

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015
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Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Neftali Garcia interview, 2015-06-18 : interview conducted by Michael Robert
Bussel and Sonia De La Cruz**

INTERVIEW LOG

00:01:02: Name is Neftali Garcia. Lives in Salem, Oregon. Born in south of Mexico in state of Oaxaca in 1961.

00:02:01: Has worked in fields, attended a school for teachers, worked fourteen years in mountains of his state. Son born with difficulties and prompted him to migrate to obtain more resources. In United States, has worked in agriculture, housekeeping, production, woodworking, canneries. Settled legal status four years ago. Has worked most recently in Woodburn School District as teacher's assistant. Likes this work.

00:04:40: Four years as a home care provider, mostly working with those who are hard of hearing or deaf. Son is deaf. In Mexico, could not find schools. Rural areas did not have this kind of help. Mixtecs major immigrants from his area. Often have least resources.

00:08:27: Wanted to help his child. Father came to United States as bracero. Encouraged him to study and didn't want him to come to United States. Work was very hard. Father initiated documentation process for family. Goal was to help his son.

00:10:40: Very hard after first coming to United States. No idea where we were...new language, new culture. Found some good doctors including one who didn't charge us. Financial burden after using hospital. Shared living quarters. No vehicle. Very sad, very hard.

00:13:02: Still believes this country is very generous. Determined to get resources but didn't know how to access them. Difficulty.... community not always accepting of children with disabilities.

00:15:20: Things changing in contacts with church and government. Taught us a lot and allowed us to help others. Cared for others before with his wife on a voluntary basis.

00:17:12: No resources. Established community group called “Together We Can” with other Latinos. Began with four families. Similar to a union. Group became very large. Helped you feel like you could have a child with a disability and not be different.

00:19:48: Without legal status wasn’t stable. No other options... couldn’t get help. Not only my case but also case of other families. Without status, cannot receive resources.

00:21:59: Qualities for being a caregiver: be someone who is caring, person who has love for other people, necessary and basic. These are often things people with disabilities do not receive. Have love, be passionate, have respect for other people.

00:24:05: Father naturally knows what a child needs. At first, new at it and didn’t know what to do. Others became his teachers. First lesson: to have disability does not mean you are from another planet or universe. If you don’t have this belief, caregiving will not work.

00:27:00: Latino culture where he lived in Mexico asked why God was punishing you for giving you child with disability. Made you feel unworthy.

00:28:21: Understood child had need to communicate. Wife and I learned sign language at school in Salem and at school for deaf, also at classes held in church. Now my second language is sign language.

00:31:54: Came to United States for dream of helping my child. Not just to earn money or goods but to help my child and I have realized this dream. That is my American Dream. Priority not to make money but to help my son.

00:34:00: Hard in Mexico when I saw children who were deaf and did not have hearing aids. Make me mad I can't help. Feels like kids have been abandoned.

00:37:37: Had routine with child from first day he was born. Made up our own signs. Help him shower, get dressed, do homework. Still have routines today. Lock doors, cook for yourself. Regimented, structured, basic thing we need to have. How we are going to work together and integrate him into the community.

00:40:29: Without support, you don't grow.

00:41:16: Four families initially formed support group. Group grew bigger by word of mouth. Some fundraising through a woman from Eugene. She taught many lessons. Group admired her strength.

00:44:55: Started meeting in people's homes, then churches, then had an office. Space helped serve their needs. Part of group called "Parents and Policymakers." Parents whose children had disabilities. Help with discrimination. Showed people how to become legal guardians.

00:48:28: Learned how to navigate school system. Learned about union. Networking group. Built directory. Could call other parents to help them navigate system. One member now working nationally.

00:51:30: Short time with union. Name says it all. Place where people feel supported. Advance, progress, help one another. All about improving resources for people with disabilities.

00:53:46: Union watching out for your back. Helps us sort out issues with agencies.

00:54:50: Has talked to policymakers and expressed his opinion. Exercising rights he has in this country. My message: people with disabilities are equal to you. Don't want to put labels on people with disabilities.

00:57:13: Has felt looks, words, rejection from outsiders. Try to find equality for children with disabilities and fulfill his dream. Because of color, native language, we feel we have been rejected.

00:59:18: As provider, need lots of patience. If you get bothered, won't be able to do your job. Must be person with this kind of skill. Must break personal barriers.

01:01:18: Must think of other person's needs. Different to work with people who have these kinds of needs.

01:02:28: Essential to have a sense of humor. Wouldn't feel right without it. People with disabilities don't have the love and support they deserve. All about putting yourself in someone else's shoes.

01:04:45: Need to treat people like human beings. My son: give him trust, love, respect. If I don't, others won't.

01:06:03: Satisfied when he can satisfy other people's needs. To live it changes you.

01:07:22: Been doing this for 22 years. People ask how you do it. One day at a time. At same time other families have greater difficulties than I do. If they can do it, why can't I?

01:09:40: Likes sports, bicycle riding. Not much down time. Social life is different. Son asks lots of questions. Life of person who has child with a disability.

01:15:15: Wants to highlight that people with disabilities are human beings. Live in country with resources. Keep pressing for equality and no discrimination against people with disabilities.

01:16:19: End of interview.