

Latin@ Stories Across Ohio



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# Dedication

*Latin@ Stories Across Ohio is dedicated to my husband and daughters. Thank you for your support and for allowing me to spend my weekends working on this project. It is also dedicated to my students, past, present and future. May you be inspired by the stories you see, hear, and read.*



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# Introduction

The history of the United States cannot be understood without taking into account the presence of Latin@s. Contrary to what many assume, not all Latin@s are immigrants. Starting with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ended the Mexican-American War by granting the U.S. a large portion of northern Mexico—including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California—the history of Latin@s in the United States has not always been that of immigration. The now famous words of the immigrant rights movement resonate, “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us,” to explain the historical presence of Mexicanos in the Southwest. A similar history is shared with Puerto Rico: the island was annexed to the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War, through the Jones Act, in 1917. Indeed, Latin@s have shaped the landscape of the United States for over 100 years.

In 2010, the U.S. Census reported that 3.4% of Ohio’s population is Latino/Hispanic, which amounts to about 390,000 of the total population. Specifically, the data shows that Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo, Dayton, and Akron are the most populous cities where Latin@s (of all races) live. Currently, Columbus takes the top spot with about 50,000, followed by Cleveland, with about 42,000; and Cincinnati and Toledo, with about 22,000 each; not to mention the rapidly growing numbers in the more rural areas like Mount Vernon, Celina, and others. In terms of country of origin, Mexicans make up half of the total number, followed by Puerto Ricans, Cubans and many other nationalities.

The current numbers tell us part of the history of Latin@s in the state, but do not tell us about the conditions, culture, language, and overall impact of their presence. My intention for this oral history project was to re-trace and establish a communal past of Latino presence in Ohio while at the same time allowing participants to create individuated histories. Without a doubt, the interest in collecting and preserving histories and traditions came from my own experience of moving to Ohio in 1992. I wanted to know what common histories I shared with other immigrants, and which ones have informed the lives of others.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=115#h5p-1>

## [Hispanic/Latino population growth over the past four decades](#)

In the stories heard and studied here, I find that storytelling as a tool for self-representation and cultural preservation is best represented in the first person narratives in this book. Participants, at different points and via different venues, have fulfilled the role of culture bearers, while at the same time seeking to demystify the image of Latin@s. The reader and listener of these stories will witness the way Latin@s affirm their value and culture, and allow their personal stories to become a path for change. I have found that they, like me, are interested in recuperating and recording previously forgotten or unspoken stories of family, culture, and language.

By telling me their personal stories, they connect our lives with theirs. Their **testimonios** test our own preconceived notions of immigrant lives as destitute and incomplete. Most Latin@s participate in all areas of public life and are fully engaged in the community. Their stories challenge traditional understanding of immigrants as an economic burden, and instead, we find that they have found value in their work as educators, cooks, business entrepreneurs, students, activists, and artists as a path to resist domination and alienation from the macro culture. Life histories are a path to dignity and power, and they help us to see a more complete picture of individuals. These stories function as **testimonios** that give value to people, and are the beginning of new conversations with and about Latin@s.

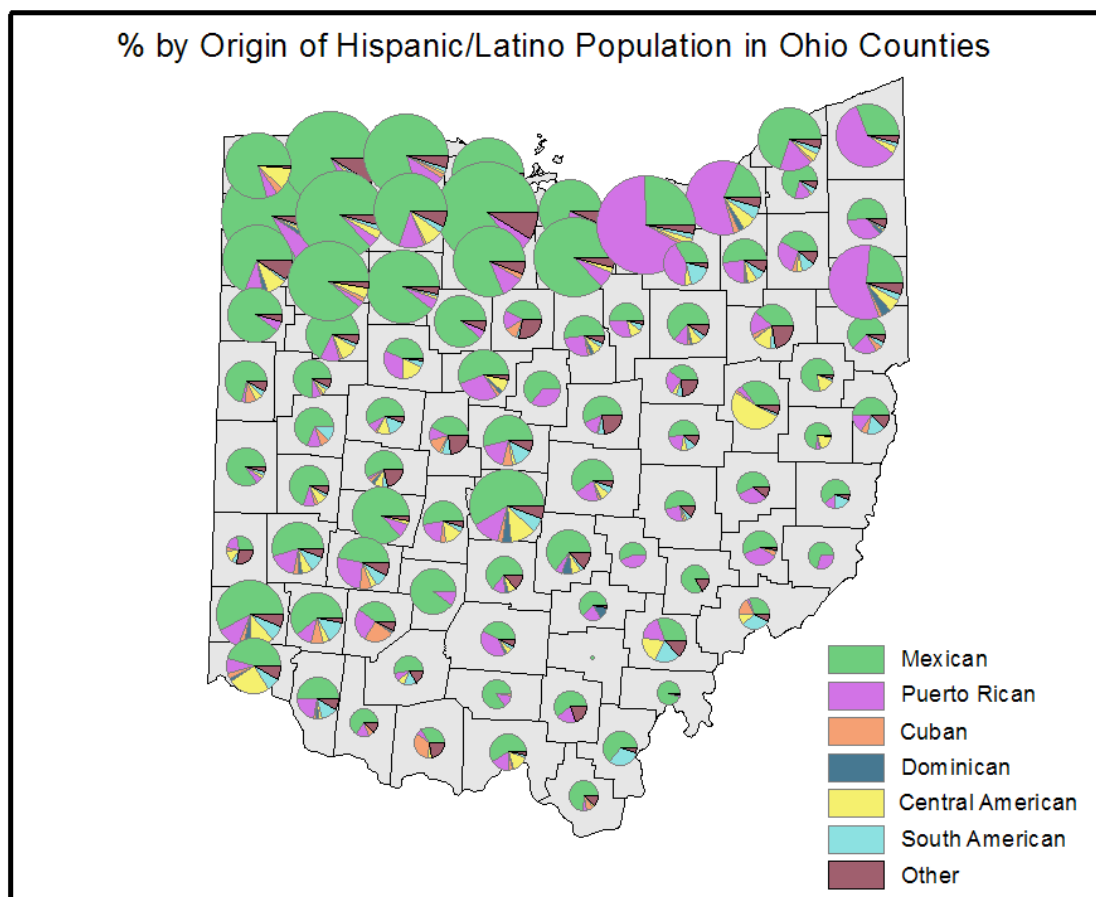
Many of the participants interviewed here are members of organizations that have emerged as the number of Latin@s grew. Organizations such as The Ohio Hispanic Coalition, the Hispanic Business Center, and the Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs represent the programs, needs, interests and matters that affect Ohio Latin@s. This growth in population accompanied by a sense of pride is evident in the many local Spanish newspapers such as [La Prensa de Toledo](#), [El Sol de Ohio](#), [El Sol de Cleveland](#), among others, as well as the many annual festivals, dances and religious events that celebrate the culture and heritage of the many groups represented in the community throughout the state. The selected interviews in this book provide the reader/viewer with a synopsis of Latin@s throughout Ohio from different economic and education levels, and diverse national and generational backgrounds. In this oral history project I suggest that the diversity of Latin@s in Ohio mimics much of the composition of the rest of Midwest, which for decades has had a growing Latin@ population.

The best way to understand a person is to listen to their story and, *Latin@ Stories Across Ohio*, promotes this understanding. This book is divided in 6 chapters to give the reader/viewer a glimpse of the diversity of our stories of adaptation, advocacy, entrepreneurship, generations, women's strength, and the perspective of young Latin@s, many of whom are "puro Latino and puro Ohio."

The interviews you will find in this book have been edited to facilitate understanding, and for some, I only included a portion of the transcript. The video link or audio files are included for each story, so you have access to the whole interview. As you will notice, some of the interviews are in English, some in Spanish, and some participants use both languages. I gave them the freedom to use the language of their choosing; in doing so, these interviews reveal a great deal about the way language plays a big role in an individual's identity, culture, and impact of the Midwest landscape in their lives.

Since this is a bilingual book, I did not provide a translation of participants' use of Spanish. I chose to leave most of the speakers' language and regional dialect use intact to show the diversity of language among Latinos, as well as the unique appropriation of English and Spanish in their speech. The use of code-switching and Spanglish is also a part of our Latino identity.





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# I. ADAPTACIÓN



# Adaptación



The process of adaptation can take months, years or a lifetime. Some of us might never fully adapt, but we learn to negotiate new landscapes, cultures, and traditions. In the process, we make our own traditions, we make decisions that are informed by the concerns and needs of our community, we hold on to our identities and language—always a difficult task—while we accept and adapt to the new environment. As we grow up in the new environment, we become adults, students, teachers, parents, and some of us now call Ohio home. Many of the participants in this first chapter, informed by their own personal experiences, try to make the transition for others a little better. They do this in their daily lives at school, work and social gatherings.

The interviews in this section include participants that were born on the East and West coasts, in other parts of the Midwest, Puerto Rico and Mexico. Whether born in the United States or not, these participants narrate the shock of moving to Ohio, a state that is very different than the place they left. Worthy of mention is the fact that those born in U.S. were as shocked by the absence of Latinos and Spanish as those of us that moved from other countries. All five interviews here show that, in big or small ways, Latinos want others like them to survive and thrive in this state.



# Diana Pagán



**DP:** I was born in raised in Chicago, Illinois in the Humboldt Park area. I lived there for about 11 years and then moved to Columbus immediately after that.

**EF:** Ok. So when did you move here? Do you remember what year?

**DP:** Um, 1996. I was in sixth grade.

**EF:** What area of town did you live in when you first moved here?

**DP:** When we first moved to Columbus we lived on the west side. Specifically in the famous Lincoln Park West apartment complex, which I think has had like 15 name changes since then. When my family moved to Columbus Ohio, we were one of the very first Latino families in that neighborhood. We lived there for about a year, after, we moved to Dublin and pretty much spent, you know, a majority of time here until I graduated from high school.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:  
<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=27>

*Diana was interviewed at the beautiful Ohio Theater in Columbus, OH.*

**EF:** What was your first impression of Columbus?

**DP:** ¡Ay, dios mio! Those were probably my first words. For me as a young Latina, you know, growing up in Chicago, Illinois in a very like close-knit family, um for me, the move here was a culture shock. Just going back to 1996, Columbus Ohio was a totally different... the people were different. There weren't that many Latinos. You know, I felt like I was different. Like my hair. Girls

used to always come up to me and be like “boing, boing, like your curls bounce.” And I was like, yeah, in Chicago everybody had hair like me. So for me it was a huge culture shock.

## Hairs/Pelitos

by Sandra Cisneros (1994)

Everybody in our family has

different hair.

My papa's hair is like a broom, all up in the air.

And me, my hair is lazy.

It never obeys barrettes or bands.

Carlos's hair is thick and straight. He doesn't need to comb it.

Nenny's hair is slippery – slides out of your hand.

And Kiki, who is youngest, has hair like fir.

But my mother's hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circles, all curly because she pinned it in curls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe,

is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling and Papa snoring.

The snoring, the rain, and Mama's hair that smells like bread.



Read a poem about “hair.” Consider how this poem relates to Diana’s experience. Latin@s come from different ethnicities. The color of our skin, height, and hair, among other markers, can be quite different from person to person. Sometimes, even within the same family!

**EF:** What was your childhood like? You can compare it to Chicago or you can focus on your childhood here in Columbus.

**DP:** My family ALWAYS gathered at my abuela’s house. It was like *sin duda*, every year, like I mean every, every weekend the whole entire family would be at my grandmother’s house. My grandmother at the time worked in a factory packing candy. So I think of all the little kids in my generation like “Oh my god, like we gotta hit up the closet where abuela has her stash.” I remember just that there was kind of this camaraderie.

So, one of the most vivid memories at abuela’s house is that um you know, the women would all be in the kitchen making the rice and the beans and the meat. And just, having conversations. One of us is washing the dishes. Another one is drying. And then the men would be in the living room watching sports. And the smaller kids would be in one room playing around. And the older kids



would be in the bedroom watching T.V. I just love that sense of family. And moving to Columbus um, that changed. Um ‘cause you know, all my family stayed back in Chicago. I mean, I used to spend a lot of time with my family, so coming to Columbus... that was hard. But mami made it a ritual to make sure that we were going back to Chicago literally on a monthly basis for the first two years that we moved here. Slowly, but surely, a lot of my family that actually lived in Chicago then is actually here now. I guess that makes the transition easier in all.



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**EF:** Why did your mom decide to move here?

**DP:** My mom has always worked in HR, specifically in the hotel industry. And she used to be the general manager of Executive Plaza Hotel, which I know that hotel has been renamed now. She’s always wanted to start her own business. And so her and um two of her friends started a business here in Columbus: Resource Staffing Solutions. And basically, what they were doing was that they were recruiting Latino families from New York to get them to come to Columbus to um better their lives, you know, hopefully provide better opportunities for their children, um employment. And so uh the opportunity came. I was too young to say “mami ay, yo no quiero ir.” So we sold our house and packed a U-haul and came to Columbus Ohio.



**EF:** What songs, jokes, or stories do you feel are part of your family? So you just told me about the kitchen and being in the kitchen. But what else, what else is home?

**DP:** I will definitely say “Bidi Bidi Bomb Bomb.” [Selena’s song was] an instrumental part of my childhood. Not too many people know this but I actually, along with two of my cousins, tried out to be um Selena in her movie. I wish I had pictures to show. But um, I remember after try-outs me and my cousins and, and my aunt went out to McDonald’s and we’re eating french fries and there’s like all these pictures that my cousins and I have about, um about this date. I also have a cousin, one of my cousins that actually did a performance to that song in the talent show in her school. I think that it just, it definitely shows like the creativity, I guess, that we have, and like the bond. And uh so I would definitely say that it’s, that it’s that.

## SELENA

Selena Quintanilla-Perez was a Mexican-American singer from Corpus Christi, TX. She was considered the Queen of Tejano music. Selena was killed by her fan club president, Yolanda Saldívar when she was only 23 years old. She is remembered and missed by many of her fans.

These two pictures are monuments made in her honor. They are located at the pier in Corpus Christi.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=27#audio-27-1>



### “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom” excerpt

*Listen to a portion of Selena’s song “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom” from the album, Selena Remembered*

A joke? Um most recently, um there’s this whole thing with the **chancleta**. Um you say the word chancleta in my family and everyone will just like, just crack up.

**EF:** Well the chancleta has many meanings.

**DP:** It does! Um so ours actually has a positive one. We uh, we were basically like all the cousins were together. And it wasn’t for the best occasion. It was actually for... our family got together for a funeral. And to try to lift everyone’s spirits, we were trying, um you know just talk and remember the good times, and just silly things, jokes and things like that. We all started talking about...we all went down a list and wrote down everyone in our families’ names and kind of like a word that was associated with, with each person. And so in that, we started talking about the chancleta and we were like, “we should come up with a dance.” And so like there’s just this whole dance, joke of like ‘el baile de la chancleta, el baile de la chancleta.’ So whenever we hear anything about the chancleta it just brings back all those memories and it kind of helps, you know, re-live a sad moment with some happy memories.

**EF:** Is there anything else that you remember about those first years here in Columbus?

**DP:** Definitely, I remember back in those days I was ecstatic whenever I went anywhere and heard anyone speaking Spanish. Whether you looked Latino or not, I heard Spanish and I was like “¿Qué, quién? We don’t know you yet!” That was big. Columbus has now grown onto me. I’ve been here for almost, what 18 years now? Oh my god. But Chicago’s still my home. I’m still a city-girl at heart. It felt like a *campo* coming [here] from Humboldt Park which is, you know, very Puerto Rican dominant city or area in Chicago. It was weird for me to come here and be like, “ oh you guys don’t have like the big steel Puerto Rican flags on California Avenue.” And there’s not a **Lily’s Record Shop**. There weren’t, at that time, there weren’t lot of Latino businesses. I think I missed um a big part of my culture. There wasn’t anywhere where I could just go and um buy sancochos, si se me antojaba algo, or you know just you know buy **arroz con gandules**, con **pernil** or something like that. So I think a lot of those things were definitely missed; taking into consideration that I was exposed to all those things on a daily, and weekly basis.

**EF:** Yeah. Who’s the most important person in your life?

**DP:** My mom. Just saying that like, I dunno she, she makes me real emotional. But definitely, my mom. I’m a lot like my mom. I mean she... I feel like I owe myself to her. I said she’s always been in HR and so got me my first, like professional job. At that job is where I really learned the love for networking and the love of just like meeting and connecting with people. I think that knowing that my mom has instilled those values in me and that she, you know, kind of gave me this opportunity where I could basically go through any open door. I think that that’s what really got me to find that love for you know the journey that we have with each other. If you even think of you know how we met and, like, here we are. I just really love that my mom has you know shown me the value of hard work, of dedication, um family. You know growing up I remember Mami always working, ALWAYS working. And I was always like, “I, you know I don’t wanna, I don’t wanna work so hard. Or I don’t wanna you know have to maybe make some of those tough decisions that maybe she made growing up.” And so when I moved to Columbus and found out you can start working at the age of 14. I was like, “On my birthday when I turn 14, I’m gonna start looking for jobs.” And I did. And since I was 14 I’ve been working. I remember when I was in high school and I had to buy a

Texas Instrument calculator, and I remember it cost like 144 dollars. And I was like, “I’m not asking Mami for that. I can buy it myself.” And I remember that being such a big moment for myself. Um ‘cause Mami always told me, you know, when I was growing up, I’d be lucky if I got a doll. It made me realize at an early age, that we can’t take things for granted. And I really wanted to be able to prove to my mom that, you know, I don’t have to ask you for what I need. You know, I can do that on my own. She’s my rock. She’s my strength. She’s the reason why I feel like I breathe...Definitely my mom.

**EF:** How old are your kids? You have two sons?

**DP:** Yeah. My oldest, Duncan Eric Nesbit III, he’s named after his dad. He will be six next month and he’s in kindergarten. And Antonio Alexander Nesbit is 18 months, so he’s not a baby anymore. That makes me sad.



**EF:** What traditions, family traditions, are you trying to keep alive with them?

**DP:** One of the traditions that we’re, uh that we’re definitely keeping alive is on, on Christmas my family always opened up our gifts at like 12 o’clock and that’s something that I’m definitely keeping alive with my children. Along with my husband’s traditions. We allow them to open up some gifts at 12 o’clock and then the morning of **Christmas** day we’ll, you know, open up the rest of the gifts or whatnot.

Another tradition that, that we have, that, that we try to do, maybe not as, as we did, you know, growing up at Abuela’s house on a weekly basis, but just really making sure that we find that time like we are as a family, like, we’re getting together around food. You know, just to celebrate our

culture and our family. And, to remember where we came from. I would say that those are, those are definitely things that we have tried to instill in our children. And of course, speaking Spanish. I will admit with my first child, I wasn't on top of it as much. My husband is black and Mexican but when he was growing up his mom was learning English. And so in that process she kind of forgot to teach the boys Spanish. They didn't really grow up too much with their Mexican culture. And so for me, I, I found it hard to always have to like translate. Cause then you feel like a broken record, you sound like a broken record. Oh, I just said that three times. But with Antonio like it's definitely a lot easier. My kids actually both just went to the Dominican Republic for the summer.

**EF:** Great. You work here at **CAPA**, right? What other jobs have you had here, in Columbus?

**D:** Um, not a very long list actually. My very first job um was at Fairmont. And it was a nursing home. And boy did I love that job. Like just working with, just working uh with, with the helpers and just having the conversations. You know, yeah. You know a lot of, a lot of people in nursing homes don't really have relatives who come visit them and I really enjoyed having that, like I mean with them...Immediately after that, um I started working as a cashier at Meijer um and this was when I was in high school. I've also worked um selling cell phones.

I would say my professional career kicked off with the job that my mom got me. I was a bilingual pharmaceutical sales representative at Modern Medical... I worked with an amiga, her name is Nadie Boch and um she was like my Latina girlfriend that wasn't Latina. And she, I remember one point we were like, "You know what? We're not happy here. Why are we still here?" She went off and applied for jobs and I, I kind of stayed complacent, I guess. And um when she got her new job she reached out to me and she was like, "Diana you have to apply to this job." And I was like, "uhhhh I'm not interested. I'm fine where I'm at. I get a good paycheck." Like you know I'm, I'm comfortable. I was actually going to OSU at the time in the Delaware campus. And my job was literally across the street from campus. So it was perfect. I went to school from like 9-11:30, worked from 12 to 8 and had a class from 8, from 8-10 o'clock. So it was like perfect at that time, at that point of time in my life. And um so Nadia went and, and said, "Hey I haven't seen that you applied to this job." And I was just like, "I'm not going to apply to it." And um one day I get a phone call from the executive director of the position and they were like, "We need you to apply to this position." And I was like "wait, isn't it supposed to work the other way around?" So because the executive director called me I was like okay sure I'll submit my resume. Like that same day they were like, "So can you come in for an interview tomorrow?" That interview um opened my doors to the nonprofit world.

I worked at the Columbus Council of World Affairs for four years um as the office manager and as the community outreach person. I learned everything from databases to membership, um you know, what keeps people coming back to an event, what keeps people engaged. I learned a lot about networking, relationship building. Since then, I've never looked for a job. I've had the, the opportunity to be actually sponsored by people. And four and a half years into that job I was invited to lunch. And uh was you know, on our way out, um they were like, "so what do you think about a job um working as a development associate at the Women's Fund Central Ohio" and I was like "man that's like a tough call. Cause I really loved my job. But I was at the time I was really passionate about empowering women and girls. So I decided to take the job. I was at the women's fund for about four and half years. Got to do and work with amazing people.

After that I, in my time there, was when I became a mom. And becoming a mom I was like, "You know what? Like I need to maybe focus a little bit more on my family and my kids." So I took a little bit time off work. Did some fundraising like freelancing. And then someone called me up again



and was like, “Hey you wanna do coffee?” “Sure!” So there’s a recurring theme here with my coffee and lunch. That conversation was about CAPA. And um I remember, I remember saying, “You know what like that’s down my alley. Cause I really wanted, want to use my skills working with the Latino community. So I’ve been, I’ve been with CAPA for about four and a half years. And love it. I mean um I get to coordinate the largest Latino festival in the state of Ohio. I’m proud of that. I, I really like it. You know going back to some memories as um, of my childhood. Um one of, um one of the things that I looked forward to on a yearly basis was going to the Puerto Rican festival in, in Humboldt Park. And I remember just always really going with my cousins. And it was like, you know, the place to be at. Having that as a fond memory of my childhood and um you know, being now the coordinator of the Latino festival in the city that I live in. Um I feel like you know, like it’s kind of gone full circle.

**EF:** Great. What does Ohio mean to you?



**DP:** Ohio. Opportunity. Growth. Journey. Friendships. Strong friendships. I really like the sense of community in Columbus. And the opportunity for growth here. I mean whether it’s economic, social, education, I think that there’s, I think that Columbus, Ohio has a lot to offer. I think especially as a young Latina, Ohio almost has so many opportunities that it’s like enough, like conquer the world. You have an idea, you know go for it. Um I, I think that’s what Ohio represents for me. It feels very inclusive.

**EF:** What was one of the most difficult times of living here?

**DP:** In the beginning, I would definitely say that like fitting in. Um, you know just going back to, I was you know eleven when I moved here. I was in the sixth grade. So like you know, you’re like in

that tween phase. And uh you know coming here like I didn't, you know, I didn't have any friends. I had an accent. I mean I still have an accent but like you know, 18 years ago, I had a really strong accent. I came from a school that was like 99.9% Latino so coming, coming, to, to Columbus I mean honestly like I've, I've never seen so many Caucasian people at once. Like seriously.

**EF:** So you, I know you have young sons and um and this might not be the case where you're, you're telling the stories now but um maybe when you get together with your mom or something like that, what are some of the stories from your youth that you like to take, to tell the most from when you were little or a teen or something? Or remember, you know like la chancleta right? What are some of those stories that you like to tell?

**DP:** I know when I was growing up, um well not even growing up, when I was a baby, mommy always said, "Ay tú eras, tú eras mal criada, cuando tú eras, tú eras pequeña." And I used to be like, "Really?" And um so there was a, I used to like when I got upset or mad when I was a baby, and this was like when I was one or two, I used to always like, you know, throw myself on the floor and conk my head on the floor. And so I have an 18 month old and um when he was about one like one, he started to do that. And so my mom was like, "Coje allí, that's what you get." Um, and so um, it's just this, it takes me back to so many memories. I remember always having conversations with my best friend saying, "we're not going to be like our moms". My mom and her mom used to be like known for going to the stores and getting the little Estée Lauder sets because it's a free gift if you purchase 25 dollars or more. And we just always be like, "we're not going to be like them." We're so like them. And so all those things like they, it really just all goes back to you know...we really do end up being our moms. And our kids end up being us. And I don't know if it's a cultural thing or not but I mean it definitely happens. And it's happening in my family. And I'm seeing it with my kids.

**EF:** So you mentioned that your son is sort of doing the things that you used to do when you were little. What are some of the fondest memories of your children? Uh I know they're still young but what are some of those memories that you're keeping and that you're you know, thinking still, uh remembering, or, or wanting to keep alive in a way?

**DP:** I have a lot of recurring themes. Going back to the story about my hair and the boing and all that um. My oldest son um probably has had the most beautiful hair like ever. Not just because he's my son but because he really does or did. So my husband's father always thought that a man's wealth was um dependent on how many sons he had and how long their hair was. And um, so when my son was born we were like, "We're never cutting his hair." So we didn't, for a good like four and a half years. He has tight curls just like mine but a lot easier to manage and just nicer curls I guess. So we were actually growing his hair in honor of my husband's dad who unfortunately passed away, so even with more meaning we're like, "we're definitely never cutting his hair." But there was a day, it was Mother's Day, my husband's grandmother kept him overnight. When my husband went to go pick him up she was like, "here you go" and gave him a ziplock bag with four braids in it. I cried for nine days nonstop. Eventually I got over it because he, he's a handsome kid. But when he sees pictures of himself from back, he's like, "Mom really, really? Like you let my hair get that long?" and then you know we're able to like retell him the story and the history and the reason why we did it. And he's like, "Oh okay." Um so now he sees his little brother. He, he also has, you know, the curly, the curly locks. I don't know where they get it from. Um and so.

**EF:** Um if you were to give advice to new immigrants to Ohio, especially Latino immigrants, what would you tell them?

**DP:** Do your research. Get engaged with an organization, a cause, a nonprofit, that you feel



passionate about. Do it *con toda fuerza*. But definitely do your research. And like make sure that you have a passion for what you're, for what you're wanting to get involved in. And don't spread yourself too thin. I should take my own advice on that one. I think I have a very strategic reason in why I am very involved in the community. Sometimes I think, like "Oh my god I don't even know how I do it." Um but I, I can definitely say that I am passionate about everything that I am a part of.

**EF:** Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

**DP:** I hope that, you know, people are a bit inspired by my story. If I inspire one person like I feel like I changed the world. Embrace your, your heritage and your culture. Don't ever stop being who you are. Don't ever let anyone tell you like, "You can't do that. You shouldn't do that. Like we tried that before, that's not going to work." Do you.

## Festival Latino Columbus, OH

Festival Latino began in 1996. It is a free family-friendly event and the largest Latino event in Ohio. In 2014 it drew more than 150,000 people from all over the state of Ohio and some neighboring states. It celebrates family and community with two days of children's activities, music, food, fashion, art, and dance from the heart of Latin America and Spain.

Diana Pagan has been the primary fund manager for this event over the last six years.



*Learn more about Festival Latino*



# Mari Burgett



**MB:** Nací en Puerto Rico, mi familia toda es de Puerto Rico, estuve allí hasta la edad de como siete, ocho años y después mi familia se mudó a Texas. En San Antonio, y allí estuvimos por diez años.

**EF:** ¿cuándo se mudó a Ohio?

**MB:** En el ochenta y cuatro [Mhm], después de diez años en San Antonio mi familia se mudó a Columbus porque mi papá vino a la Universidad de Ohio State para terminar su doctorado y por eso fue que nos mudamos a Ohio.



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# Carlos Martinez



**EF:** Bueno, uh, Carlos, uh gracias por haber aceptado [**CM:** Sí] venir hacer esta entrevista acerca de tu experiencia como latino en Ohio [**CM:** Okay]. Uh, primeramente eh, hoy es jueves seis de noviembre de dos mil catorce y puedo, podemos empezar eh ... si nos dices tu nombre completo, por favor.

**CM:** Me llamo Carlos Alfredo Martinez Junior.

**EF:** Okay. Uh, ¿Dónde naciste y creciste tú?

**CM:** Pues, nací en Nueva York y me crié allí para unos diez años y después, después me mudé a Columbus y pues, allí, allí yo he estado, ¿no?

**EF:** Okay. ¿Cuál es tu herencia? ¿De dónde son tus padres y...?

**CM:** Okay, mis padres son de Honduras, sí, son de Honduras.

—



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# Elena Foulis



**\*\***This interview was conducted by my former student and now friend, Sam Quintell-Lenzi.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=33#audio-33-1>

## [Listen to audio of Elena's interview](#)

**SQL:** ¿Dónde nació y creció usted?

**Elena:** Yo nací en El Salvador, pero crecí en Matamoros, Mexico. Es una ciudad fronteriza en la frontera con Texas.

**SQL:** ¿Y cómo fue su niñez?

**Elena:** Mi niñez fue, pues como la niñez de muchos niños en México ... Tengo bonitos recuerdos, a mí me gustaba mucho jugar afuera en la calle, ¿no? Entonces una de las rutinas que más recuerdo es, llegar de la escuela y andar en bicicleta siempre, ¿no? O brincar la cuerda, jugar por las calles; era, es una de mis memorias más favoritas.

**SQL:** ¿Y cuándo llegó los Estados Unidos?

**Elena:** Después de la **preparatoria**, eh, tenía diecisiete y me fui para California y viví allí seis meses. El plan original era venir a Estados Unidos por un año y regresarme, ¿no? Y empezar la universidad en México. Pero, después de seis meses, me vine a Ohio y seguía tomando clases de inglés y después seguí la universidad.



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# Lupe Medina



**EF:** ¿Dónde naciste y dónde creciste?

**LM:** Yo nací en Los Ángeles, California. Pero mi familia se mudó cuando yo tenía como cuatro, cinco años y crecí en Columbus, Ohio.

**EF:** Okay. Uh, ¿Cómo fue tu niñez?

**LM:** Fue divertida: mi mamá era ama de casa so ... um, todo era para sus niños: ella cocinaba y si no nos gustaba lo que hacía, hacía algo más, tenía mis hermanos, era la primera hija. Entonces dicen mis tíos que era muy consentida ah, me encantaba el espagueti; dicen que cuando comía espagueti, me embarraba toda la cara (risa) So siempre quería hacer el espagueti em, y yo siempre tenía amigas en la casa. Siempre tenía alguien en la casa con quien jugar porque mi mamá no tenía nada más que hacer, entonces traía yo a mis amigas y jugábamos con el pasto, y hacíamos comida, y con las hojas de, de los árboles y con los palos ehm, on the grill, y nosotros estábamos cocinando como mi mamá. So fue muy, fue muy, muy divertida mi niñez; me gustó. Yeah.



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## 2. LOS ACTIVISTAS





# Los Activistas



Sometimes we become activists when we least expect it. We do it through our work, through our engagement in the community, through our children's school or by being asked to represent a group or groups that are often voiceless or with little to no representation. The rapid growth of Latinos in the Midwest and their desire to fully participate in the community means that participation can range from cultural talks at children's schools and interpreting at migrant camps, to providing after school resources, organizing cultural dances, and educating the greater community about the Day of the Dead in community parades, public altars, and art pieces. All of these small and large acts of engagement are informed by a personal interest in making the place where they live better, and in the process, their activism—small or large—points us to how bridges are being built among other groups.

The six interviews in this chapter show a strong stance on education as way to inform the community about their rights, to seize the opportunity for a better life, and as a means of integration.

# Gabriela Pickett



**GP:** Mi nombre es Gabriela Zavala Pickett

**EF:** ¿Dónde naciste y creciste?

**GP:** Yo nací en la ciudad de México. Viví en la ciudad 12 años aunque mi padre tenía una casa de campo donde nos íbamos los fines de semana a escapar la civilización, vamos a decir. Y después viví ocho años Morelia, Michoacán antes de venir a Estados Unidos.



The artist at her studio in Dayton, OH

**EF:** ¿Cómo fue tu niñez en, en México?

**GP:** Tenía una niñez muy segura. Nunca nos faltó nada, creo que fui muy privilegiada en el sentido de que tuve la oportunidad de convivir con gentes de muchos estratos económicos y sociales, por el hecho de que mi padre era arquitecto, entonces pues, mi papá le mandaban hacer casas, convivía con los dueños de las casas, las gentes que las construían y las gentes que vivían alrededor de los lugares. Y creo que eso fue una cosa muy importante para mi formación, como adulta.

**EF:** ¿En qué año llegaste aquí a Ohio?

**GP:** En el 2001.

**EF:** Okay, ¿Fue tu primer ciudad o estado en Estados Unidos?

**GP:** No, yo llegué a Estados Unidos en 1989. Llegué al estado de Texas, a cinco millas de la frontera de México entonces, estuve ahí, tal vez unos diez años, doce años antes de venir a Ohio. Ese tiempo fue muy interesante pues, no sentía ni que vivía en México ni que vivía en Estados Unidos, esa área de Texas es como una subcultura.

**EF:** ¿Cuál fue tu primera impresión al llegar a Ohio? ¿Y llegaste a Dayton? ¿Dayton ha sido tu única ciudad?

**GP:** Sí, llegué a Dayton, llegué aquí en finales de agosto, del 2001, llegué dos semanas antes de que sucediera el ataque de las torres, entonces yo llegué

a Dayton en un momento crucial realmente, donde ... no sé, tal vez las dos primeras semanas fueron muy tranquilas para mí y después, creo que en, esa sacudida a todo el país, pues, creo que nos afectó a todos, sobre todo a mí llegando a un estado donde realmente no conocía a nadie, y sentí una diferencia de un día para otro, en una desconfianza hacia los inmigrantes, hacia las personas que realmente no se veían igual a los demás.

**EF:** ¿Qué te trajo a Dayton?

**GP:** Un trabajo, un trabajo, sí. Y yo pienso que querían que realmente llegáramos a Ohio porque, recuerdo que yo pregunté si nevaba mucho en Ohio y me dijeron que casi no nevaba en Ohio. (risa) [EF: Te mintieron] (risa) ¡Sí!



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# John Alvarez



**JT:** Yo nací en Torre, Puerto Rico. Uh, fui a las escuela allá en Puerto Rico y después nosotros nos mudamos a los Estados Unidos, el primer sitio fue Arizona. Y eso fue bien difícil para mí porque fui de isla tropical a desierto. Después, nosotros nos mudamos mucho, aquí en los Estados Unidos. Y, mi papá se retiró en Orlando, Florida.

**EF:** Entonces, ¿Hace cuánto tiempo que usted vive aquí en Ohio?

**JT:** Uh, casi ocho años.

**EF:** ¿Cómo puede describir su niñez en Puerto Rico y en otros lugares?

**JT:** En Puerto Rico fue difícil porque yo, yo sabía mucho ... el problema era que, yo quería más, en la escuela y no me podía ayudar. Y después mi madre me dijo, "Tú sabes, lo mejor es mudarse para los Estados Unidos porque allí vamos a tener la oportunidad de hacer lo tenemos que hacer, y para que los niño crezcan como nosotros queremos." Así que era difícil en Puerto Rico pero no supe lo más difícil que era vivir aquí en los Estados Unidos. Por algunos años yo quería regresar pero, tú sabes, me acostumbré.

**EF:** ¿A qué edad vino usted aquí a los Estados Unidos?

**JT:** Ah, siete años.



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# Lily Cavanaugh



**EF:** Gracias por permitirnos entrevistarla y quería que nos diera su nombre completo, por favor.

**LC:** Mi nombre es Lilliana Calderón Cavanaugh. Nací en San José en Costa Rica y crecí hasta los catorce o quince años en Costa Rica también.

**EF:** ¿Y en qué año vino usted aquí a Ohio?

**LC:** Vine a Ohio en los años ochenta. Luego regresé a finales de los noventa.



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# Grace Ramos



**GR:** Well my name is ... everyone knows me as Grace Ramos, but my name is Altagracia. Altagracia Ramos. And I was actually born in El Paso, and I probably lived there for a week. But I was raised in Fort Madison, Iowa. So I was raised in an atmosphere very, very similar to Ohio. You know, in all ways. And that's where I grew up, until I was a junior in high school and then I went out to California for a couple of years, and graduated in California, San Bernadino. And then met my husband, and ended up back out here in the Midwest, in Ohio.

**EF:** When did you move here?

**GR:** We moved here in the, uh, fall of '66.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=47>

# Rosa Torres Caskey



**RC:** My name is Rosa Torres Caskey, I was born and raised in Waco, Texas. Torres is my maiden name um, my parents uh, long history—Torres is a very common name, and it's a popular name so. And on my mother's side it was Monreal, so Monreal Torres Caskey. My family, a lot of them to this day, can't pronounce Caskey. They do, "Cosi, Casi..." you know it's just. So Rosita is Rosita, that's, that's the way it is so.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=49>

# Tony Ortiz



**EF:** We are here with Toni Ortiz and thank you again for doing this interview with us and supporting our effort to document Latino presence in Ohio. So to start, where were you born and where did you grow up?

**TO:** Lorain, Ohio, near Cleveland. With a lot of Latinos there ... yeah that's where I grew up. It's right by the lake. There was a huge number of Puerto Ricans and Mexicanos there really that migrated there and stayed there.

**EF:** So what is your background?

**TO:** I'm Puerto Rican. My parents were recruited out of Puerto Rico to come to work in the mills, in the trucking companies so there was a lot of them that came at the time and they all just stayed there. And literally one time it was the third largest population of Puerto Ricans besides New York and Chicago, so it was a lot of them.

**EF:** What was your childhood like?

**TO:** I was one of thirteen kids. I was the third out of the thirteen; the first to graduate out of high school, and the first to graduate out of college. My older brother got sick and my older sister got married early and had six kids.

**EF:** What memories do you have of growing up here in this area and with this unique background of growing up in Lorain?

**TO:** In Lorain, the thing I remember the most is that everything was centered around the church. We had masses in Spanish, after every mass there was food so you ate different Puerto Rican foods and Mexican foods. There was just a lot that centered around the church, everything we did was around the church. My mom was at church every day. That's a picture of my mom up there. [Points to picture on wall]

Basically growing up I spoke Spanish at home, spoke English at school, and Spanglish on the streets. It was rough at first because one of the things that going home you couldn't get help, I struggled in the beginning, but we made it.



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### [Tony Ortiz Audio Interview](#)

Listen Tony Ortiz's Interview

**EF:** Did you grow up hearing both languages?

**TO:** Yes. I was just writing a grant for something. I had to write why I was doing it. Basically growing up I spoke Spanish at home, spoke English at school, and Spanglish on the streets. It was rough at first because one of the things that going home you couldn't get help, I struggled in the beginning, but we made it.

**EF:** Are your parents still around?

**TO:** No. Both my parents passed.

**EF:** What songs or stories were part of your family growing up, of your parents or friends?

**TO:** With thirteen kids there was all sorts of different music playing all the time so it was like *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, it was like that all the time. Food all the time and it was always eaten hot because if you didn't eat it hot you didn't eat it. Never had leftovers. We never locked the doors because that's too many keys to issue so the doors were always open so there were a lot of different people there all the time.

**EF:** Now, you mentioned you have children.

**TO:** I have two daughters.

**EF:** What are some of the traditions that you try to keep with your family now?

**TO:** Unfortunately, down here in Dayton there weren't a lot of Latinos at the school that I was at, when we first came here I went to Beavercreek High School to teach there and I was the first Latino they ever had there, and my daughters were a couple of a handful there. But we try to take them back up to Lorain all the time just so they can get a taste of the culture. But around here there wasn't a lot of opportunity to do that. But they may miss some of that, but every time they went home to see Grandma and cousins it was a whole different world for them.





Mr. Ortiz was interviewed in his office. He is the Associate Vice President for Latino Affairs at Wright State University. His wall is filled with family pictures and awards and recognitions he has received over the years.

**EF:** What types of jobs have you had here in Ohio?

**TO:** I went to Bowling Green for my undergraduate, then I went to work in the NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles. I did that for an internship and then I went back to Bowling Green, got my Masters. No, I taught a year in between in Lorain and then I went back and got my Masters at Bowling Green and that was in 1980. Came here in [Dayton] 1980. I taught Spanish and was the athletic trainer at the high school. Came here in [Wright State University] '85. Started the athletic training program for sports medicine program, and I just stopped doing that this past August. Then I basically started this new position. I'm the associate vice president for Latino affairs. I'm the first Latino administrator up here. I have my work cut out for me.

**EF:** That's a lot of pressure.

**TO:** No pressure at all because, the president understands what we need to do, he's just ... I've got free reign, whatever I need to do. I'm really thankful for a lot of stuff I had then. I even have a little school on the east end of Dayton for little kids, for little Latino kids. It's called El Puente Learning Center, I started that six years ago. We have thirty-five kids come there every day. I did it because that's what they did at the church when I was growing up and that really helped us because a lot of my friends, including myself, would've stayed working there in the steel mills, we



never would have had the opportunity to go to school if we didn't get that additional help needed. So that's what El Puente has become. It's been very successful.

**EF:** Can you tell me a little bit about El Puente?

**TO:** Yeah, El Puente I started with Sister Maria, myself and Rosa Caskey, who you're going to talk to tomorrow. And we started it, we have after school tutoring, but what makes it different than other tutoring programs is our college of education students all have to rotate through there. It's part of a service-learning class. So it's high quality tutoring ... it's an experience for the student teachers, but also great experience for the kids. But what's happened is this center has become a magnet because all of the other schools in the area want to be part of it and it's all privately funded. I get all of the money from friends, from grants that I apply for and there's no cost to the kids. We have a long waiting list of people that want to get in. We basically pick the ones with the most needs, and not so much kids but just anybody. We get those kids from Dayton Public Schools and also the parochial schools nearby

**EF:** What was your main inspiration for opening up El Puente?

**TO:** I had the opportunity and the means to do it because the guy that first funded it for me, his kid played baseball. The guy was a multimillionaire – billionaire. If you've ever heard of Iam's Pet Foods, he started Iam's Pet Foods. So when I approached him about what I wanted to do, he says, he wrote the check out right there, so ... and he's written out a check every year.

**EF:** What has been the happiest day of your life?

**TO:** When my daughters were born. Yeah. I mean they ... You know Maria, the one up there [points to picture on wall], is the oldest. She went to school in undergrad here and then she went to Loyola Marymount. She's basically a filmer, she's writing, she's basically a film writer, a screenwriter. But she also, if you see the middle picture up there, she played basketball on a state championship team at the big school, so it was fun growing up and watching her. Then my youngest one Melissa went to Michigan State, undergrad, and just finished up her grad school here. But she's fighting cancer so it's been tough for her since she hasn't really cut out her career.



**EF:** I guess one of the saddest days would be finding out that, right?

**TO:** Mhm, oh yeah.

**EF:** What are some of the stories that your daughters like to hear about you growing up?

**TO:** How I used to get smacked by my mom all the time for being a smart aleck. Yeah, I mean, they became real close to my mom because my mom was like a saint. I mean she was in church all the time. She did the rosaries for everybody every night somewhere. She took us along. It was just a special bond there. And they liked to hear that. In fact, my youngest daughter, her first year at Michigan State had to do an article on her, and I didn't know a lot of stuff, but I had to sit there and interpret for my mom, or just to be there, and it was an unbelievable story.

**EF:** You learned stuff yourself?

**TO:** I learned a lot about my mom – I had no idea. Well for instance, my mom, she was supposed

to be a nun, she was gonna become a nun, but because her parents didn't get married through the church, it didn't allow her to become a nun. Luckily for thirteen of us that that occurred!

**EF:** Yes, yes. She went from a nun to the mother of thirteen.

**TO:** Yeah.

**EF:** What does Ohio mean to you?

**TO:** Opportunity. Especially down here. There's just so many schools here. Plus we got Wright-Patterson air force base right there. So there's a lot of changes constantly going, a lot of opportunities for people that come here and do well. Really there's no excuse because opportunities are there. If you don't take advantage of the opportunities, it's no one's fault, but yourself, because the chances are there.

**EF:** We've heard that from other people that we've interviewed that Ohio means opportunities, that you don't find in other states.

**TO:** I mean like here we've got ten colleges within thirty miles of each other. It's crazy, and I mean they all are looking for Latino students. We just need to push the Latino families to change that mindset of working and working hard. If they work hard now, they work less later. Work and use your brains. Brain power versus man power. I mean it's ... you're gonna get a lot further in it. It's just convincing the families that, "hey, you don't need that car right now, you can buy ten cars later."

**EF:** Would you say that a lot of the work that you've done here in the community is educating parents about the importance of higher education?

**TO:** Mhm, yeah, and just showing them how easy the process is, because I would have never been here if it wasn't for a guy named Sao Torres back in Lorain, Ohio. Because my parents couldn't help me go to school, but he took an interest in the Latinos there and he helped us fill out the paperwork, take us through the process, visit schools, and have us start. We need more Sao Torres like that throughout the whole state to get kids in school.

**EF:** If you could keep a memory in life forever, what would it be?

**TO:** This job right now.

**EF:** This job, this job is the dream.

**TO:** Yeah, because I really, you know, being up here, working for the President, there's no limits as to what I can do. If I have an idea, I just take it down the hall and tell him what I want to do and he says: "Do it"! I don't have to go through a lot of different layers. Because what's happened in a lot of places, is you have a great idea and you take it to a certain person and they stop it and it never goes anywhere. I don't have to do that, I just have to go right down the hall, and he either says "yes" or "no". Ninety percent of the time he can't say no to me, so.



Mr. Ortiz was interviewed in his office at Wright State University

**EF:** Great. I can guess right now that the job that you have is one of the proudest moments of your life. Can you think of other ones that have made you proud?

**TO:** Um, yeah. It's not up here, but my students in athletic training, when I got done, when I was done with the program, they had a function for me. They created a scholarship in my name which is endowed as like \$20,000 and it's endowed for life. What happens with that money, we pick a couple students every year, they get money, otherwise they couldn't afford coming to school. So, that's there. That's there forever.

**EF:** If you were to offer advice to immigrants to Ohio, what would you tell them?

**TO:** Come. Come and settle because there's affordable housing, also my advice to them as well is to get into good schools, get involved, tell their parents get involved, okay. Because if you don't get involved and learn the process ... get involved and make sure that your kid is getting what they deserve.

**EF:** What message would you like to give to your kids, or grandkids in the future about life in general?

**TO:** Don't sit back. You know, if you want something done, take the initiative to start it and see it through. Follow through, get it done. And don't do it haphazardly. Take pride in what you do.

### 3. LOS PROFESIONALES





# Los Profesionales



Some of the rhetoric against Latino immigration is that they hurt our economy. Many studies show that in places where a large immigrant community settles, they tend to stabilize that city's



economy. According to the [Wall Street Journal](#), most economists agree that immigration has benefitted the U.S. economy. They tend to fill holes in our labor market—not only as manual and skilled laborers, but also as bilingual professionals in the public health, law enforcement, and educational sectors. Immigrants are not only taxpayers, but also consumers and entrepreneurs. A local example of this is Dayton, OH. Dayton had experienced a loss in population due to the departure of several manufacturing companies. With the city's [Welcome Dayton initiative](#), many immigrant communities began to arrive to the area, attracted by cheap housing, and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. But Latinos—long or short-term immigrants, and born and raised in Ohio—occupy a wide range of professional environments. The interviews in this chapter will show us how Latinos are committed not only to their own professional aspirations, but also to bringing awareness of the needs and opportunities available for other young Latinos in the state. The Young Latino Network is one example of the interests that people like Jason Estremera have in equipping young people for the professional world in the Cleveland area. Estremera, along with Jenice Contreras and Alexandra Pagán, among many other things, have a passion for creating a space where culture, business, arts, educational and civic centers come together to celebrate Latino history and identity, called *La Villa Hispana*. Kenneth Ramos was one of the first bilingual member of the Columbus Police Department, and Belkis Shoenhals works for a non-profit housing counseling agency committed to affordable housing development working with the Hispanic community in Franklin County. The job that all of these professionals do speak not only of their personal accomplishment, but also of the desire to give back to their community.

# Janice Contreras



**EF:** Nos da su nombre completo, por favor.

**JC:** Janice Contreras.

**EF:** Hoy es miércoles, 25 de septiembre del 2014. ¿Dónde nació y creció usted?

**JC:** Yo nací en Caguas, Puerto Rico y me crié en San Lorenzo.

**EF:** ¿Y cuánto tiempo tiene de estar usted en Ohio?

**JC:** He estado aquí la mayoría de mi vida yeah, so diría como ... tengo que hacer la matemática ... sería más como veinticuatro años [EF: Veinticuatro años] La primera vez que vine fue a los diez años y después nos regresamos a la isla y volvimos dos años después. So, desde los trece años he estado. Y he estado viviendo en Cleveland, Ohio.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=55>

# Jason Estremera



**EF:** Today is Wednesday, September 24, 2014. Can you tell us your full name, please?

**JE:** Jason Estremera.

**EF:** Okay. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

**JE:** I was born in Cleveland, but I grew up in Chicago.

**EF:** What is your heritage?

**JE:** Uh, I guess, half Puerto Rican and half White, for lack of a better term.

**EF:** When did you move to Ohio?

**JE:** Um, you mean to Chicago or...? [**EF:** To Ohio] To Ohio, just four years ago.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=57>

# Kenneth Ramos



**KR:** Yo nací en Cleveland, Ohio. Los padres míos son de Puerto Rico. Mami llegó a Cleveland a los veintiún años, incluso yo creo que llegó a Lorain, Ohio, y se mudó a Cleveland después. Um Papi nació en Puerto Rico y llegó a los dieciséis años con nosotros, once hermanos. Mi abuelo vino a trabajar con a Ford allá en Cleveland. Y allá mis padres se conocieron en el trabajo, donde papi estaba trabajando. Se casaron y después mami se hizo maestra de inglés de segundo lenguaje.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=59>

# Belkis Shoenhals



**EF:** Can we start by you saying your name?

**BS:** Yeah. So it's Belkis Shoenhals.

**EF:** Where were you born and where did you grow up?

**BS:** Um, I was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio, which is about an hour northeast of here, and that's where I grew up. I was born and raised there until I went to college.

**EF:** What was your childhood like?

**BS:** Um ... it was ... wonderful. I had a fabulous, fabulous childhood. I was blessed and am blessed in many, many ways. But I noticed from an early age that it was like different than, than other children if you will, because Mount Vernon, it's a very, mostly white town, very conservative, you have white, Catholic people there, or white Christians really um, so there's not a lot of diversity. I noticed a lot of my friends, their moms, would be at home and bake brownies and, I don't know, just do, do things. That didn't happen in my household, my mom was always, very loud and call her family all the time and so I noticed this ... I didn't know what it was but I noticed this difference, like really early on, I just couldn't put my finger on it. But it was really fun; uh, my dad, he was a history professor in Kenyon and my mom stayed at home and watched over me and everything but it was great in the sense that we traveled a lot. So since my dad was a historian he was always doing research, he taught Caribbean and Latin American history, as well as Eastern European history and Russian history, Middle Eastern history but because of that we traveled a lot and so we traveled mostly in Europe but, um we got to go to the Dominican Republic like three or four times a year, which is where my mom's from. That was awesome because I was immersed in that culture and that's how I learned Spanish. My mom, my parents always spoke to me in Spanish. My dad knew Spanish as well, so they always spoke to me in Spanish and then, also when I was there, I didn't have a choice, I either figure it out and not be shy and talk to my abuela or, I don't. So that's where I

learned all my Spanish, it's like my second home, it's like when I went there my brain just switched and I got used to the loud noise and the chaos in the street. You have this switch that just happens, you don't even think about it really. I had a really, really wonderful childhood but I did notice those differences. My hair's naturally curly and the texture's a little different, and so when I was little, my mom kept my hair natural so I noticed, you know, "Oh, she has like, straight hair and why is mine big and curly and ..." my classmates would be like, "Oh, like you're just talking in gibberish like, you don't really know another language" I'd go to my friend's houses for dinner and they'd have pork chops and mashed potatoes and my mom was making **guandules** and arroz con habichuela and **tostones** and chicken and they would be like, "What's that?" You know what I mean? And, so, that's part of me noticing a difference, I just didn't quite understand it at the time. So I did encounter um ...I don't know if you want to call it prejudice or whatever but people picked up on that and, and they labeled it as weird, instead of like, "Oh, that's cool" they're like, "That's weird, that's different" mostly weird, and so ... but uh. When I was in fourth grade I made friends with Valesca, and Valesca was adopted from Chile, and so I finally had a friend, my very first friend, that was Hispanic. I had never, all my other friends had been white in the past and so her and I would speak in Spanish and just knowing her made me feel more comfortable about myself because I always knew I was different, I just didn't understand why. She made me feel more comfortable and she really, made me feel more like 'affirmed' in my culture, even though I was half Dominican and she was Chilean, just us knowing Spanish brought us together, you know? So people kind of gave me more credit (laughter) I guess in that way. Cause they're like, "Oh well ... I guess so" But it was a wonderful, wonderful childhood, yeah.



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# Alexandra Pagán



**AP:** Alexandra Pagán.

**EF:** Where were you born? And where did you grow up?

**AP:** I was born in Atlantic City, NJ, and moved here when I was 3 to Cleveland, OH. I've been on the same street, not living, but working. My parents worked on the street for over 20 years now and I'm a Cleveland gal.

**EF:** I know you were very young when you moved to Ohio but can you tell what it was like growing up here in those first years of coming here? And maybe if you could mention, in particular, growing up as a Latina?

**AP:** So, especially, this area of Cleveland is very diverse, but mostly Latinos. You see a lot of Latinos here. So, I can say I wasn't in Puerto Rico but I still grew up around my people. It's a home because there are so many ... you become so tight in the community. People know you. You've been here so many years that customers tend to become like family and you can, especially Latinos, we have no problems speaking to each other problem-wise and everything.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=63>



## 4. GENERACIONES



# Generaciones



Each interview in this chapter includes a couple or group—some from different generations—that offer us a rich perspective of their experience and place in Ohio. There are mothers and daughters, great aunts, and a husband and wife that tell us stories about their own generations, and the journey of how they came to Ohio. Ignacia and Torentino moved to Ohio from south Texas, but met and married in Celina when they were working in the agricultural fields. Rosemari moved from Peru before her daughter Nicole, and tells us about the sadness of being briefly separated from her daughters and how she learned to navigate her new surroundings, which later helped her become an advocate for her daughters. Marian, Yolanda and Lena are three generations of Texan women who have lived in Ohio, or who have ties to Ohio, as in Marian's case, for many years. Their perspectives of the community, tradition, language, and culture, is telling of the experience of many Latinos in the Midwest. Lastly, Blanca from El Salvador and her daughter Ariana of Salvadoran and Cuban descent, tell us about their deep family bond. While the perspective of each individual is unique here, what is fascinating during these interviews—which transcripts alone cannot represent—is the interaction between them during their time with me. They sometimes finish each other's sentences, exchange looks that demonstrate a deep understanding between them, and interrupt each other in mid-sentence to make sure the other does not forget an important detail. Most of all, their interactions demonstrate many cultural traits of Latinos, for example: deep respect for older generations,

family storytelling, their uneasiness about taking credit for their own personal accomplishments—they often talked about the accomplishments of the other as a source of pride. I encourage you to read the transcripts and view the videos to witness these interactions. (Note: unfortunately, two of the videos from this section have poor audio quality due to a microphone malfunction. Due to the nature of oral history, it could not be re-recorded)



# Ignacia y Torentino rodríguez



**EF:** Muchas gracias por habernos permitido venir y entrevistarlos. ¿Cuál es su nombre?

**TR:** Primero la mujer.

**IR:** Mi nombre es Ignacia Rodríguez.

**TR:** Yo soy Torentino Rodríguez.

**EF:** Ok ¿dónde nacieron y crecieron ustedes?

**TR:** Pues yo nací en Lytton Springs, Tejas. Viví como 12 años en Tejas y luego me vine para Ohio.

**EF:** ¿En qué año se vino?

**TR:** Como en 50, 1950.

**EF:** 1950. ¿Y usted?

**IR:** Yo nací en China, Nuevo León, México. Y a la edad de 3 años nos trajeron para un rancho que se llamaba los 3 cheques en medio de Alamo y Edinburg, Texas y allí me crié.

**EF:** Y ¿se vinieron juntos a Ohio?

**TR:** No.

**EF:** ¿No? ¿Cómo se conocieron?

**IR:** Aquí nos conocimos en la pisca de tomate en 56.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=67>

# Nicole Espinoza y Rosemarie Gómez



**EF:** ¿Me pueden dar su nombre, por favor?

**RG:** Yo soy Rosemarie Gómez.

**NE:** Y yo soy Nicole Espinoza.

**EF:** ¿Cuál es su herencia? ¿De qué país, cuál es su nacionalidad?

**RG:** Eh, nosotros venimos de Perú. Somos de Lima, Perú, tenemos acá ... bueno yo tengo cerca de cinco años eh...[NE: Yo casi tres] Sí, ¿no?

**EF:** Okay. ¿Por qué decidieron venir a Ohio?

**RG:** Eh ... bueno me encontré con un antiguo enamorado mío, nos reencontramos en Lima, Perú, él había hecho su vida acá eh, tuvimos una relación, me propuso casarnos y este, venirnos acá. Él habló de la ciudad, de todo de por acá y este, me vine con él eh, con el tiempo pudimos tramitar los documentos de mis hijas y pudimos traer a Nicole y a su hermana.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=69>



# Marian and Yolanda Zepeda and Lena Garcia Staph



(a portion of this transcript has been omitted due to sound quality)

**EF:** Pues muchas gracias por haberme permitido venir a entrevistarlas y estoy muy emocionada de poder entrevistar a tres generaciones, ¿no? Primeramente, ¿me podrian dar su nombre y apellido por favor?

**MZ:** Marian Zepeda (Mother of Yolanda Zepeda)

**LGS:** Lena Garcia Staph (Great aunt of Yolanda Zepeda)

**YZ:** Yolanda Zepeda

**EF:** ¿Dónde nacieron y crecieron ustedes?

**MZ:** Yo en Longmont, Texas, y luego nos cambiamos para Placido, Texas y allí es dónde fui a la escuela en Bloomington y luego cuando me casé en, Victoria y allí estoy todavía.

**LGS:** En Mission Valley, Texas.

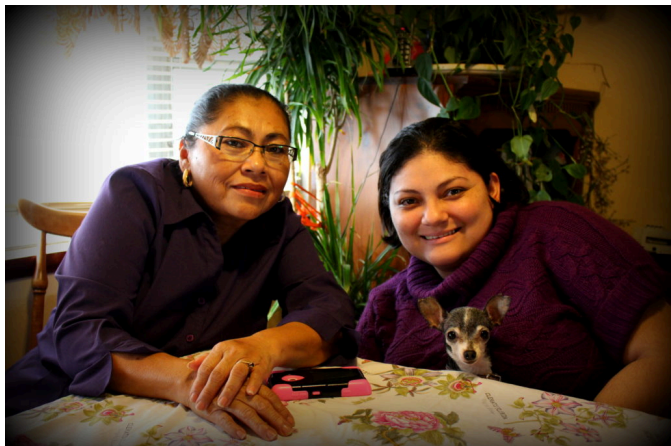
[Minute 3:20-15:30 were omitted]

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# Blanca y Ariana Quintana



**BQ:** Mi nombre es Blanca, Blanca Nora, Quintana.

**AQ:** Ariana Quintana.

**EF:** Okay. Blanca, ¿Dónde nació y creció usted?

**BQ:** Uh, bueno yo ... yo nací en la capital de San Salvador, El Salvador Centroamérica, y me crié en un pueblo que se llama Jucuaran que queda al oriente de la capital.

**EF:** ¿Cómo fue su niñez, en El Salvador?

**BQ:** Mala. [EF: Mala, ¿sí?] Mala y buena, sí. Eh, buena en el sentido que...eh me considero

que fui una persona muy sana- me crié en un tiempo de ... era muy sano y tengo muchos recuerdos de eso que, que pienso que pues, estuvo bien. Y malo porque pues eh, en el pueblo que se llama Jucuaran, era un pueblo olvidado del Salvador que ahora en día pues este, lo llaman turístico.

**EF:** Ariana, ¿Dónde naciste y creciste?

**AQ:** Yo nací en Los Ángeles, California. Cuando tenía cuatro años, mi papá y mamá se mudaron para Las Vegas, y allí fue dónde me crié. Yo fui a high school allí ... y todo allí hasta los dieciocho años.



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## 5. LAS FUERTES



# Las Fuertes



I titled this chapter “Las Fuertes” because the stories of the women in these interviews are truly remarkable. Despite hardship—of leaving home and family, or growing up with few resources—these experiences have informed their professional decisions, their passion for education, their commitment to giving back to the community and perhaps most importantly, their dedication to family. Ana and Filomena left their countries to look for new and better opportunities, and they have learned to be at peace with their surroundings. They have managed to raise and support their families largely on their own, and serve as an example of women that are positively impacting whoever they encounter or serve. Maria and Sophia grew up in Ohio and witnessed the sacrifices their parents made for them and other Latino immigrants in the area. Their interviews show how the things they are involved in now are a direct relation to what they lived as children—housing people in need, interpreting and advocating for immigrant rights and access to healthcare. Ohio, for these women, means reconciliation, healing, success, safety and home. It is a place that has become of part of them, although they recognize that their parents or their own home countries also are very much a part of who they are. In the words of Ana Berrios,

*“hay un momento en la vida en que se acepta este vivir partido en no sé cuántos pedazos pero cuando uno se da cuenta, ¿Cómo podré decirlo? Que ‘healing’, es un regalo que está escondido en la pena ... te hace sentir que el espacio donde vives es un reflejo de quien eres tú como persona.”*

# Ana Berrios-Allison



**AB :** Okay, yo nací en Lima, en Lima, Perú en el ... uf, hace cuarenta y tantos años. Crecí en Lima, yo diría que llegué a Ohio a los veintisiete, los veintiocho años, te puedo decir que la mitad de mi vida hasta ahora, en Perú y la otra, casi mitad, en Ohio. En Columbus.

**EF:** ¿Cuál fue su primera impresión de Ohio cuando usted llegó, en qué temporada llegó, por ejemplo?

**AB :** El invierno. Llegué en marzo, ya estábamos entrando en la primavera y me parecía que hacía un frío tremendo y yo dije, “Si esta es la primavera, entonces ¿cómo sería el invierno?” La primera impresión ... en el año noventa ... ¿Cuándo llegué yo? noventa y tres, noventa y cuatro, por allí ... una ciudad universitaria, bastante joven, poca diversidad, comparada con lo que es hoy día..., una ciudad predominantemente blanca, inclusive la universidad..., no había muchos latinos en ese entonces, si podía hablar mi idioma con, con alguien era muy ... como que ... o sea la oportunidad era cero e inclusive dentro de la universidad, éramos muy, muy, muy pocos. Pero definitivamente con los años yo he visto que ha crecido tremendamente la población latina hasta el punto en que ahora inclusive hay mucho ‘outreach’, ¿no? que se está haciendo a los estudiantes universitarios, de los colegios y dado la área de especialización que tengo en counseling career, entonces siempre hay alguien que está llamando y, cuando yo llegué eso no ... no, nada que ver. Es más, soy ‘Licensed Professional Counselor’- ¡oi! Olvídate, pues hacer algo en castellano en esa época ... mucha estigma

comparado con lo que es ahora. Yo siempre he visto que ... sobre todo, hago mucho labor en el hospital, en OSU Medical Center, el idioma y las counseling skills definitivamente son transferrable a esa área también, puedes pero comparado con lo que fue hace, cuando llegué, no había ni necesidad creo.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=81>



# Filomena Nacacio



**FN:** Yo nací en el Estado de México, en un ranchito que, en un rancho muy, este, alejado de la población. Eso es, un rancho ahí fue donde nací. Estuve ahí por unos ocho años. Este, yo me crié entre, fui huérfana también de papa, nada más viví con mi mamá. Yo tenía la edad de tres meses cuando este me quede huérfana entonces nada más vivimos con mi mamá mi mamá también nada más tuvo tres, dos, mujeres y un varón. Y pues esa fue nuestra, nuestra vida ahí empezamos a este, mi mamá fue una persona muy luchadora, que gracias a Dios yo creo que ella nos enseñó hacer fuertes, luchadoras, y este, porque a pesar de que toda la gente por vivir en un, en un lugar muy muy, este, lejos de la población, pero mi papa gracias a Dios cuando este dejó un terreno y mi mamá ahí vivió siempre con nosotros ella cultivaba ahí. Tenía de todo, tenía, de todo, gallinas, puercos, chivos, burros, después vacas, y sembraban el maíz. Y cosechaba, ella sembraba amaranto, maicena. Este, frijol de todos los colores y sabores. Y lo único que pues no podía sembrar ahí era cosas como que necesitaban como el arroz o el trigo porque ese no se da muy bien ahí pero mi mamá sembraba hasta café y eso bueno. Todo teníamos gracias a Dios. No teníamos dinero, crecimos descalzos con poca ropa porque no, no lo había pues, pero gracias a Dios mi mamá la comida segura la teníamos. Segura. Porque ella era una mujer muy trabajadora. Y nos enseñó a trabajar y eso. Yo era muy muy niña todavía cuando este, estuve ... yo me acuerdo cuando llegó una persona yo pienso que yo tendría por ahí como, porque, como algunos seis años, algo así. Este llegó una persona y le dijo a mi mamá porque mi mamá sembraba algún tipo de maíz



que los, este 25 días de sembrado ya había elotes. Era una semilla muy ligera. Rapidito crecía y daba su fruto y era la primerita que tenía. Y van estas personas, esta señora y le dice a mi mamá, mi mamá se llamaba Ruth. Y dice, señora Ruth yo vengo que me venda unas este camaguas unas mazorcas ya para ... Y mi mama me mandó a mí. Y yo fui, y las, las llevé a casa y la señora me empezó a curiosear ahí. A partir de eso yo me enfermé. Estuve mucho, y yo la veía esta señora, había veces que me jalaba hasta la puerta por allá. Me arrastraba así. Ya cuando y despertaba llorando y mi mamá me recogía de allá de la puerta porque este quien sabe cómo llegaba yo haya, pero esto era una, pero jugaba conmigo la mujer. Me hacia cosquillas, me hacia reír, y yo pues en mi sueño no podía reírme, no podía dormir. Y eso de que no podía dormir yo me enfermé. Entonces optó mi mamá por sacarme de esa casa y llevarme con uno de sus hermanos. Entonces ya ahí ya este, empecé yo a vivir con esta familia. Y esta familia fue la que me llevó, me empezó a llevar a la iglesia evangélica. Con esta, con los hermanos, el hermano de mi mamá. Y allí fue donde yo aprendí que gracias a Dios, le doy muchas gracias a Dios, porque creo que ahí fue donde yo conocí la palabra de Dios ahí fue donde yo empecé a leer, porque yo no fui a la escuela. Pero por medio de la iglesia yo aprendí a leer la biblia y aprendí a escribir mi nombre. Y si escribo, no sé como este, que nombre lleva una letra mayúscula o cositas así, cosas. Pero de todas maneras si yo escribo yo le entiendo a lo que estoy escribiendo. Bueno y así fue mi vida y mi niñez. Ya como a partir de como 10 años ya me fui al distrito federal, a México a trabajar como empleada con una, con unas familias. Pero este, como a los...yo tenía como 15 años me salí de con esa familia y me fui a trabajar con una, con unos doctores. Y ya llegue a trabajar allí como cocinera. Y, y así fue ya después me casé, tuve a mis hijos y ya ahí va mi vida.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=83>

# Maria Sanchez



Yo

**EF:** ¿En qué año llegaste a Ohio por primera vez?

**MS:** Yo nací en el 1985 y nos cambiamos a Ohio en el '86.

**EF:** Pues eras una niña, una bebe, no, cuando llegaste aquí. ¿Cuáles son tus primeras memorias de Ohio, de vivir aquí, de crecer aquí?

**MS:** No sé. Yo vengo de una familia grande. Entonces, yo siempre tengo los recuerdos de muchas fiestas porque nosotros nos cambiamos aquí en Ohio. Es un pueblo un poquito más chiquito de que Columbus y allí no había muchísimos hispanos. Entonces, mis papás conocían casi toda la gente hispana que vivía ahí. Recuerdo yo mucho de ... durante mi niñez, que había muchas fiestas donde toda la gente se reunía y todo.

**EF:** ¿Estas fiestas eran de hispanos?

**MS:** Sí, de hispanos ... bailando hasta toda la noche, todos los niños corriendo.

**EF:** ¿Como fue tú niñez? Piensas que fue una niñez diferente a los demás?

**MS:** Sí, fue diferente y dura. Cuando nosotros vinimos, vinimos en “tourist visas.” Tenemos visas pero solamente para turistas. Entonces, cuando ... Nosotros nos quedamos. Entonces, no sabíamos qué iba a pasar así. Pero en esos tiempos, estaban haciendo una “immigration reform.” Entonces, con todo eso que estaba pasando, nosotros pudimos sacar papeles y, por eso, ahorita tengo yo ciudadanía. Cuando mi familia vino, éramos muy pobres, muy pobres. Vivíamos en el “basement” o el sótano de una familia y yo ... éramos cinco niños y mis papás viviendo en un cuarto. Entonces, fue dura. Mi mamá no trabajaba, cuidaba a mis hermanos y yo. Y mi papá trabajaba dos trabajos. Entonces casi no lo veíamos y ... también mi ... se hizo más difícil las cosas porque mis papás no hablaban muy bien el inglés. Entonces, con todo eso que estaba pasando, entonces ... era muy difícil las cosas. Entonces, así. Fue muy niñez diferente porque mucha de la gente que vivía en Canton, Ohio en ese tiempo era blanco o negro. No había asiáticos, no había diversidad allí en el pueblo. Entonces, éramos.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=85>

# Sophia Rodríguez



**EF:** Primero, muchas gracias por eh, permitirnos eh, entrevistarle. Fue un placer escucharla en Ohio State cuando usted vino hablar en el, en el um, Latino Education Summit, ¿no?. Fue una experiencia muy buena para, para todos nosotros. Uh, entonces quería empezar primero ah, si nos puede decir su nombre completo?

**SR:** Ah, mi nombre es Sophia Marie Rodríguez.

**EF:** Okay. Ah, ¿dónde nació y creció usted?

**SR:** Ah, nací aquí en Mercer County en, en Hospital de, en Coldwater, donde enseño.



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## 6. LOS JOVENES





# Los Jóvenes

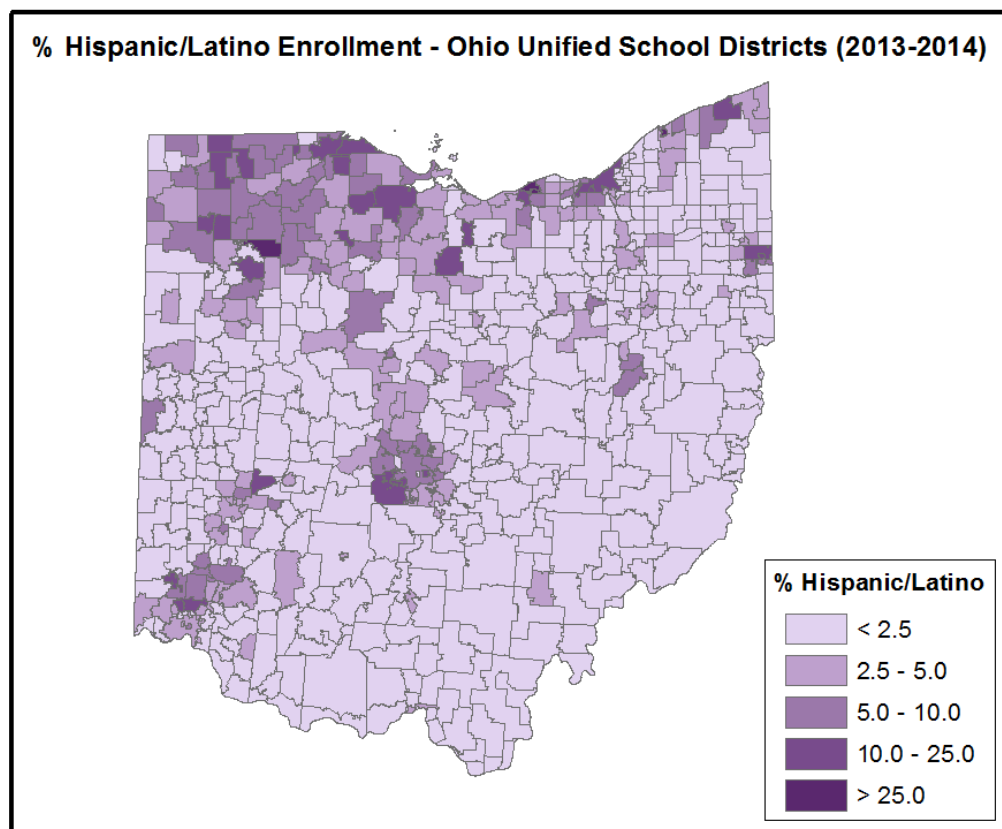


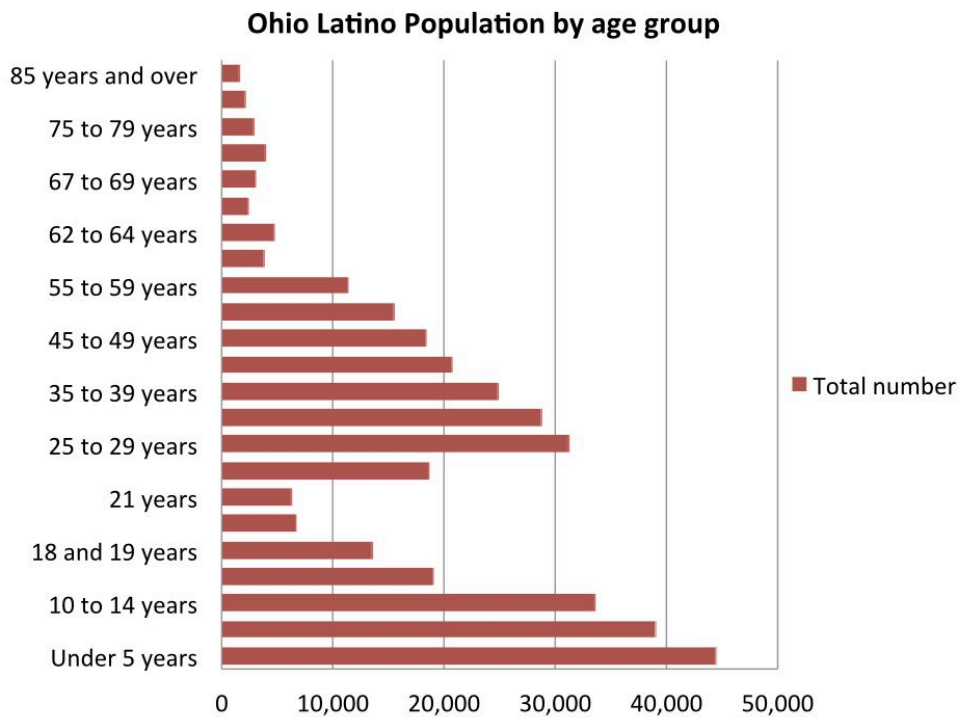
According to the 2010 Census of Population and Housing and the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey, the population of young Latin@s is surpassing all other groups in the state. Between 15 and 20 % of the Latinos are between the ages of 5 and 25. This is a considerably large number, since Latinos are only 3.4% of Ohio's population. Many of these young Latin@s have grown up here, some arrived as children, and others came to further their education. But what these statistics really tell us is that there's an exciting road ahead of us as leaders emerge out of this generation that knows Ohio well—some of them are homegrown Ohio Latin@s. The rapidly growing population of young Latinos also reveals the lack of resources to support students and parents in the [education system](#), K-12 and college, as evidenced by a recent [newspaper article](#). In January, 2015 the Columbus Dispatch wrote a story regarding a complaint filed by parents, stating that Columbus and five other central Ohio school districts fail to provide translation and interpreters services for Spanish-speaking parents with special-education students.

Through the work and research many of my students and I have done around Ohio, it is evident that there is a great need for bilingual resources in education, health care and law enforcement. The need for translation and interpreting services is one specific example of such needs. The issue of language and cultural maintenance, family values and identity is of high importance for

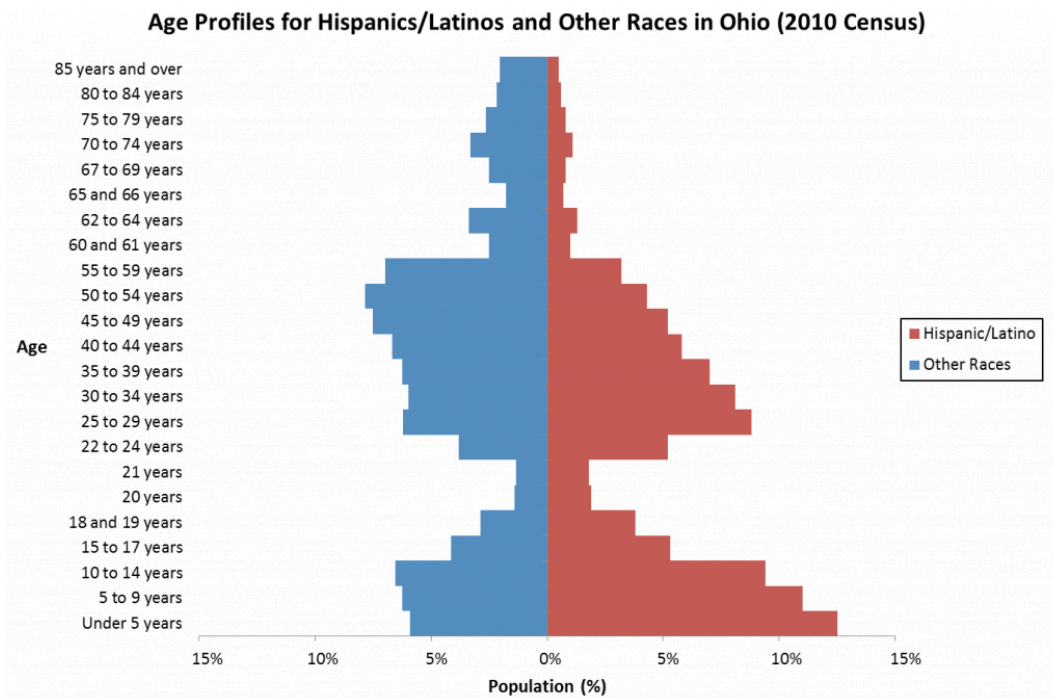
the young people interviewed in this chapter. As you listen and read about their journey, life lessons, and their stories of growing up, you'll discover the passion these young Latin@s have for education, and for learning and maintaining the Spanish language—although it has not been an easy task for most of them—as well as their genuine interest in their communities. From belonging to different Latin@ student groups, to creating a space within their universities to engage in dialogue about cultural issues, to investing their time to support the development of a central Latin@ community in Cleveland, OH; these young people are truly an inspiration.

*Hispanic/Latino enrollment in Ohio school districts*





Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Age by Race Data for Ohio, 2010. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed May 27, 2015)





# Carlos Lugo

**EF:** Bueno, Carlos, muchas gracias por haber aceptado ser entrevistado para este proyecto de narrativa oral, de latinos en Ohio. Entonces, quería preguntarte, primero, si me puedes dar tu nombre completo, por favor.

**CL:** Mi nombre es Carlos Alexander Lugo. Soy de Akron, Ohio.

**EF:** ¿Dónde naciste y dónde creciste tú?

**CL:** Naciste en Columbus, Ohio, durante el año un mil noventa nueve noventa dos. You know, 1992, lo siento, yo tengo problemas con las fechas. Y, pero, yo viví para mucha de mi vida en Akron, Ohio.

**EF:** ¿Desde qué edad?

**CL:** ¿De qué edad? Es muy complejo, a las grados a primera a la grada tercera en Akron. Y después de eso, mi familia, vivíamos en Celina, Ohio, en Mercer County. Es, es una pueblo, más pequeño pero es, es muy simpático, me gusta mucho y...

**EF:** Hay un lago cerca.

**CL:** Y el lago, ey, tú sabes lo. Sí, sí, el otro lado, o el otro lago en Ohio. Hay un Lake Erie, y Ground Lake Saint Marys. Sí, sí, sí. Y, y yo vivía allá para los grados del, fifth grade y sixth grade, y después de eso, vivamos en Akron un otra vez para todo mi colegio y mi segundo, mi escuela segundo.



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# Victoria Colín

**EF:** Muchas gracias Victoria por haber aceptado hacer esta entrevista. ¿Entonces primeramente me puedes decir tu nombre completo, por favor?

**VC:** Okay, pues me llamo Victoria Isabela Colín.

**EF:** ¿Cuál es tu herencia? ¿Dónde creciste, dónde naciste?

**VC:** Nací aquí en Columbus, actualmente, pero mi familia y yo nos fuimos a Chicago para crecer y después nos mudamos a St. Charles, Illinois. Y crecí ahí.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=94>

# Selina Pagán





**SP:** My name is Selina Marie Pagán.

**EF:** Okay, uh where were you born and where did you grow up?

**SP:** Well, I was born in Cleveland. Um, right on the East side of the Cleveland Clinic, on the East side, and I was raised here. I went through the Cleveland public school system and everything so, I'm Cleveland born and raised.

**EF:** Okay, and your heritage is...?

**SP:** Puerto Rican.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=96>

# Yoselin Melgar



**YM:** Me llamo Yoselin Carolina Melgar.

**EF:** Okay. ¿Dónde naciste y creciste tú?

**YM:** Nací en El Salvador en Ahuachapán, El Salvador, entre la frontera de Guatemala y El Salvador pero luego me vine para este país cuando tenía once años y ahorita estoy viviendo en Los Ángeles.

**EF:** ¿Cómo fue tu niñez eh..., y piensa tal vez...estoy preguntando de tu niñez desde en El Salvador pero también en Los Ángeles.

**YM:** Okay. Bueno fue, so mi experiencia es muy diferente porque en El Salvador yo vivía en una comunidad bien chiquita, bien pequeña, y luego todos nos conocíamos, y los niños, pues, usualmente juegan afuera en el patio, se van a, a los árboles; se van a jugar en los árboles. Jugamos bastantes deportes: bastante futbol y luego, y pues éramos libres, podíamos ir donde sea en la comunidad porque es relativamente bien...eh, pues todos nos conocemos, no hay mucho peligro. Y luego acá, cuando vine acá a Los Ángeles, es mucho más diferente porque hay, pues las comunidades casi no se conocen. Yo, fui a, ahorita estoy viviendo en South Central en Los Ángeles y luego pues, la comunidad no es muy segura y no hay muchos latinos so es no hay, no hay esta comunidad que, a la que estaba acostumbrada cuando estaba chiquita. Entonces, eh, me la tuve que pasar más en el apartamento; nunca salía a jugar afuera, ya no, ya no jugaba futbol, ya no vi, ya no estaba con otros niños, nada más uno pasaba adentro, viendo televisión, aprendiendo inglés. So, esa es la diferencia.



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<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=98>



# Erika Cuevas



**EC:** Soy Erika Cuevas [EF: Okay] Erika Danielle Cuevas.

**EF:** Okay. Hoy es viernes, catorce de noviembre de dos mil catorce. Um, ¿Dónde naciste y creciste tú?

**EC:** I was born in Stockton, California and that's where I grew up, too.

**EF:** Okay. ¿Cómo fue tu niñez?

**EC:** Um ... it was good; I actually, up until, I'd say six years old I grew up a lot with my grandparents and that's how I 'know' Spanish, but after that they moved back to Mexico and my grandma only came down for summers so I have like a limited knowledge of Spanish now that I'm older [EF: Okay] but I'm working with it. (risa)

**EF:** Okay, good, good. Um, so your mo-, your family's from Mexico? From where, exactly?

**EC:** Um, Michoacán y Veracruz.







One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:  
<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=100>

# Damaris Garduño



**EF:** Primeramente muchas gracias Damaris por haber aceptado, hacer esta entrevista. Y quería preguntar, primero, pedirte que nos dieras tu nombre completo por favor.

**DG:** Damaris Garduño.

**EF:** Ok. Y hoy es viernes, 14 de noviembre de 2014. ¿Dónde naciste, donde creciste tú?

**DG:** En San Diego California. Mis papas son de México, de Cuernavaca. Y estoy aquí en Ohio por cuatro años. Pues, tres años y medio. Es mi ultimo año de, del colegio.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:  
<https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/latinxstories/?p=102>



# Conclusion

Although I carefully selected the interviews in this book, they are only a sample of the wonderful stories found all across Ohio and the Midwest. The stories selected here point to the continual processes of cultural exchange and social transformation—particularly in the Latino population—being experienced in the Midwest as a result of our demographic growth, educational and professional interests, and economic opportunity. As you saw in the introduction, the maps offer a visual representation of this growth, but the stories in this book bring those numbers to life. They invite us to listen, engage, and consider how the Latino experience is not monolithic. In other words, we are many, but we are much more than a number.

*Latin@ Stories Across Ohio* provides a glimpse of the dynamics of change happening in the state of Ohio, a change that occurs at times with resistance and confrontation, and at times with acceptance and compassion. Some of the interviews here revealed that the same person that experienced rejection from one person was offered incredible support from another; such is humanity. Through these interviews, we are witnesses of how some have made it their mission to actively educate their communities, give voice to the undocumented immigrants—that work, live and love like all other citizens in our state—and engage in advocacy in matters of safety, education and politics. Their pursuit for social equity goes across barriers of immigration status, age or gender.

The issue of language is an important factor in identity formation. Participants in this project describe their relationship to growing up in bilingual and non-bilingual environments, and how keeping and maintaining language is an important part of staying in touch with their heritage. They do this without rejecting mainstream society. In some cases, the Spanish language can be a source of conflict and pain because Latin@s feel that being Latino or having a Latino name requires a certain mastery of their parents' or grandparents' home language. Yet, they find that they live and breathe Latino cultural traditions, foods and celebrations and confess that they are so fully immersed in it that it took them years to clearly identify what was part of that Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, etc., background and what was not. This too was my experience. I grew up in Mexico with a Salvadoran background, which only came out at Christmastime when my mother cooked Salvadoran style turkey and salpicón.

Storytelling is a tool for self-representation and survival, and through this project I seek to bring insight into our common interest more than what sets us apart. But many of the stories are still waiting to be heard. Many people have yet to be interviewed and given the opportunity to tell their stories, other stories will remain at family gatherings late at night, over a cup of coffee or some good wine, and when all the kids are asleep and grandparents reminisce about the good-old times. Perhaps I will be lucky enough to document those stories too. Perhaps my daughters will collect my stories in the future.

# References

## Interactive 1:

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Hispanic Or Latino Origin By Race, 2010. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Hispanic Or Latino By Race, 2000. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Hispanic Origin By Race, 1990. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Race by Spanish Origin Status, 1980. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Spanish Origin or Descent Indicator (15%), 1970. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

## Figure 1:

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2013 (5-Year Estimates). Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed Mar. 13, 2015).

## Interactive 1.3

Cisneros, Sandra, and Terry Ybanez. *Hairs =: Pelitos*. New York: Knopf, 1994. Print.

## Interactive 1.8

Fernandez, Maria Teresa "Mariposa." *Ode to the Diasporican*. Ilan Stavans and Edna Acosta-Belén. *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011.

## Interactive 1.11

Adapted from: <http://www.laprensa.hn/vivir/recetasdecocina/751068-410/baleada-sabor-hondureño-en-el-paladar-del-mundo>

## Interactive 1.12

Information and audios used with permission from the following website:

<http://elalliance.org/projects/languages-of-the-caribbean/garifuna/>

## Interactive 2.3

Song sample retrieved for educational purposes from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ9GnSDueS8>

## Interactive 2.7

"Santería." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. 2008. Encyclopedia.com. Retrieved May 16, 2015.

Song retrieved for educational purposes from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOLrj5MKq9E>

## Figure 6.1

### 1) School District Boundaries

U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division. TIGER Line Shapefile, 2010 Census Unified School District Shapefile. Accessed via the National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/downloadMap2010.aspx>.

### 2) Enrollment Data

Ohio Department of Education, Ohio School Report Cards. 2013-2014, Disaggregated District Data, Racial/Ethnic. Accessed via the Ohio School Report Cards Download Data page: <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/Download-Data.aspx>.

Figure 6.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Age by Race Data for Ohio, 2010. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed May 27, 2015).

Figure 6.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Age by Race Data for Ohio, 2010. Prepared by Social Explorer. (accessed May 27, 2015).