then people get excited and empowered. So an example the Brown Berets use this space, they started doing their Lowrider workshop [at Mestizo]. And it has to come from them because that is something they are interested in, and actually that is something I am interested in too, but I don't want to take over what they want to do. So now it's about trying to figure out how to fund their workshops. It's been having those consistent conversations about "Do something here, yes you are welcome to do what you want." And finally they tested the waters and they did it, and now we are thinking about doing a Lowrider art exhibit. And anytime somebody has an idea, "oh we should do this..." and then, people, sometimes they are not used to their ideas being taken seriously, and so we will be like

"yes you can do that, do it here" you know. So we try to provide as much mentorship and services as we can. We're both really stretched you know, but it's mainly it's that consistent encouragement of yes you can do it here, yes, yes, yes. People [are] just barely taking us up on it. But little by little, just testing the water sort of thing."

"In five years I see Mestizo growing, and I say that Mestizo because I am a part of [Mestizo], and I feel that it is part of me too, into a permanent art museum that is growing stronger and stronger, and that it will be self sustained and hopefully I will be able to do what I do best, which is to continue doing murals and mentoring youth through the process, and doing all that stuff with young artists who want to be artists and what I already do. Perhaps doing that a little bit further and maybe even in other states and around the world. Continue to do that work and mentoring young people and helping them find their own voices and opportunities in the art world. That's kinda' one of my personal goals, what I'd like to do full time. My family pursuing their dreams too. Maybe not having to put so much emotional energy into the stuff that young people have to go through because those fears and stereotypes will be gone. Then we can work towards making a more positive environment that we live, rather than fighting against all the crap that we have to deal with to protect our young people."

Ron Jarrett

With

Eduardo Reyes-Chavez: *As both a Rose Park local and a resident of the University of Utah housing community, I have become to be a mediator between mutual geographic communities. I arrived to Rose Park in 2000 when I was 11 years of age. When I graduated from West High School, I moved to the University dorms to continue my studies. Thus, I have had the privilege to observe and analyze both communities while daily interacting with residents and neighbors that have expanded my knowledge in community building.*

It is this type of perfect position that encouraged me to take my curiosity to another level and expand my research on the Westside community through the UNP Honors Think Tank. In this class, I was assigned to work and collaborate with one of Rose Park's main leaders, Ron Jarrett. The similarities and differences between Mr. Jarrett and I have help me look at Rose Park from different perspective. For Mr. Jarrett, Rose Park became his home when he was only one year old. He has been able to experience the continuant socioeconomic changes that have made Rose Park so unique. As an Anglo-Saxon and Mormon resident, Mr. Jarrett has seen how little by little the demographics in Rose Park began to change, especially on the great scale of primarily Latino immigrants. As for me, I am one of the many new comers who at eleven years old embraced Rose Park as my new home. I am a low-income Catholic Mexican whose ideas and personal experiences reflect the life of hard work and poverty in rural Mexico. With such different backgrounds, this interview embraces the quality of partnership from both parties to come up with a life story that will inspire and reinforce the promising future of Rose Park.

Early Childhood

I was born in 1947 in Sugar House. When I turned one, my parents bought a home in Rose Park and so we moved there. The community was very young and full of young faces. All the houses were brand new and the whole community was been developed at that time. During this time, all the new WWII veterans and their families were moving to this community. This young community had a lot in common mainly because we were all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and we were all Anglo-Saxon. Everything we did was strictly on the guidelines of the LDS Church. This was a very close community. All the families got along really well; we all just interacted with each other. We all went to church together and shared similar values.



There were a lot of kids in this community. Most of these kids played sports and/or played in little league ball. Even though I was not an athlete myself, all my friends were. We all went to school together and took the same classes. I remember when I went to Rose Park Elementary School. The school was so full of students that the whole sixth grade class was moved to Northwest Middle School, we included. In my immediate neighborhood I had probably 12 friends. They were all my age and we were always together all the time. The interesting part about my community was that every group of kids had the same age. So every year a new group was formed with the kids that were born that year. For these reasons, my parents decide to stay in Rose Park and so we did.

Adult Life and Community Work

I lived in Rose Park until I went to Brigham Young University. Even though I was 40 miles away from home, I visited my house in Rose Park a couple of times a month. Because it was really close, it took me about one hour to get home. Soon after, I was called for an LDS mission at Southern California for two years. After that, I returned to continue my studies at BYU and graduated with Bachelors in speech communication. My emphasis was based on classes that would prepare me to work in public schools. So, after I graduated I went to graduate school and graduated with a Masters degree from BYU. When I was 24 years old, I lived up in the Avenues with my wife. I lived in South Temple and Q Street. I spent about three and a half years living in this house. From 1966 to 1975 I lived away from Rose Park. I would visit occasionally, but I did not do anything else there.

After 9 years living away from Rose Park, my wife and I decided to buy a house and so we ended up buying it in Rose Park. We decided to buy the house in Rose Park because we wanted our kids to go to West High. We felt like we wanted the diversity and give them the opportunity to go to a large school. We looked everywhere and decided that Rose Park was the perfect place for us. This was true because I was working for Jordan School District in which I worked for 34 years as a special education teacher and then as teacher of teachers. After more than a decade of experience, I became an elementary school principal for 22 years. Living in Rose Park was also easier for me so I could avoid traffic during the Rush Hour. Since my wife worked at Primary Hospital, Rose Park was a good location so she didn't have to commute. Not only that, the location of Rose Park is very good since it is really close to Downtown Salt Lake City. We really liked the closeness to Downtown and the fact that it is close to the airport. Another thing why we chose Rose Park was that the houses were much cheaper compared to houses in other neighborhoods. At the same time, we liked the community, the area, and the people.

For me, working as a principal was a life changing experience. I worked at schools in Sandy, one in Draper, one in West Jordan, and

one in Riverton. As a principal, I really concentrated on improving the students' math and reading skills. The No Child Left Behind Act became a big issue for us and so we had to relook at the way we were teaching. At the beginning, the students were always eager to learn. I saw how enjoyable school was and how happy the students were to be there. Unfortunately, it seemed like, as time went on, the students were less and less happy to be in school. Along with this, we saw more kids who had problems. More kids seemed to have behavioral and emotional problems. So, schools became more difficult for people. A lot of the children came from families and parents who had not always had good experiences in school. If you live in a community where parents are well-educated, then those kids are usually fairly successful. It is normally easy to work with those kids because their parents insist that they learn. In the other hand, the communities that had parents that were divorced normally faced harder challenges. The parents usually didn't have the energy or the time to make school work for their kids. It isn't to say that all of them had those problems. There were a lot of kids who really excelled and did very well. I retired in 2006 from being a principal. I was 58 years old when I retired.

Since I was little, I always felt the need to improve my community. I began to get really involved in my community about 20 years ago. I would go to the community council meetings. In these meetings, I would listen to the things they talked about that affected my immediate community. Still, at that time, my involvement was very limited. I mean I was just kind of off and on; just kind of here and there. I would only go when they would talk about something that interested me. But then I turned more interested in the last 10 years or so. I decided I wanted to become more involved and know what was happening. I wanted to have some kind of voice in the decisions that affected my community. So, that's when I got really involved and soon after ran for elections to the community council. I took leadership in the community council board for a long time.



After working many years in the community council, I decided to spend more time with my family. I wanted to be with my kids and my wife. I thought that, since there were a lot of new members in the community council, it was time to step out and let them have their chance. So, for 3 years, I would go to the meetings but let somebody else be in the leadership positions. I think it was really important to do that. It was very important for me to see that they were going to continue moving and that they were going to continue to do things that were important to our community. I didn't worry about them dropping the ball. I knew that they were going to continue improving our community; they did. I think my leaving gave me a chance to say "wow!" I do have more to say. For this reason, I went back to take another leadership position. The community council voted me back into the board and made me the chair person. The previous chairman was really ill and they needed someone to take that leadership.

Throughout this time, I have always been very active in the LDS church. I have served a lot of different positions to help my church. In one of these positions I served as a bishop. After that, I became one of the head presidents and took the charge of supervising other bishops. I also joined the choir team from the LDS church. I sang in that choir for about 8 and a half years. When I turned 60, I had to retire because that was the age limit for the choir. However, they still invited me to go back and work as the assistant to the president of the choir. The president of the choir is Mr. Mac Christenson. So that is what I am doing now and have done since April of last year.

Ethnic Diversity and Community Change

When I was little, the houses in the young Rose Park were considered small starting homes. After people would spend some time here, most of them would then move to Bountiful. This city became a big drag because it had bigger homes. For this reason, a lot of my friends moved to Bountiful. This type of migration attracted different people to move in.

When I was growing up we were all Anglo-Saxon Mormon kids. Since we were all white, there was limited exposure to any one of color. I had one friend who was Japanese and that was it. This was the only culture I was exposed to while I was a little kid. Then, when I moved on to Northwest Middle School, I got to meet a few other kids of other nationalities. Even though there were few students who had Spanish surnames, they were not ethnic in the sense that we have Latino children now in the community. As for African Americans, there was not even a single black student in any of my classes, not even at West High School. For this reason, we were very "ethnically undiverse". When more new families moved in, we got few more exposure to people of color. By the time I graduated from West High, I had some friends who were black or Chicano. Still, most of my friends were white. It actually found more diversity at the BYU college campus. When I first went to BYU, I lived in a house with six other guys who were from all over the United States. My immediate roommate in that house was from Chico, California. During this time I had the opportunity to meet people from all over.

I think it is sad when communities do not consider diversity important. I have seen how some communities are happy lacking diversity. In most cases, these people like the fact that all the people look the same, have the same kind of money, drive the same cars, and have the same houses. They are very happy with that and I guess if you are happy with what you have it is okay then. But, I do believe that there is so much more that you can enjoy. I think diversity is really a positive thing. I also think that someone's understanding of

diversity is where we get into trouble. If I were to say that anyone who wasn't a member of the Mormon Church was a person I wouldn't associate with, then that's a problem. If I were to say I don't want to associate with any black people because I am white, that's a problem. So, the person's attitude is the problem. One big example is what happened in Southern United States. I remember when I went there for vacation. There were a signs that said "White only" and "Colored only". I remember that so well. I asked myself, how wrong is that? But see, that's the way they lived and it was very wrong. Even in my own community I have seen people who refuse diversity. Some discontent residents have even argued that we should rename Rose Park "Little Mexico" because we have so many Hispanic families living and moving in. They don't like that. I think that since they have stores here; they do their shopping here; they raise their families here; they participate here; why not?

Something that Rose Park is known for is definitely change. I think what constantly happens here is economic change. The first homes that were built in Rose Park were small. Because most of them were small homes, they have reasoned to about the highest level that they are worth and stayed at that height. They are the most economical homes for many families to buy. So, when the older generation of the white people who first settlers here moved away, their kids also moved away. Those homes are been sold to mainly people of great diversity who can afford them. That is what is bringing diversity to our community. Our homes come up, they sell, and people come in. More homes come up, they sell, and people move in.

The Latino population in our community is growing very very fast. However, I do not think that we have to worry about becoming a "blighted area" like some big cities throughout the U.S. I think the "white flight" problem is unlikely to happen here. So, we should not worry about everybody leaving Rose Park and only the poor be left behind with run down houses and no one wanting to move in. First, I think people can afford these homes. I think if you become a home

owner of a single family home chances are that you will live there and fill them with your and people.

The demographics of our community have also changed. When I grew up as a kid I bet it was 99% white. Then, that 1% may have been just a handful of other different people in the community. But now, because of economic reasons and the uniqueness of the area close to Downtown, Rose Park has attracted a lot of diverse people to our community. The original Rose Park was just homes. It didn't have apartment houses or duplexes. Now we have expanded it to include other areas and have also added apartments and duplexes. The homes have maintained their value and gradually reasoned with the change in time.

Make My Community Your Community

My father is 90 years old and my mother is 84; they are still living in the same house in Rose Park. Their immediate next door neighbor is also one of the original neighbors to the community. After all these time, he and his family still reside in Rose Park.

I currently do not have a job but I am very involved in my community. I am not interested on finding a job either. Now, I baby sit my granddaughter four days a week. I love to have this responsibility. It is really fun.



In five years I do not see myself still as the chairman. Not that I would necessarily just give it up, but I think that in 4 years my wife and I will volunteer to serve a mission for the LDS Church. That will take me out of the community for a while. For a long time we have been

talking about trying something totally different. After my mission, I will probably get back to work in the community.

In my neighborhood, I know my neighbors on both sides of me and across the street from me. I also know neighbors 3 or 4 houses down. There are other people throughout the neighborhood that I also talk to. I believe that to make friends with your neighbors you must approach them. I normally go up to them when they are in a comfortable position. When I am outside with my granddaughter I just say hello to people if they are in their yards. After that, I just continue to say hello whenever I see them. Small things like that make a big difference. One day, the man from across the street organized a neighborhood breakfast and invited all of us on the block to go down for breakfast. I definitely think that is a perfect thing to do to create unity in your community.

I wish everyone would get involved and I know it is not possible. I do think that it is more important than what many people think it is. I really appreciate the older generation of people who have been a real faithful in coming to the meetings and supporting the community. I wish there were more people my age that had bigger interest. There are only a few. I think that one of the reasons the older people stay involved with our community is that they have more time. This leaves them time to meet their friends and so they stay more involved. Then they see the good that they are doing in the community and they share that. As for the younger generation that ranges from late 20s to early 30s, they are getting started out here. Unfortunately, most of them are not participating enough. I think what I see in them is that they are just going to stay here for 3 or 4 years and then move to another neighborhood to bigger houses. It seems as if they are not very interested. However, I do believe that it is very important to have a community that has a lot of different ages and different people in it. Everyone can get stuff from everybody else they learn. That is why I like my community so much. It has a lot of people, a lot of diversity, and a lot of differences among residents.

It is kind of frustrating for me when people don't want to get involved in the community. I really think that if you are going to be in the community for a month you have to plant some flowers; if you are going to be here for a year you have to plant some bushes; if you are going to be here for 4 or 5 years you have to plant some trees. You have to set some roots down and add to make things better where ever you go. If you do that you will walk feeling good about your community. Whatever your opinion is in that community, at least you did something and put forth your energy. A lot of neighbors don't do that. I just wish they would but they just don't.

Our biggest challenge is the negative perception that people have of our community. When you have something as difficult as a perception, it is really hard to change those ideas. For that reason, the perception of what is like to live up here is really scary. It is true that we have gangs, drugs, and other problems too. Still, every neighborhood has its own problems with similar stuff. I really would like people to come to Rose Park and see what a wonderful community we have.

When my parents first moved here, the community felt strong enough about having more street lights. We called the City and they put more street lights in the condition that we would have to pay the extra money. Thus, we did. That was a good example of strong community effort in Rose Park. When I worked in the community council board that was one of the projects we worked on. Now, our community is the model community for the city in street lighting. So, if we have an issue we can tackle that issue and we can make it work. In another occasion, I took my car to a car shop to fix some problem. The shop sent their courtesy car to take me home. When the driver was driving in the community he said, "This looks like a very nice community. Nice houses...lots of big trees, wide streets..." I reaffirmed him that Rose Park is a nice community. I told him that he should come visit us to see how is like living here.

A Promising Future for a Promising Community

I am excited for the future of Rose Park. The mayor, for example, has been looking to the Westside community and has plans to improve it.

At this moment, the future recreational facility, Northwest, is undergoing construction. I think that there are great things coming to our community. We will make it nicer. Residents really want more shopping places and dining places to eat. For four years we have had the Rose Park festival. We are planning to have it this year on May. We invite all the residents of Rose Park to come to our festival. It is important to have these kinds of events so residents can feel that they too belong here. If they feel like they belong maybe they will come to our meeting. I always use these opportunities to get their e-mails and addresses. So, I keep an e-mail roster of people that I can contact about our community. I normally send them two or three e-mails a week. We also e-mail an information page to more than 200 people in our community every month. In our festival we are going to collect residents' addresses so we can invite more people to get involved. Right now, we are also working on a news letter to send to the residents.

As for the older community members and leaders, we are constantly working on preparing the next generation of Westside leaders. We are using our strong involvement to set the example for them. So, leading them and training them is essential to create effective leaders. Even if they don't stay in our community, we know that these experiences will help them contribute to their communities where ever they go. By being involved, I am also setting an example to everyone around me, especially my family. My daughter for example, is getting involved in a committee here in the city. Currently, I also have 4 young leaders for the Rose Park community council. Youngsters want to get involved, all you have to do is give them an opportunity and they will take it. We are trying everything we can to expand our network. We have a Rose Park festival, community webpage, and a regular community council. Not only that, we are also beginning to reach the young residents by starting to work on a Facebook and Myspace. At the same time, we are connecting with many churches throughout the community. Our community is updating and constantly reaching every type of people in our community. I am truly confident that our community will come to be

recognized for what it really is. Our hard work and the unity among our residents will greatly contribute to create a stronger Rose Park for the future.

Omar Hernandez

With

James Egan: *Before the story begins, I would like to take a moment and establish my role in this project. I have had the pleasurable opportunity of getting to know Omar over the last few months. When I think of my position in relation to Omar's story, the first potential bias that comes to mind is inflation. That is to say, I have developed the kind of admiration and friendship with Omar that tends to lead one to exaggerate the positives. Yet Omar was so candid about his own shortcomings in the interview I had with him that I doubt that will come out in this narrative. In fact, I worry Omar's unfeigned good intentions might not come through completely in the text. I hope they do. We spent a considerable amount of time in our interview discussing details of Omar's past that are not exactly dignified. And though we did not include them in this narrative, I think the lesson I derived from them does. The lesson is that Omar recognizes both the patience a strong community requires in its members and the reality of inevitable conflict. By my lights, Omar's story reveals his belief that liberation is a continual process and that one must continually and, perhaps more importantly, patiently work to overcome personal and social constraints.*

I hope I did not emphasize this strain (i.e., his beliefs about the relationship between community and the process of liberation) of Omar's story at the expense of some other strain that he feels is important. During our discussions he agreed with my analysis and elucidation of this strain and consented to "go with it." I trust he wasn't holding anything back, but, nevertheless, feel an obligation to explicate my position in this regard.

As for my relationship to the details of Omar's background, I am quite foreign to many of them. Though I have spent a great deal of my life in Salt Lake City, I have not (until recently) been acquainted

with the Rose Park area and I know very little about Hispanic immigration. For example, I learned what a "coyote" (a person who transports immigrants into the United States) is during our interview. I have known some Hispanic immigrants over my lifetime, but I have not been able to become intimately acquainted with one until I met Omar. My friendship with Omar has helped me get a glimpse of the challenges that immigrants face upon arriving in the United States. For this reason (among other important ones), I made use of as much of Omar's exact words and phrases from our interview as I could. I did not want to inappropriately represent the facts. Fortunately, Omar is much more articulate than he gives himself credit for; consequently, the elegant yet casual tone is a product of Omar's skill for free and honest expression.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Omar on this project and I am grateful for the learning process it was for me. Omar's simple story is certainly impressive to me and I hope that in the part I have played in telling it I have done it justice. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of lessons I learned through the process of putting this story together, though there were plenty of them. I feel inclined to say, however, perhaps the most important lesson was that I benefited greatly from both the unfamiliar and the familiar aspects of Omar's story. I learned that the immigration situation in the United States is much more complex than I had believed and that the life of an immigrant includes a myriad of nuances that I have never experienced. But I also learned that despite the differences, there are places of commonality, places wherefrom we might build solidarity. I may have known that in theory before or, at least, hoped that were true, but Omar helped me see my theoretical hope reified in his very life.

A Big Step

My name is Omar Hernandez. I was born in Mexico. My dad died when I was two. So it was just my mom and sister and me at first. Before

we came to the US, my mom met a guy that was a "coyote", which is a person who transports people to the United States. They were married and we came to the US with him. He brought us here illegally. From there, we just started out really poor. We were living in apartments with other people. Everyone was bunched up in a little apartment.

When I was in Mexico I was two, so I don't really remember anything. Pretty much everything here is home for me. My mom filed papers so she could get documentation and citizenship when she came here, but it took us about 14 years to get papers just for residency. You have to take a test, but my stepdad didn't pass. But now that I am 18, I can try to take the test. Right now we are just residents except for my little brother and little sister who were born here.

When I was younger, I got into a lot of fights at school. So I got a parole officer and he advised me about getting a job and encouraged me to take my studies seriously. When I became a resident, I used the information my parole officer gave me to find a job that fit me. Because then I *could* get a job, before I was a resident that wasn't even an option. My first job was at NHS, Neighborhood Housing Services, which is now known as Neighborworks. I was with the youth program and we built house on the west side of Salt Lake in neighborhoods like Glendale and Rose Park. We mowed lawns, did landscaping, put up fences in the area, and removed taggings from public spaces. NHS was just a couple of miles away from my school, so I would walk there. Working at NHS helped me realize the importance of community and just helped me make connections. It helped me be open to new opportunities and helped me see new directions my life could take. I learned that the community is kind of a force that helps make you who you are. You know, the community gives you opportunities and helps you know about those opportunities. I didn't even think about a job before I met my parole officer. I was just going to school and doing whatever I had to do to pass classes. So the idea of a job opened up opportunities: I made some friends; it gave me a sense of pride in the community because of the things that I did in the community; and it made me want to give back to the community.

A good example of how a community can help provide new opportunities is the way in which I recently received a full-ride scholarship to Salt Lake Community College. Maria Garciez, the executive director whom I worked for at NHS, told me about the application process. So I applied. In the same way that I hadn't thought about applying for a job before I met my parole officer, I never thought about applying for a scholarship until Maria encouraged me. I feel like there are more people that deserve the scholarship besides me but maybe they didn't apply for it. Maybe they didn't have someone like Maria to encourage them and let them know about it. I think that a lot of things have to do with being involved in the community and meeting the right people. I wouldn't have gotten the scholarship if I had not known the people I met at NHS and the work I did in the community there. But it isn't just who you know. If you the community offers you opportunity, it is possible to miss out on it. You have to be friendly and work hard. A lot of it has to do with your personality. You have to make the right choices.

Through this process I have learned that when you receive a special opportunity from the community, expectations change. The community expects more from you. I think that my expectations were lower when I didn't have the scholarship. I think the community expects more from me now that I have it. They just expect me to be the best I can be and to succeed; they think that nothing is stopping me. So there's a lot of pressure from the community. Sometimes it feels overwhelming, because I still have obstacles, though they are much smaller than they were before. For example, I have to work during the school year, but I am used to that. I have been doing it for a long time. Overall, the pressure is a good thing because it pushes me to work hard. As for my expectations of the community, I just want them to be understanding and supportive. They always have been, so my expectations are being met.

I think an understanding of expectations comes from the community. At least, that is where I learned a lot about them. I have been to certain camps where you learn all the -isms and conflict management stuff.

They talk about conflicts in the community and how to deal with them. Maybe if I hadn't have gone to those things, maybe I would not have made the connections I did, the connections that really helped me. Because I learned more about how to socialize with different people by learning different expectations, I was able to develop relationships with a variety of people.

The camps also help you feel like you know people from separate areas, you feel like they're with you. You feel like they'll back you up and it gives you strength knowing that there are more people that agree with you than you think. I participated in camps organized by the Inclusion Center, which brings different high school students together and informs them about difficult social issues like race and class. The camps made me feel like other people wanted to know how I feel and helped everyone there develop a similar point view. It was nice to know that there were other people that felt like me in Salt Lake. But when I went to a camp in San Jose, I felt even more strength because the camp wasn't just people from Salt Lake. There were people from all over: people from Florida, New York, California, all over the country. So it made me get a better sense of how there are a lot of people with the same point of view. We think the same about different conflicts and what we should do to deal with them.

Getting to know people outside of Utah helped me feel like I can connect with more people and places. Because I was born in Mexico I feel like I can connect with both countries. At home I can speak Spanish in the accent they have in Mexico. Curl the Rs, you know. I feel like I can connect to both places but I connect with the United States the most because I've grown up here.

But my life here hasn't been perfect. It has been challenging economically. My mom didn't work because we weren't residents at first. My stepdad has been working as a janitor ever since we got here. Earning a good income has been a persistent challenge. We are a family of 6 and my stepdad's job as a janitor didn't always bring in all the money we needed.

Early on, my mom used to cash checks to supplement my stepdad's income. People would come to her with checks to cash and she would charge them a percentage of their check. She made a little money doing that. It was illegal, but it was a must. It wasn't like the money she earned was extra funds for our family. We needed it for basic things that other people don't have to worry about like food and rent. Another thing that my family did to make money was rent out a house. We owned a house because we couldn't live in an apartment when there were 6 of us. So we bought a house and we had people live downstairs. It was small though; there were two bedrooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. And some of us slept in the living room. Downstairs there was another family with like 3 kids and a mom and dad so my parents got money out of that. We lived like that until they told my mom not to cash checks because of she was losing money from fraudulent checks. So I started working and helping the family financially for a while. Later, my mom became a resident and she started working for the first time. She had never worked before, so it was a big thing for our family. In the end, we found a way to stand on our own two feet without anyone else's help. Sooner or later we will get citizenship. We keep working hard and hope things will get better than before.

In the end, the most important community for me is my family. I spend a lot of time doing things with and for my family. And they've done a lot for me. My mom has influenced me in a lot of ways — the way I think and the things I think about. I was always a sensitive guy. And maybe it relates to not having a dad. If someone has a dad maybe they tend to be a bit more aggressive, but I had a mom who always cautioned me, "Omar do this. This is how to be nice." She pounded the saying into my head: If you don't have something nice to say then don't say anything. I learned to be sensitive to other's feelings.

Because of my sensitivity, moving from middle school to high school was a big change. In high school everything was about getting respect. I kind of felt like I didn't have the respect I had in middle school, so a

sort of attitude of rebellion kicked in during high school. I wasn't completely immature about it, but I did things to get the respect I wanted. I started trying to prove that I was worth respecting to my peers. I got into fights and demand it. But then after some time with that attitude, I just kind of quit. I realized that I didn't have to prove to everybody that I was respectable. I knew I was and that was all I needed. I told myself, "I don't have to prove anything to them because I know who I am." It was a big step.

My community — my friends at school, at NHS, and my family — were a key part of that step. They helped me see my potential and gave me tools and opportunities to realize it. They encouraged me to work hard and contribute to the community. They taught me how to deal with difficult situations and gave me reassurance because I knew there were people who knew my situation and thought like me. I still have plenty obstacles and constraints in my life. But I am confident that there are more big steps in my future. I believe I can find more freedom by working together in the community.

Muna Ali

With

Randy Wood: *Over the last five months, I have had the pleasure of conversing with, eating with, laughing with, visiting with, talking with, and interviewing Muna Ali on several occasions. As a senior at the University of Utah studying International Studies, German, and Economics, and in an effort to better understand my hometown community culture and diversity, I enrolled in the University of Utah's Honors Department Think Tank dedicated to the University Neighborhood Partners (UNP). With a vision to better our communities, many students and residents in the Salt Lake valley banded together to shape communities by learning and telling stories. After researching the west-side areas of Salt Lake (Fairpark, Rosepark, and Glendale), our small group of think tank members partnered with resident committees facilitated by UNP to learn from each other and provide an opportunity for some of the "urban pioneers" of Salt Lake's west-side to be heard. This is where I met Muna. After meeting Muna in several different settings including our classroom and her home, I conducted a personal interview with Muna on January 31, 2009 to hear her story. How she came here and why she chooses to stay. The following condensed narrative has been compiled from actual dialogue, facts, and thoughts given during the course of the interview. It is written from my third-person perspective, often utilizing direct quotations. Some grammatical tense changes were made and changes to actual speech can be seen in [brackets].*

As a young girl growing up in areas of Ethiopia and Sudan, Muna Ali learned first hand how much of a blessing a large family can be. "Moving," "mixing," "changing," and "togetherness" are all words that Muna is very familiar with. After her birth within Ethiopia to Egyptian parents, Muna moved with her family to Sudan, where she spent the majority of her life. After being taught and raised for a while in Ethiopian cultures (mixed with Egyptian roots), her

transition to Sudan was interesting. Her father had other family members who had moved to Sudan to find work and he later followed suit and took his large family along with him. Muna had nine children in her family as well as three step-brothers and -sisters, all of which lived in one house. Muna said that "they [were] happy together. They [were] very good with my mom and [my mother-in-law.] We call[ed] them [both] mamma, mamma." Staying close as a family helped Muna cope with the environmental changes that accompanied their move to Sudan. She had to quickly learn Arabic, as all the schools in Sudan taught Arabic.

Muna had and always will have a love of learning. As a young girl living in a recently independent Sudan, whose educational system was still under British rule, she loved to learn and learned to love. She exclaims that "the school in Sudan before is very very good. Very good. We studied a lot." Muna loved to learn about the world in which she lived. Before moving to America at a much later time in her life, Muna told me, "We have studied [America] before in elementary school in geography. We studied what happened here and that the country is going better, quick; not like my country." Sadly her chance for attendance in a school system was taken from her at the young age of twelve years old, because she married her husband and "in Sudan [at] that time, [there was] no school for someone who [was] married." It was common practice during that time period to marry very young in Sudan. Although this is not a very common practice to date, Muna said that many people in small villages all over Africa continue to marry at a very young age.

After meeting her husband's parents who lived near Sudan's capital city in a city named Umm Durman, Muna experienced another "mixed change" as she moved from her small village of Sannar to the home of her husband's Egyptian and Moroccan parents, and she began to start a family. In north Sudan, "every family is mixed" Muna said. "You can go into one family, one is white and have green eyes, one is dark and is many color in one house. And they are

together." Muna learned the lesson of unified love across lines of difference. She continues to teach that today as well.

During this time there weren't only changes happening in her social and family life, but also the political structure around her. After discussing the history of Sudan with Muna, I learned that Sudan declared its own independence in 1954, and since then "every government...coming [in], they change many things." The political framework of the Sudanese drastically changed as the British left and new forms of government entered the scene. One such change occurred as the British-run educational structure began to decay after their exit. "That is still every government is coming and change [the school], and now the school is not like before. Before it is very very good." With some of her children still living in Sudan, Muna and her daughter Hiba, who was present at the interview, reflected on the different style of education she had versus that of her grandchildren still living in Sudan. Hiba shared some of the hardship that has come as a result of that historical change. She said that the "school over there, it's expensive. Like even with the public school, you have pay money to go into it, ya know. And [my sister in Sudan] has like two kids in college right now."

Although Sudanese independence was promised to bring more freedom, in Muna's personal experience, it brought more hardship. The early years of being a newlywed were difficult for Muna and her growing family, but they conquered it together. "Sudan, is [...] many years ago, [had] a lot of problems. For every family." Many people were out of work, forced to sell their homes, or imprisoned for alleged treason if they voiced their opinions about the shaky government (which was often the case for Muna's oldest boy Aladdin). Over the years Muna gave birth and raised a beautiful large family of nine children: Aladdin, Manahil, Madjuline, Ahmed, Huda, Mohammed, Sarah, Sahar, and Hiba. All children were born and raised in Sudan, all of which are now married except Mohammed and Hiba. After seeing my amazement of such a large family, her

husband joked that "she have too much children" as he chuckled from the upstairs during our interview, putting a smile on Muna's face.

Other changes that were forced on her growing family were the new government's decisions to issue a mandatory military draft. "The government [would] come take all your house and your kids in high school. They [would] take the children to war in the south [...] and after that, we [had a] very hard time." The draft brought tough changes economically, and after a while, Muna's husband's job as a teacher was threatened. Afterwards, he began working in the new government's temporary workforce. The increased cost of living coupled with economic hardships forced them to lose their home. It was difficult for Muna and her husband to see their neighbors forced to work for the government just to have enough money to put their children into school. "Many many many people from the north of Sudan [were] killed in the south. They [were] very young [and] they [were] very good people. They [were] killed. Nobody [came, so] what [could] they do?"

Amidst the hardship, her faith and family only grew, while their love for one another and their pride as a diverse Sudanese family grew as well. Muna proudly taught that a true Muslim "[has] to [...] have responsibility about your family." During all this mixing, changing, and moving, Muna always fulfilled her responsibilities as a parent and worked hard to raise her children to teach their children the same values. One word frequently used in her speech was the word "together." Although Muna detailed some of the hardships she faced as a Sudanese citizen, she never complained. She simply objectively explained "how things were" and then would follow up with a personal story about one of her children, her neighbors, or friends, exclaiming "she is nice. She is good." Togetherness is of great importance to Muna. After one of the biggest changes in her life, her travels to America, she has a deep and innate desire to connect with her neighbors and loved ones. One of the things she misses deeply from the Sudanese culture is that when one "live[s] in the small village, you know about everyone in the village." Although she has not

always been extremely successful in connecting in the way she desires, Muna continues to amaze me and her family by reaching out to her family, neighbors, and community at large.

After many years of joy and hardship in Sudan, her oldest son Aladdin traveled to Egypt and came across a process to apply for political asylum. "Aladdin, [...] because he has [...] to have the responsibility about the family, he [traveled] to Egypt and he appl[ied] for the [...] the refugee people." He had the opportunity to be placed in an area with other political refugees, whether on American soil, Australian, Canadian, or somewhere else. He was instructed that he could file for his immediate family to accompany him, however any siblings that were married with their own families couldn't accompany him. After being matched with Utah in a lottery-type application process, Aladdin traveled here on political asylum and found a place in the Hartland Apartments area in the west-side of Salt Lake City. Aladdin was the first of Muna's family to move to the United States in 2001, and over the next three years, the single brothers and sisters (Mohammed, Huda, Sahar, Sarah, and Hiba) of the family, as well as Muna and her husband all landed in Utah and established Muna's next "mixed change" in the Hartland apartments.

I asked Muna how it felt to come to a brand new place with new people or what she thought when she heard she was going to Utah. Her response was "We just now American." My perception was that she was going to explain how vastly different life in the U.S. was in comparison with her life in Sudan weighing contrasting pros and cons, but her Muna's contentment with continual changes struck me as such a wonderful quality. Life for Muna in Hartland somewhat resembled home she said. She knew her neighbors and many people were "mixed." "Hartland is before have a lot of people from different country, many, many people." Over the last six years in America, Muna and her family have experienced many changes. Many of the children she brought to America have married, had their own children here in the U.S., and many have moved to different states. One of the

greatest changes Muna experienced while here in the United States is another chance to learn.

While at Hartland, Muna grew to love and support the newly opened University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) Hartland Community Center. She and her husband had been previously attending the Utah Asian Association with other refugees to learn English, but were slowly making progress until UNP came along. Muna feels that it is crucial to try to adapt to change. She stated "after you coming here, you and everybody is learning English and have to speak the language of the country you live." She told me a very short anecdote of her first encounter with English classes at the Asian Association that I feel reflects her strong dedication to learning.

Muna: After the [UNP] office [was] open, I [saw] so many Somali[s] [that had been here maybe] ten years [and] they not speak English. And then I tell [them] "why?" Maybe they don't have someone to take them to the Horizonte or anywhere, but after the office is open and I [went] to many house[s] and they [said they went] to take the test of the citizenship four times...and not passed. And the first time [I went] to the Asian Association, I find some Afghani people, they are maybe 21 people in the class and two years and three years and half [in the U.S. and] nobody [spoke] English. And I [said], "What is that?" Maybe they are many Afghani coming [and] they [all] speak Farsi, and together in the class they speaking Farsi, still speak[ing] Farsi. And after I [came], that [was] the good thing...

Randy: But you didn't speak Farsi either, right? So you had to speak English?

Muna: Maybe that is good for me, because I [couldn't] find anyone that [spoke] Arabic in that class and everybody speak Farsi and sometime I be crazy. They [were] speaking too much Farsi! And [...]

the first time, I don't know how I can tell them to be quiet. [Muna and Randy laughing]

Muna: And I use like the potty language. "Hey, hey, hey [Muna raps on table] Shhh! [Muna puts finger in front of mouth to shh] You see the teacher!?" And some they don't like me, because they just speak. Two years, and after I am [here] two months, I [could] speak and say "Two years in the class and no speak English, what you going, what you come to do?"

Randy: You're a hard worker though. [Randy giggles]

Muna: Yeah. You have to speak the language of the country you live. And you going to pay something, you[re] going everywhere, what can you do [without it]? [They didn't] like to speak English.

During the very short duration of her time here in America, Muna has done an excellent job at learning and adapting to American customs as well as conquering yet another language, English. Among her fellow neighbors and classmates, Muna is a prime example. She has told me on countless occasions that she used her experience as an older Sudanese woman who learned English on her own and gained American citizenship to help others at Hartland to recognize and see that the sky is the limit.

After living at the Hartland Apartments and working and learning from UNP's Hartland Community Center, Muna and her family were forced to face yet another change. After the apartments were sold to new management, many of the residents who were supported by Section 8 federal housing subsidies were let go after their lease agreements expired. Muna and her family were one of the many who were given only a month to find new residence, which then brought them to their new townhome in the Driftwood Apartments where I conducted the interview. Muna and her daughter Hiba expressed their deep love for Hartland and how much they miss their memories there.

When asked if it was hard to leave Hartland, Muna responded, "Yeah, to leave the school." Her drive to learn and grow was further made evident when she told me that one of the reasons she and her husband picked the location for their new home, was because it was close to public transportation lines that could get them around town and easily to classes at the UNP Hartland Center.

Muna's sense of "togetherness" stretches to the many many relationships she has with individuals. Over the course of our hour conversation, Muna told tens of individual stories about her teachers, community leadership partners, friends, family, and children. She knew about their interests, their beliefs, their struggles, their homes, their lives, etc. Perhaps she doesn't live in a small village anymore where "you know about everybody," but she brings that same authentic emotion to her interactions with others. While visiting with her she shared some very poignant advice that she taught her daughter.

I told Hiba, everywhere you [go], you have to choose the very good friend. [...] Maybe the black people, they don't like the white. Everyone is feel like that, but that is not good. [...] Don't care about the color; about everything. Maybe you going to call them, they be okay with you. The first time you be scary, maybe they don't like you, maybe they don't... but after you going and touch everyone, maybe [they'll] be [a] good friend and help you.

Muna is a very genuinely sincere and trusting person. She respects what others tell her and learn from others' experiences. One noted example of this came through the process of her picking her new home. She told me that she relied on the experiences of a fellow Hartland neighbor who had a hard time living above a family who constantly needed things quiet. This one conversation changed her perception of her living quarters and led her to choose a townhome, so that no one would be living above them or below them and wouldn't run into the same problem.

Muna always relates things in a personal way by telling stories. The majority of the answers to posed questions were given in story format. She is a great story teller. While explaining how life as a Sudanese woman in the United States is, rather than explaining her thoughts, she relayed personal stories from her daughter Sahar's life in San Antonio, Texas and how she networks within the Sudanese population to find new friends. After I asked about her relationships with her neighbors in the Driftwood area, she told individual stories about many different neighbors, each coming from a unique background and different areas such as from Kurdistan, Vietnam, Sudan, Utah, and many others.

Muna creates community. Through her optimistic attitude, her strong connections to her children, her work with UNP, and her continued effort to learn and teach, Muna has become a great connector of individuals. Although she feels that most of the neighbors she has met thus far are shy, timid, and keep to themselves, she is very hopeful that after more contact with one another they might get to know each other better. It is very evident that Muna continues to and always will connect with others. During every visit made to Muna's house, there is always something going on. Whether an American neighbor is there eating baklava or she is babysitting a neighbor's little girl, Muna is always making an effort to reach out and follow her deep-rooted belief that "you have to see all your neighbor[s] every time. Right and left." I am amazed at her giving spirit and her drive to share with others. Although now farther from UNP Hartland after "moving" to Driftwood, she continues to "mix" things "together" and "change" her community with the help of her family and side-by-side with others.

Muna is known for her amazing talents in the kitchen and for the delicious food she cooks and it's enjoyed by many. Each visit I had with Muna, whether in the classroom or at her home, I never left on an empty stomach. Her culinary talents have led to one of the many initiatives she is currently working on. Muna is currently a member of a committee of diverse individuals who are seeking to facilitate a

community kitchen that will provide many people the opportunity to cook in a health-inspected kitchen that has the proper licensing so that their food can be sold to local merchants, shops, and restaurants. Meeting with other Utah women has been a real joy for her. "Mixing" and sharing recipes with other women has brought a bigger smile to her face.

Muna: Another lady she told me, "I'm cooking everyday and you bring [me] some baklavah and falafel," and [then] she say "I know the falafel I make in my home, but [it's] not like your falafel." She say, "your falafel is very stronger."

Randy: Yours is better?

Muna: Yeah! I say, "You know, maybe you not putting packing powder in the falafel" She say "Wow. I have to put that?" "Yes." [Laughs]

What the future will hold for Muna, she does not know and she is okay with that. "Sometime you don't know what is your future [...] and you don't know where is your destiny." As you can tell, change is nothing new for her. She knows that life is an adventure worth living and as she says "I just like to be [with] all my family together everywhere. It's okay." One thing she knows for sure is that over the next five years she wants to continue to learn, especially how to speak better English and to begin learning how to read and write English. It seems no matter how much change comes to this amazing woman, mother, neighbor, and friend, that one thing won't change, her love for others and her love of learning!

Amanda Moore

with

Kendra Richins: When you're not a part the community that the majority of the neighborhood associates themselves with, it's hard to want to stay there. When you hear of a neighborhood whose residents associate themselves with a community you feel you could belong to, it's easy to want to transplant yourself and your life there. Amanda Moore has inspired me to move. My first house and kindergarten school I do not remember. My second was a brand new house in a brand new neighborhood just across from the Air Force Academy; there was ethnic diversity, but we were all middle class. Finally, my current home is in what I have heard called the richest zip code in the Salt Lake Valley. The houses are cookie-cutter, the moms are all stay-at-home moms and drive their children around in unnecessarily large Suburbans. It's not unusual to see, everyday, a car worth over \$100,000 or a home over 5,000,000. What isn't commonplace however is seeing someone of a different ethnicity, someone who is not a part of the upper-middle class, someone who rides their bike because they cannot afford a car, someone who has the vivacity of another cultural history, someone who speaks a different language. And rarest of all would be to see individuals as I have previously mentioned incorporated in to the neighborhood community.

I am white, I am upper-middle class; but I am not cookie cutter and I do not want to be. I want to see culture and difference, I want it to be painted on my walls and roads and danced in my streets. I want to see and meet and get to know my neighbors - and have them be real. After speaking with Amanda, I want to live in the west side neighborhoods of Salt Lake City. Amanda has lived in and moved from each of the neighborhoods that I have had a passion for living in and ended up in one I have just begun to consider (yet now am in love with). Her path is identical to one I have thought of for myself; yet

where my views and opinions come simply from dreams and whimsical ideas, Amanda's come from experience.

Amanda's Story

Amanda is not from Utah; she grew up in Rural Tennessee, a mid-size county of about 100,000 people. "There were a couple black families on our street, but it was mostly white. Religions weren't obvious." She moved to Utah for graduate school at the University of Utah and obtained her MFA. The first local neighborhood she rented in was 9th and 9th because she was immediately drawn to the walkability of the area. She later moved to the avenues to be closer to the university and enjoy the aesthetics of the area. After that her and her husband took over her husband's parent's house in Sugarhouse before moving to Rose Park two and a half years ago.

So why Rose Park? "When it comes to the various neighborhoods we lived in, I wouldn't say that we didn't choose to stay in them because we weren't Mormon, each had different reasons. Like in the Aves, we really didn't feel like there was opportunity to be involved or make things better so to speak and in 9th and 9th the houses really became unaffordable when we were ready to buy (same with Aves really). It became clear very quickly that Rose Park was for us."

Having lived in other surrounding neighborhoods of Salt Lake City, Amanda knew the negative images associated with Rose Park - higher crime rate and gang prevalence - however the chance to be accepted and acknowledged, to feel like a part of something outweighed those. She has now been living in Rose Park for 2 1/2 years for the reason she initially moved there, her and her husband do feel like a part of the community. And even with its flaws and the common stereotype that the west-side is not the place to raise children, Amanda would prefer to stay here when she has kids so they are raised in an area where "they not only understand they are entitled to a good life and quality education, but they understand that they are not entitled to it because of the color of their skin or what their parents do. That everyone is entitled to it...We love living in Rose Park and we are expecting our

first child this fall so we are going to be selling our home and buying a larger house in the neighborhood. We were thinking about looking elsewhere but felt strongly about staying here. We just need a little more room and there are some great houses coming on the market so it's a great time to buy over here."

"We're looking north of tenth north and on the very west side of rose park proper... the river is the boundary, but there's all these cool mid-century crazy houses that don't match anything else in the neighborhood and of course nobody ever sells them but I love em. I love to ride my bike past em; I'm so jealous. They're like so quiet and, I don't know, everybody's very mellow back there. That's kinda where I would like to be but we'll just kinda wait and see what happens. Yeah, we'd like a little bit bigger of a house. You know you just kinda outgrow your space. We have a lot of animals; we're kinda outgrowing our first space. We think about it, and I have a studio in the basement that's kinda depressing because it's in the basement. I would like to have like an old fashion like family room as my studio, like we've talked about that. But yeah, we want to stay close. I can't imagine if we moved anywhere we would, we would probably live like around the capital and down here. We just like everything west of the capital. The rent is nice, I do think people overall here are friendlier. I don't know why, they just seem to be friendlier. They're nice when you pass, when you walk and I don't know. Just seems like it. Whereas in Sugarhouse they wouldn't like say hi when you walked by. I think that's crazy."

"People want to be a part of something big, want to be a part of a neighborhood."

And in Rose Park they can be. Amanda has called the area a blossoming neighborhood that has all the potential to be as vital and valuable side neighborhood of Salt Lake City as the avenues or Sugarhouse. It has the people, the passion, the talent, and the space. So what is needed? What can result? She thinks more walkability, more

parks (even a dog park), more local shops, farmer's markets, better sidewalks, and an investment in the children. The investment in the children is the need she stressed the most.

"I'm not going to act like there's not an issue with gang stuff because there is an issue with gang stuff. It's an inevitability when you don't have an investment in these kids and when the community doesn't see the investment. Maybe we need to actually figure out how to actually prevent this kind of thing, instead of worrying about the punishment of it. That's another one of those million dollar answers. And things like the after-school programs that they have around here—I'm a hundred percent for them. Anything to keep kids busy." Amanda sees the west-side neighborhoods as idealistic because they are places where youth can get involved in the community. Here she sees the youth work to keep the community alive; they restore houses and paint murals around the round-a-bouts. As the youth are joining the communities the communities begin to flourish. When everyone comes together to develop parks, run ethnic stores, referee after school sports, splash their artwork across the city, the vitality and vivacity of the west side stays alive and shows Salt Lake what it is they have to offer, and what they have been missing out on.

María García

with

Frances Tíam: We are sitting in María García's office; rows of 'homies' line the windowsill. Homies are figurines modeled after the youth of L.A.; they remind her of her experiences with youth as a probation officer, García says. The great amount of time in her life García has spent as a probation officer is a reflection of García's desire to help others and translates across to how she and her neighbors treat one another.

García is especially animated when she talks about her community, the Guadalupe Neighborhood. Interviewing an older person who has seemingly lived five lives and is from the west side is intimidating and interesting, especially as someone younger who is very much from the east side and before September 2008 knew nothing of the west side and hardly anything about urban life. It is important to remember that this difference in positionality the way we, as interviewer and narrator, interacts. The difference in positionality may lead to a hierarchical, objective interview relationship; we need to keep this in mind so we can remember to be as non objective as possible.

The way we interact affects the outcome and products of the interview and thus affects the way I view the west side/Guadalupe community. María García considers herself to be an ambassador to her neighborhood, and that it is her duty to defend it against the somewhat negative image the media has promoted. García states straight out during the interview that she believes that an outsider, such as myself, may make an even more credible ambassador. I can only hope that over time I begin to see a fully rounded picture of community interactions in the west side. Seeing the good, the bad, and everything in between enables me to be a better future ambassador and brings myself and hopefully others one step closer to realizing that there isn't that dramatic of a difference between the east and the west side, and therefore bridging the gap in between the two.

This condensed narrative is intended to provide a closer look at the positive aspects of the west side: more specifically, the Guadalupe Neighborhood and María García's experiences there.

"For me it's always been about turning lemons into lemonade. Because I try and see the glass half full instead of half empty. Again the one individual told me it's all in how you look at this challenge or problem. You can look at the problem and allow it to oppress you or you can look at the problem and figure out how to solve it. Whenever I'm faced with these challenges I think 'Okay, it's a challenge what do I need to do or who do I need to bring to the table to turn it into something positive?'" - María García, February 2009

Growing Up: Transience

I was raised mostly by a single mother and am the middle of seven children; we were a very transient family and moved two to three times a year. Because we were poor, we often moved into homes that were old and ugly and rented houses that needed a lot of repairs. We would move so much always tell people, I think I've been to every elementary school in all of Salt Lake City and probably why I am so familiar with so many different neighborhoods. We finally saved enough money to buy a home when I was fourteen. My roots are Salt Lake City.

Developmental Years

I attended East High school which was not very diverse and became an angry and hostile teenager. There were a lot of reasons for my anger, some related to discrimination, some to economics but mostly because I was different and not accepted by other kids. My anger got in the way of school work and I was close to getting kicked out of school. I was sitting in the principal's office and there was an individual from the school district and he asked me, "Do you want to be the loser that they think you are, or do you want to get over on them and graduate

from this school?" While I didn't like being called a loser, his question really motivated me to finish school because he said you know "Don't let them beat you at this game, you have to graduate from school." And so I did, I graduated from East High School and it wasn't easy. Not because I wasn't smart, but because I was... kind of a...a rebel more than anything else.

Even though I had decent grades to go to college I was never told by my school counselor that I could go to college. No one in my family had ever gone to college, what was important to us was working hard.[One day], I was walking down the hall at East High and this Hispanic adult grabbed my arm and said "Hey are you interested in going to college?" I said "What do you mean? I can't go to college." He said "Aren't you getting ready to graduate?" I said "Yeah." He said, "Come with me and these other students up to the University of Utah." They helped me get into college. I graduated with a degree in political science. So I got very involved and very engaged in the civil rights, what they called the Chicano Movement, at that time, from '75 to '80. I think individuals like myself and Judge Valdez, Alicia Suazo, Joyce Valdez, a lot of people in their forties and fifties; we paved the way so that it was easier for kids of color to get into college, to have those opportunities.

[Near the end of college], I started working as a probation officer; that's when I started working more intensely with youth. There was this anger in these young people involved in the court system. The same anger I had in high school, maybe it was because of the way they were treated that got them into the system. But they were not lucky enough to meet someone like I did, someone who said "You really need to stop being so angry and learn how to get over on the system and graduate, that's the best revenge. The best revenge, is graduating." So that in part, is what I imparted to the kids that I worked with. What I would say to them is "How can I help you to be successful?" I did that for, 5 to 7 years. While I was a probation officer, I was assigned by the court system to help [Neighbor Works] in '82 participate in a program

that would help target teenagers in gangs by getting them off the streets and employing them and engaging in building community.

Neighborhood Interactions: A Little Philosophy and the Wine Club

I am a huge believer in knowing who your neighbors are. It's natural for me to want to know who my neighbors are. If you don't know who your neighbors are, they won't be able to help you when you need help. A few years ago I helped organize a wine club. The last Saturday of every month people from the neighborhood and guests from other neighborhoods get together to sample wine. The wine club is an excuse to visit with each other, it's not really about drinking the wine because half the people do not drink; it's about talking about the issues and how they impact the neighborhood, the community and Salt Lake. Talking about Trax, talking about what's happening with the city council and so forth. [At wine club,] a lot of small groups gather and because we all have a sense of each other, someone will say "Go talk to Maria" or "Go talk to Dave about that". People at the wine club find out information or find out what resources exist.

At the monthly Guadalupe wine club gathering, neighbors talk about the elderly people in the neighborhood and we ask each other to stop by and check on them. Next door to NeighborWorks we have an elderly neighbor and she is an amazing woman with a wonderful smile. I believe she is one of the original Japanese families who moved into this neighborhood several decades ago. She does not leave her home very often other than with her adult children. NeighborWorks helps take care of her by shoveling sidewalks during the winter and checking in on her occasionally to see if she needs anything. Her children take good care of her but they have families of their own and have some comfort that we are nearby. NeighborWorks helped repair electrical, heating and roofing for health and safety and volunteers painted the exterior to give the home a minor facelift, she loved the improvements and it was great to see her excitement with the improvements ... She feels that this is her neighborhood, she feels safe here, and knows she can count on the neighborhood to watch over her.

Right next to where I live there's an elderly black woman who has no family in the City. So we check on her almost daily. We have services like Meals on Wheels come visit her and we have other programs check in on her. We make sure that the seniors in the neighborhood are taken care of because they might not have anyone close by. I think that communities and neighbors like opportunities to get involved at that intimate level where they can check on their neighbors. With my neighbor next door, she has no family close by. Her husband died fifteen years ago and any other family she has lives out of state or other counties. She calls my husband every day at 5 o' clock in the morning and he goes over and checks on her oxygen. It is not an imposition and I believe this is what the west side is about. It's a neighbor to neighbor thing. There's another young man who lives nearby and he has a physical disability He doesn't have the energy to get up and do things. He's married and has two children. His wife works full time so he takes care of the children. A lot of neighbors think that he's lazy; it's not that he's lazy; he just has energy for his kids since they are the most important thing to him. His house can look unkempt and this bothers other neighbors, but I know he cares because when we cannot take care of the elderly black woman next to me, he will take out her garbage. This is his way of showing how he cares. I believe, in the west side it's about knowing your neighbor and understanding that every little bit of help makes a difference.

Orin Howell
with

Stanley Lloyd: As a junior in Speech Communications, Political Science and Campaign Management at the University of Utah, I did not have much background in performing contextual research. When I

initially signed up for the University Neighborhood Partner's Honors Think Tank, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Throughout the course of the year, I have learned to recognize the social categories to which I belong and how some of those categories provide me with certain privileges. As a white, male, native Utahan who is a member of the dominant religion, I never fully realized all that I had taken for granted and all that I do not have to think about in my day to day life. Coming to these realizations is something that I will never forget, especially given the lifelong learning that I did while in this Think Tank.

For me, starting this project was a bit like walking into a pitch black auditorium with the purpose of finding a paperclip and only a penlight to guide me. I felt totally and completely lost on how I was supposed to tell someone else's life story, especially the story of someone who has lived twice as long as myself. From the moment I began working with my community leader, however, I realized that I was not in this alone. This story was something that we would make together.

In preparation, I thought about the many things I was expecting to discuss in this interview. There was so much I wanted to know about my leader's past, where he had been in his life, and how he ended up here in Utah. I also wanted to focus on what he felt a community ought to be and what an individual ought to give back. Finally, I wanted to know more about the west side and what steps can be taken to further build the sense and feeling of community. In addition to these specifics, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the greater concept of telling stories as a means of building community. As the major focus of this Think Tank, I also wanted to get a firsthand look at how an individual's story could be used to build an entire community.

Growing up and Gaining a World View:

"I grew up in a military family. My father was in the Air Force so we moved all over the world. Is there any particular place that I'd call

home? I've lived in or visited every state in the US; I've lived in England, Germany, France, Hungary, Austria, and Bosnia. I've also lived in Asia but one of my goals is to visit Africa. But I guess I call Utah home now because it is the longest place that I have lived. People often ask me of all the places that I have lived where would I really like to reside, and I tell them that every place I've lived has a wonderful uniqueness about it and special memories and if I had the opportunity I would probably have a residence in each of those locations."

"My siblings and I were very fortunate, because our parents brought us up to view the world with respect and tolerance. There were always people that were going to be different from us and that we would be different from them. But we could learn from them, and I think that having relatives from different ethnic backgrounds also helped. Having spent time in different countries and different states, I think it's added to how I view and understand things."

"I have been very fortunate in that my relatives took the time to expose me to different things. I remember I had an uncle who worked for NBC and my aunt and uncle took me to Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center. I remember touring the NBC Studios and I think that is where one of my fascinations with animation comes from. I remember as a kid watching them do the animation and I was surprised at how they did it, so that has kind of stuck with me and every now and then you'll catch me watching an animated cartoon, or what have you, because I know how it was made and the process that it went through."

"My parents were wonderful people, both of them have passed away. Just to give you an example, I remember one time my parents came home, we were teenagers and pre-teens at the time, and the house was a mess. My mother had gone back to work and when he saw the house, my father pulled us aside and said, 'Look, your mother is married to me. She is not married to this house; she is not your servant. If you come home and you notice that the laundry hamper is overfilled, do a load of wash. Dry them, fold them, and put them away. If you see that we are not home, set the table and you know how to start supper.'"

"My father taught us how to darn our socks and sew a button on our clothes. He said, 'Your mother does not need to do this for you, you have the capability of doing it yourself.' My mother, I remember, at my brother's birthday party, I think he was about ten, we had some friends over and my mother had made these large cookies, and there was a small cookie on the plate and she faced the small cookie towards everyone and you know, as kids, we always reached over and got the big cookie. So this girl, I will never forget her name was Mary, took the cookie which was closest to her, which was the smallest one. And underneath that cookie was a five dollar bill. We've never forgotten that. Lesson learned, always take the one that is closest to you and don't reach over."

"I was born in the United Kingdom, but my imprint years were actually in Taiwan. I call them my imprint years because that is where I think my foundation was more or less laid. I think it kind of started in England but I learned more about the world in Taiwan. The interesting thing was that it was from a different perspective. My parents sent me to a camp that was run by American missionaries. The next year, I went to another camp that was run by Buddhist monks. So I think I see the world as kind more easternized than westernized. One of the differences between the two is that in the west, when we have two people who are in disagreement, then they tend to butt heads until only one person is standing. And in the east, though when we have a disagreement people will try to see how close they can come to that opposing side which means that sometimes you really have to open yourself up to understand where the other person is coming from."

"I was very fortunate that I had parents that believe that when you move to a country or an area, you get to know the people, the customs, and the language. So we were greatly encompassed those cultures so I think that has become very much part of me. I think it also helped the fact that in our family we have eleven different ethnic groups."

"In one of my sets of grandparents though, my grandmother was the moving force in the family. When we visited, my grandmother would

actually sit down with me and read the newspaper to me and I would then read the newspaper to her and we would talk about the different topics in the newspaper. We would watch the news and I remember watching and talking to each other about the news and our perspective on the news. And I remember her telling me that you should always get your news from more than one source but that it's your obligation to come up with the conclusion. Ensuring that you get the facts. She married my grandfather and because of the situation when they were living in the south (K.K.K.) they moved to New York. For a while, my grandfather worked as a chauffeur and did some other odd jobs and she convinced him that he needed to go to school. And because of that, he later started his own business. He was really integrated into the community as well as my grandmother. My grandmother started the Negro Woman's League on Long Island. When she passed away, I knew that she was involved in the community but I did not know to what extent. Her funeral was standing room only and I remember all of these people from various organizations getting up to honor her."

Life in the Military:

"I joined the military probably because of my father. My brother, however, took a different turn. My mother was involved in the medical field and so my brother ended up going into the medical field. He liked it so much that he ended up going to medical school. I, on the other hand, joined the military. But I think I kind of disappointed my father because he was in the Air Force and I joined the Army. So I have a brother in law that is in the Navy and a cousin that is a marine so there was a little rivalry there. It's all done in good fun and good taste and what have you but... I joined the army because I wanted more, I felt the army provided more structure, more leadership, and that's what I was interested in so when I joined, I joined what is called the combat arms and those are the individuals that actually go out and do the fighting. I was a tanker and then I had an opportunity to become a scout and then another opportunity to pick a different, what they call MOSO, Military Occupation Specialty Operations and so I

chose something that I could bring to the outside with me and that was public affairs or public relations.”

East Side vs. West Side

“I chose the west side because of the Diversity. Out of all the places that I could have lived, I was looking at living in Cottonwood Heights, but the development that we were looking at, the homes were so close together that you could actually stand in your house and look into your neighbor’s house. I thought about Tooele and Grantsville, you know, a little bit more space, but it was too far away. I like West Pointe Neighborhood because of the diversity and I had grown up with diversity all my life. If there is a down side to my community it’s that it amazes me that people can live in the same house for 10, 20, or 30 years and not know their neighbors. And I still have a hard time with that. I can tell you, in my neighborhood, which car belongs to which house. I know my neighbors, and I don’t hesitate to knock on their doors and just chat with them and through that we have become good friends. I have a set of neighbors to the north where there was a little bit of language barrier but now we see each other and it is a wave, and “Hello” and I have learned a few words in Vietnamese, “Hello, How are you?” you know, that kind of thing. So I think that is important in any community that people get along and reach out to one another.”

“I know people in the entire subdivision. Growing up in the military, you learn to always establish a connection with people. People seek that out, they look for a connection. I used to work on Capitol Hill and I worked for a Senator that told me something because he knew I was interested in politics. He said, “Never forget the people that voted for you and the people that did not vote for you, they will be your boss.” He also told me that every day, at a minimum, I needed to find five people that you do not know, engage them in conversation, and without them knowing about it, try to find something you have in common because when you hit that topic, you will have made that connection. I have found a lot of acquaintances and a lot of friends because of doing

that. Just meeting a minimum of five people a day and engaging them in conversation.”

“I think in the west side neighborhood it needs to adopt more of a ‘we can,’ rather than a ‘we should’ attitude in regards to the neighborhood and involvement from everyone. I think that everyone is at a different level on this and everyone can be a contributor no matter what level they are. And I think that that needs to be understood by everyone. Dr. King said it best, ‘No matter who you are, we can all contribute, because we are all part of the big plan.’ So I think the mentality needs to be that we are all a piece of the puzzle and we all need to contribute what we can. Because you never know how you are going to affect another person. Or the person that you effect, even though you may only affect one person, that person could have a large effect on everyone else or a lot of other people. But it’s just because of that one person’s effect on that individual.”

“I went to the West Side Leadership meeting and I have seen how certain individuals have affected hundreds of people. In my family, we have always been taught that we need to give back to the community. It’s the fact that we all take from the community, but if we take from the community and we don’t give back, then we are wrong. You need to give back and that is one of the reasons I sit on the Human Rights Commission and the Diversity Committee and the Salt Lake County Sheriffs’ Department. And I do a couple other things too, and it’s because of this sense of obligation and responsibility to give back to my community how and where I can to make it a better place. And I realize that other people have not been brought up with that sense of responsibility and obligation, because I do call it an inherent responsibility that it is important that we give back and the make the environment that we live in a better place.”

“I think another way we on the west side could improve is to become more business savvy. Just north of us, we have been promised these soccer fields, but yet my mentality, and this is the business side that comes out, is you are not going to get those fields from the City of Salt Lake unless all the money is on the table first. On the east side,

that would have been the mentality because there are a lot of business people on the east side. They also deal with businesses in a little better way. When a business moves in to the east side they say yeah we'll let you move in if you can maybe offer trees for our park, or if you can offer maybe 5, \$1000 scholarships for our kids school, or that type of thing, or you can donate for an elementary school crayons or what have you, or a trip to the zoo, that type of thing. I think on the west side, we need to get into that mentality as well. Business interactions need to be a partnerships, and if they let the businesses know right off the bat, then I think businesses will welcome the tax write-off."

The Individual's Responsibility in a Community

"I feel that it is there, but I think that it can be more. Sometimes I wonder if it's just my expectation of what I think and individual needs to give because of other places that I lived. I lived in a small town in upper Michigan called Gwinn, Michigan, up near Marquette, Michigan, and in that town, everyone knew everyone it was more like Mayberry from the Andy Griffith show. I remember in high school going out with some friends and we would go out into the woods somewhere and we would build a bonfire. And some of the guys would have beer and the Sherriff, would come and no one ran, but he would look at you and say, "Now you know Tommy, you know that you are not supposed to be drinking." And you know it was a kind of respect that made all the difference. And you'd say, 'okay, you're right,' and you'd empty it out. People looked out for everyone; people looked out for each other's kids and families. It was a town where people did not lock their doors."

"So I think that's where my expectation comes from, that a community needs to be tight, that people need to look after and look out for each other not matter what their ethnic heritage or their religious background, their political persuasion. A community is very important. I think in today's society, people are afraid to talk or say something to someone's kid who they see is doing something wrong. And I remember when I grew up in Gwinn Michigan, people would not hesitate to say something. And I remember my day saying things to

kids that I didn't even know. "What are you doing? You shouldn't be doing that and you know you shouldn't be doing that."

Feeling and True Essence of Community

"I think that it is achievable on the west side, but I do not think that my community is getting there. I am actually a little disappointed. I remember going by the Day Riverside Library because our community council meetings are held there and I saw all these cars and the cars were parked in the drive of the library and on both sides of the street. So I pull in and I go in and I see all these people standing around and I go up to someone and I asked what was going on. And he said, "Community Council Meeting." And I'm looking around and I don't recognize anyone, so I said, "What community council meeting?" and he said, "Rose Park." But with West Pointe, when we have community council meetings I am saddened that people aren't taking more of an interest in their community. Because usually when we have speakers there are more speakers than there are residents at the community council meetings."

"Since I have been here, I think there have been four community council presidents, and I see, even though I am not in their shoes, I can feel and understand their frustration with the lack of participation. And I think our community would be better if people would communicate more and participate more. If something happens, then people come out to complain, then after that, after the situation is resolved, you do not see them again. There is no sense of urgency, no sense of, "well I am going to attend because I want to prevent this from ever happening again." So it's just not there."

Community Engagement

"How do you get people engaged in their community? That is the trillion dollar question. I have thought of that, at least I have put the question on the table and I have looked at it from different angles, I have asked people in my own community I have asked people from other communities, I've asked my friends outside of Utah, 'How can you get them involved, how do you get them engaged?' The thing about it is they don't care unless there is something going on. There's

a drug house, okay everyone is concerned and they want to start a neighborhood watch program and they want to set up all these rules and ordinances. But as soon as the police bust it, then everyone backs off. You know, what do you do? I'm still pondering that one..."

Juan Lopez
with

Brayan Nava: *From the very first moment I met Mr. Juan I instantly felt a connection. He has this outgoing and humorous personality that I love to be around. As I got to know him more, I definitely saw the development of a great relationship. As people of color I felt that we would instantly have many things in common and would have long conversations. The conversations turned out to be extra long because there is so much chemistry between us. From the moment I found out I was to interview Juan I knew I was in for a good time and that I would learn so much from this great man.*

I was expecting to have numerous similar experiences because we were both born in the same country and shared very similar values to some extent. To my surprise, I never imagined how growing up would be that much different for us. We both experienced hardships-some that I could relate to, but Juan blew me away with all the things he shared with me regarding how he lived, his educational experience, working, and traveling adventures. I can't see a little kid doing all those things at the young age of nine, but Juan is living prove of that and I'm glad to hear from him. I picture him as a little adult who took big decisions in life and was always strong and full of potential. I definitely see him as a fun and spontaneous friend to play with at that time. Little Juan took upon big risks and challenges in life that many of us are not even close to ever experience and for that I admire him. He opened my eyes to a different way of living that I never thought would be that way and made me realize and greatly appreciate the way I lived and the things I had.

Something else I found out that was interesting is the fact that we were both born in the same city. I thought that would connect us even more but it surprised me that he did not feel that way. At first I felt that he disliked Mexico City because he did not mention it at all and

boldly stated "I was only born there"; I took it as an insult. It was not a big deal, but the way he said it sort of cut my enthusiasm for that. I later learned more how he identifies and that he definitely does not have anything against my homeland; there is simply no connection. He was raised in Yucatan in a small village and most of his family is from Mayan decent. That also got me thinking because I actually did not live in Mexico City for too long because at the age of three I moved to a near town-Toluca and spent most of my time there until I moved to the U.S. However, I did visit a lot and most of my family did live there and that's why I always felt belonging of my City. Juan also offered a deep perspective relating to self identity. He told me "I am Mayan everywhere I go and even when I can I put it on paper." He was referring to filling out paper work and when it asks about ethnicity he always tries to find a way to select Mayan; and if not he will chose Latino/Hispanic. I thought he would identify as Mexican and Latino but he strongly stated that he is Mayan. I admire that and once more made me appreciate and think about my own identity.

Juan has a lot of character and I had this notion that he must have had a good and happy life to be like this. Throughout the interview I found out how difficult it truly was despite all the fun adventures he had. He matured very soon at a level that I'm impressed because at such a young age he had experienced so much and was very wise and still is. Interviewing Juan made me realize that just because you are born in the same country, raised with the same values, have the same color of skin, and speak the same language does not mean you will be very alike. We all live different stories and it is amazing how different we all become as we live our lives. Nevertheless, with respect and comprehension we can go far in relating each other in different dimensions. I learned so much from Juan Lopez. He renovated many of my perceptions and I'm grateful for that.

A Born Leader of Many Communities

The immigration and working movement

I am Juan Lopez and this is my life story. I was born in the "Big City" which is Tenochtitlan or now Mexico City; but only born there. I was raised in the village of Chichen which is in the Yucatan Peninsula for most of my childhood years. I have six brothers and six sisters with me being the eldest male. My parents and grandparents-except from one, are of Mayan decent and I grew up speaking Mayan Yucateco. Chichen is a small village and my community was composed of other villages as well that were very close together at about 5-10 miles away from each other. In each village there were about 15-20 families living there. We were also very close to each other personally. Sharing amongst each other was very common and is something I vividly remember. Parents went hunting together, share "la cosecha," (the harvest) and organized special events. When there was a party in a house, there was party in the entire village because everyone knew each other. The big festivities are some of the happiest moments that I always like to remember. I remember in detail las bandas (the bands), the excellent food and all the kids playing, all as a big family.

During my childhood I used to enjoy playing canicas and trompo (marbles and top) with all the kids and if it wasn't that we would make our own toys. It was very different from what kids play with now. I even called my machete a toy which allowed me to cut grass for planting; and that's when playing became work. I really liked my first jobs where I learned a lot of skills. My very first official one was as a helper in a bakery. My father and I started out supplying fire wood for the bakery and then I started doing more by cleaning; taking care of the oven and making sure everything was ready for cooking. Later I got sent to sell the bread at the village and that way made some extra money. However I still saw the need for me to contribute more and wanted to work on my own.

At the age of nine I took the decision to move away from my beloved village to the city of Merida Yucatan. I stopped going to school, left my family, and traveled to the city. I saw the need for me to start working for extra money and landed a job at an open air supermarket to begin. What I would do was help people, especially the ladies to carry their food bags to their cars. Many want to go to the city because it sounds great and has more opportunities, but it is very difficult. I learned the hard way by having to sleep in the streets, under the bridge and at house floors. But I never stopped and continued my journey.

Next stop for me was the beaches of Cancun. I took a long bus ride to get there, and it was all worth it. I still remember it like a dream, the white sand and blue crystal waters. There were not as many hotels as there are now over populating the beaches. Regardless, there was good tourism and I was able to prosper financially selling a variety of goods. I used to sell puppets, masks, ceramics, and jewelry to people from all over the globe. This is where I have my first encounter with a lot of diversity. "I met all kinds of people from the Canada, United States, from England, Ireland, from all different parts of Europe; the world rather." It was challenging at first because I did not speak their language. However, soon enough I taught myself English by practicing constantly with the tourists and making business as well. When tourism was slow, I went into different things like free markets, selling aluminum, and even sewing. I learned quickly and became a tailor at the age of thirteen. I was skilled to the point where I was able to sew shirts for men. It became a more stable job for me that allowed me to keep only one job with decent pay. Later at the age of fourteen I had my own shop. No matter what, I always found something to do and was able to survive the cold nights with no shelter and hard times with no food. I moved on along the coast.

It was all an adventure traveling up and down along the coast and I loved it. I ended working and passing through Islas Mujeres, Playa del Carmen, Celestun, and even as far as Acapulco. I continued with the

beach business and as usual found my ways around other jobs. I stayed in Acapulco for three years and then moved to the beautiful Puerto Vallarta. So beautiful that I even met the love of my life there. We decided to get married there and start a new life together.

Living in the United States

I took the decision to move to the U.S in 1997. My wife was already waiting for me in Utah because she went to visit her family that she had not seen for a long time. She had been staying there for a long time and my little girl was starting to miss her very much. At that time our first child was already five years old. I also wanted to see her and wanted to make her happy, so I decided to go to Utah with my little girl and reunite with my wife. She had been telling me that there were job opportunities for me and it was another reason to come and start a completely new life.

Soon after I came to Utah I brought my other two girls from a previous marriage to come with me and go to school. We all came to live to Salt Lake in the Wasatch Garden Apartments around 200 West and 400 North. In that community there "we had a few White Americans, Black Americans, Native Americans, but the majority were Latinos." In fact, 95% of the community was Latino and the majority was Mexican. My family and I lived there for about eight years until unfortunate things happened and we had to move to a different place. Nevertheless, I was very involved with the people while I lived there. "I used to help the people there with translations, filling out their money orders, and helping calling for the bills and stuff." I was always willing to help my people. I even became manager of the apartment complex. Under my administration, I was able to work very well with the residents because I understood many of their situations. I also had an excellent relationship with my boss and we were able to settle many issues together. The main concern that always came up was rent. Many residents had financial problems but even with that when they

promised to pay the always paid. I knew that all they needed was the opportunity to prove that they were honest people. It all worked fine.

After a storm of personal problems, I decided to continue to challenge the system and help my family move forward. I moved with my family to my current neighborhood at Hartland about four years ago. It is here where most of my leadership and community involvement have developed. In addition, this is the most diverse place I have ever lived. I have neighbors from all over the world everywhere around my apartment floor; one is Mexican, the neighbor upstairs is a Turkish, the one above him is Bosnian, another one up there is Sudanese, and the one next door is Puerto Rican. I talk to all of them and I always say hi-as I was taught, no matter the type of response. I have come to appreciate all the cultures. I have learned so much from the people around and have gotten to know them through many of our community events and gatherings. For that and other reasons, I decided to become a resident committee leader and help in organizing events and staying up to date and spreading the word about our many programs to all the residents.

My Contributions at Hartland

I feel lucky to live in a very organized community full of resources and with the presence of the University Neighborhood Partners (UNP). In the beginning I remember how the outreach efforts on behalf of UNP were not very successful. "To be honest I did not trust them." It's not easy to earn the trust of people in a very diverse community because with my own people of whom I think I understand a bit, it's difficult. "I've been proving myself for the past three years now and I'm just seeing a little bit of the trust coming in because they come all the way into my house they knock on the door because they ask me questions of what they should do or what they could do or what is best to do or where to go, and then with all the excitement and happiness I would send them to the center. I tell them we have all the information they

need right there and if they need more we'll get it for them. It's exciting to be doing something like that for your community.

Just as I had done in my previous community, I still help people with translations, filling out applications, getting money orders and paying bills. Only this time I strongly encourage them to take ESL classes. I teach classes here myself, because I want to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to better themselves and learn English so they can do their own things. I recently began teaching in the beginning of fall of 2008, and I do it every Saturday in the Harland center at the community's convenience. I encourage all the residents to come and I tell them that there is "no excuse that you don't speak English anymore no excuse, I speak Spanish I speak English, I will translate for you I will be there with you if you want, but you know what let's make this together, English classes are free." I want everyone to succeed in life.

I enjoy to be constantly updating the community about everything available in Hartland and I take that as a responsibility. Yet the thing that I enjoy the most and always brings me happiness is my interaction with the kids. I like to say that I am well known by most of the children living here as the bicycle man. "I like to take them bicycle riding-which is their favorite, and fixing the bikes for the kids too. I take it as a hobby I make it a hobby because that's one way to get the attention of the kids and that I way I could more or less remind them that manners exist that you have to respect people and things like that. I take them bicycle riding because their parents let them, because they trust me." I take the opportunity to teach them good things that I know will help them. Through the children I have a way to get to the parents and get acquainted with them. Children bring so much life.

I value education very much, and I want my son chuy to take advantage of the many great opportunities offered. As soon as I heard

of the head start program and that it was stationed in Hartland, I did not hesitate and signed up chuy for it. I started to volunteer for head start for a while. I went there and read to the children in English and Spanish because we had English and Spanish speaking kids. I read one story in English and Spanish and the kids loved it and so I got myself involved more. Whenever teachers needed any translation, they called me and I was there. The moment my son started going to head start I got involved, now he's going to Mountain View elementary and I ask a lot of questions, I talked to teachers, I talk to everybody there. They thought that they saw in me something that they needed in school to get involved there so they invited me to get involved there in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) I shy out of it for a while, but one day this lady kept bugging me and bugging me and I say ok let's see how the people will accept me. I go to one of the meetings and I find out that I know most of the people because I was already here working with the community and organizing all kinds of stuff here being part of the resident committee. We had been taking them out picnics in the parks and all that kind of the stuff, so I knew most of the parents, so the teachers, the principal they asked me to join the PTA they wanted me to be president of the PTA and I say you know what you already have a president and they said yeah but this person is not attending the meeting and stuff; so I ask the people, hey what do you people want? They go, go for it! I say okay if the people ask me, I will. So they elected me president of the PTA.

Another motivator that encouraged me to take on the position is the fact that I want to "represent the Latino population, there are a lot of Latinos here and I see the need, I feel it." Now in this position that I hold, I am starting to connect community and school. It is great that I am getting more people involved from school at the center, and from the center at school. I inform and invite everyone to our community forums, health fairs, and multicultural celebrations to name a few. As a PTA president elect, I also started to challenge the parents to get more involved. I want to emphasize on the importance of parental

involvement in school; because I know this is key for a child's success. Even in school, "the children know who I am! They recognize my presence." I am able to improve and facilitate communication between parents and teachers and help them establish the relationship needed to follow the child's progress. It is great that I am able to see the same people in my community in school and that's why when "I connect everything together, I can see it working, it is working, and well I guess I want to keep it that way, and I hope that there's no more changes going on here with this system because that breaks my heart."

My biggest mission here is to be an accessory coming from my community to combat the system that I definitely know that those in control don't understand our immediate way of living, thinking, and they don't know for what reasons we're here. Some of us are not here because of the children because some don't have any, so the real expectations that are in place, are something different than what my expectations are. My expectation is to be able to know and see that my child gets a decent education, that he gets that opportunity. Because every child deserves that opportunity to show and prove him/herself, and I know that some children aren't getting it. I believe that it is because of some group of elites are thinking that only the children of plenty should have the opportunity to a better education, and I have written some words and songs about how that kind of thinking should be stopped immediately. Every children every child should get the opportunity and support because if they don't, then they will be more likely to fall into the arms or rather the tentacles of crime, drug addiction; and of course with all that comes poverty. Discrimination is also greater towards ethnic groups, it is happening and it's visible.

I'm proud of living here with my people because I could go out there and even the children know me. I could talk to anybody out there. I have that satisfaction that I am willing to give or to share the little bit that I have. It's something that I have by nature because that's one of the

values that my mother taught me and at the same time it's one of the values that I have put in practice in the community where I live; to share what I have with the rest of the people. In return I get smiles, I get hellos, and I get handshakes. When people go to the center and get involved then my satisfaction continues to grow.

My Cultural values Before and Today

I am proud of who I am and will never forget where I am from. While I do have to confess that I have forgotten the Mayan Language because I have not been using it a lot, I still remember the most valuable things taught to me. Part of my school, was direct from my elders. I learned manners from them that I had to follow and respect. Anybody that was older than me, I couldn't call "tu" (you) I had to call them "usted" (formal you) I had to obey anyone of my uncles because they were older than I was. There was always great respect.

My memories are filled with rich moments spent in my village with the sense of togetherness spread all around. The traditional activities were always fun and my favorite and therefore I still do the here in Utah with my family. It is important for me not to lose my values and customs and it is my responsibility to share them with my kids. I try to celebrate with my family as we would back home at birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, quinceaneras etc, because it is different here. I have actually done two quinceaneras here for two of my daughters and still do traditional birthday parties for mi son chuy with the right food, music, and of course piñatas. Piñatas have been a sensation in my community and become a bonding instrument. Every time we had a Piñata, the kids already knew what to do and immediately formed a line. Everyone get their chance to hit the piñata and had a good time. Along with that we also had entertainment and food for the parents and created a space to interact.

Now at Hartland I fully invest myself in coordinating community events. Due to the richness of the diverse population in my community the theme is always multi-cultural. The main attraction is always food from all over the globe. We have food from Bosnia, Mexico, Russia, Sudan, Vietnam, and many more. In addition we have music, we take pictures and we get to know each other. It is a great and we are the ones that do it. I enjoy setting up these events very much because I have the chance to meet new faces, share my traditional foods, and my music.

Hartland is a very changing community. One of the major reasons is that many people get placed here, especially refugees from Africa. I am fortunate to enjoy all the diversity around me. I have learned so much from the people around me. I was always taught to be a listener, understanding, respectful, and supporting without expecting nothing in return; that is my philosophy. I like to help from the bottom of my heart and I will always do as much as I can as long as I am permitted.

From a son to a father

My childhood only lasted so long. I had to start working at the early age of nine and was not able to play and go to an educational institution like other children do. However, I did have a school and that was my father. My father was considered the best hunter and best fisherman of the village; and for that he was my hero. He taught me how to clear the land, till the soil, plant the seed, harvest the product, and later to hunt and fish. I learned everything a man needed to know in my village from mi papa.

I did not have many opportunities to spend time out with my father other than the learning moments, but the few times that I did "I was the happiest kid in the whole world." In our relationship there was always great respect, and communication was solid. One thing that I think about is that I don't remember him ever ever telling me "son I

love you." He never told me, but now I am sure that my dad did love me. Going through my memories I remember how much he took care of me when going on our adventures hunting and fishing. I remember sitting in the canoe with him when we would go alligator hunting because he used to sell the pelt "el cuero", so used to be in the river/lagoon at night. He would sit sitting at the back I would be up in the front and the shot gun in the middle. Then he would paddle and had his headlight flash the light all around the edges of the river we would be en el "mero centro"- right in the middle of the river and he would be paddling gently, no noise at all, then suddenly he would say whispering: "pasame la escopeta" (pass me the shot gun) so I hurried and knew how to handle "escopeta"- click it open put a cartridge and pass it to him, then I would lay in the canoe. When I see he put the lights out, the red eyes and yellow eyes then I would hear a bammm! When you shoot those alligators they go down and he would have to pull them up. That was one of the only times he took me with him. It hurt me when he wouldn't take me hunting and fishing but now I understand that he did that for protection; that was his way to show his love.

I know that back home in Yucatan a lot of machismo exists where fathers do not kiss their children, they do not hug them, and that's what happened with mí papa. I recognize that those were the values back then, but I wanted to do different. Now I am a father and I have an excellent relationship with my son chuy. I hug him and kiss him all the time because I want him to grow up knowing how much I love him. I do it because I would have liked that and I hope parents with similar values try or are doing the same and show their love and affection to their kids.

I want education to be at the top of the list for my chuy. I want him to take the opportunity to go to college, grow, and graduate. This is one of the most powerful reasons I am staying here. But I also want to go

back home someday and I want to teach him what I know because I want him to remember the values and ways of his root ancestors.

Brad Hart
with

Jessica Wilkinson: *My thoughts and opinions on neighborhood have been affected by numerous aspects of my life, including my own neighborhood, religion, and the region where I grew up and now live.*

I grew up and currently live in Davis County, Utah. I have only ever lived in two homes, one in Farmington and one in Kaysville. Both neighborhoods have similar racial, economic, and religious make-ups. The main difference in neighborhoods that I noticed upon moving was the age of those living closest to me. When I moved to Kaysville there were more young families in the neighborhood than there were in Farmington.

But, where do I fit into these categories? In my current neighborhood I fit into the racial and economic majority, being a middle class Caucasian. The age make-up of the neighborhood has changed over time. Where at first there were many young families, there is now a good mix of the old, middle-aged, and young people. I fit into the young adult age category. Within my current neighborhood I fit into the religious minority, not being a member of the LDS Church.

Having lived all my life in Utah I felt I had a fair understanding of the Salt Lake communities that Brad has spent most of his life growing up in. Many of the aspects of his neighborhoods were very familiar to me having experienced similarities in my own neighborhood. What made the process of interviewing Brad enjoyable was to learn more about the differences, and to see the similarities through a fresh viewpoint.

I tried to approach the interview process with sensitivity and an open mind. I was fortunate to be paired with Brad, who made this process not only educational, but also fun!

Brad's Neighborhood Story:

My name is Brad Hart. I live in the Fairpark neighborhood of Salt Lake City, Utah. I have been here for the past two years. I've lived in Utah all of my life. I grew up in West Valley pretty close to Valley Fair Mall with my parents and two sisters. It was a cool place to grow up. There was a lot of open space still. There were acres of open space that's now all just been developed. My friends all lived on the east side of the freeway, but they loved coming to where I lived because we could just run wild.

Growing up I always wanted an old house. I would build old houses out of Legos that would look Victorian. Or, I would try to. My family would go to see the lights in Temple Square, and I would see the Victorian style houses. There's a few of them around the downtown area and in the Avenues. I just always thought they were so cool. They had so much style and character. Ever since I was about 10 years old I wanted one.

When I left my parents home I moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. Originally I moved into an apartment downtown with some friends. I lived in the apartment for about four years. After that I had bought a house near Liberty Park. I stayed there for four years. That neighborhood saw a lot of change in those four years. I sold my home in the summer of 2006, which was the height of the real estate bubble. Prices were as high as they had ever been, and I made a ton of money. It was awesome.

But, I was impatient and wanted another house right away. I wanted a house I could restore. I started looking, but all I could afford was pretty much west of the freeway. I spent a couple of months riding my bike around through the west side until I found one that I liked. I took a chance and went for it.

The house I bought is in the Fairpark neighborhood. It's actually just across the street from the Utah State Fair Park. I have been working the past two years on restoring my house. I probably looked at 45 houses. I looked at many that had been 're-muddled.' That's what we call it when a historic house has been remodeled and kind of ruined. Many had their character taken to the dump, but this one hadn't.

It had character and potential, and it was cheap because it was really run down. But, I could see through the peeling paint and stuff. I could see it was very solid. It was structurally sound and it had a lot of its original character.

Moving into the Fairpark neighborhood I didn't have big expectations. I really want the neighborhood to get better, and unrealistically I want it to get better fast. You never realize how much is actually going to change in two years. Not much is happening. Yet.

I feel like this neighborhood is on the tipping point, and I don't know which way it's going to tip. Is it going to get better, or is it never going to change?

We have some big challenges to overcome in this neighborhood. You could probably boil everything down to poverty. When you are struggling just to put food on the table and pay rent you don't care if your house looks like crap. You don't care about what else is going on, or getting involved, or trying to volunteer. It sometimes seems like no one cares.

You try and reach out to people and they won't, they just don't respond. That's hugely frustrating.

I want to see this neighborhood get better. That was part of the reason I moved here, and I knew it was a risk. But, this neighborhood is rad. It has a ton of historic houses, and lots of character. I think it has more character than a lot of the east side. There is more diversity in cultures here. There's lots of different perspectives, and lots of different foods.

I want our neighborhood to be the coolest neighborhood in the city. I think it really could be. We have cool stuff that nobody else has, and nobody else will ever have.

The potential is there, and I think it will happen. We're going to have the biggest art installation in the whole state. We have anchors like the Fair Grounds, Mestizo, and the Red Iguana. The space here is just hugely under-utilized. We are going to have Trax soon, and I think that will make the area more attractive to people who want to live close to the city and have mass transit available. I'm a little in love with the

idea of being an 'urban pioneer.' Like helping out, and moving to sketchy area and turning it into something better.