

The Latinos Project Oral Histories
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
with the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies

Olga Vega

Interview Date: January 22, 2003

Interviewer: Joseph Gonzales, Project Ethnographer

Interviewer

... Interview with Olga Vega. So I'm just going to go down this list like we talked about.

Vega

Okay.

Interviewer

What is your full name and your age?

Vega

Okay –

Interviewer

Or your date of birth?

Vega

All right. My full name is Olga Iris Vega Sanchez [**Vacarra**]. I was born in Puerto Rico.

I was born in September 13, 1966, and my whole family is Spanish.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

Okay?

Interviewer

How would you describe your work or, or what you do? Your profession?

Vega

My profession. I, I believe I help a lot of people to keep, keep themselves organized.

And basically and essentially that is that I, I can, like we have hard working people today

in America. Some have no time to clean out like their homes and they want to feel that they're, they're more normal and more together, and so they would hire me so that I can rearrange everything in their house, and feel that their lives are complete. So I, so I clean, and by doing, doing all these things, that they feel more organized and have, feel that they have accomplished a whole lot by having me in their life. So I basically change their life.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

I mean, it's almost seems simple, but it's wonderful. I have lot of compliments on that, yeah.

Interviewer

You sort of answered this, but where originally are you from in, in Puerto Rico?

Vega

Oh, I was born, born in **[Fahaldo]** and was raised in **[Luquillo]**. But, but it was a very comfortable, nice area. It's near the beach, and _____.

interrupted.)

Interviewer

So, when, when did you come to the United States? When did you and your family come?

Vega

Okay. I was nine years old. I gather that's, I was, it was in 1970, in the 70's, early 70's.

Interviewer

'75 maybe?

Vega

Yeah. I got here in the early 70's, and right away we, from Puerto Rico, we traveled to, I believe it was New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey? And that's where we landed, and then

my parents had friends in Cherry Hill and, and it, it's all a religious group, and, and there were questions and they decided to help my family. It's a family of twelve. Twelve children and though I say there's twelve children, that was a lot of children to bring from Puerto Rico all at once. It was a, a great trip. It was fun. It was fun for everyone. They, the airline thought that it was incredible, traveling, a family of twelve, and it was great. It was great. When we got here, _____, we were very happy. We kind of went to, like, it was that, like snowing and stuff, then we discovered it was very cold.

Interviewer

Like today.

Vega

Then we were not that, that, we were not that excited anymore. It's cold, to hang out in the cold. Schools were wonderful. That was a, a good change. The only change that I think it was very traumatic was, it was that they had to use bilingual people to try to communicate with us, and it, it felt strange for at, at least six to seven years, I, it felt very strange. You're in this country, you can't speak the language, and every time you say one word or _____, it was a sentence, and you could not understand it quite, but it's scary. It's scary –

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

To try even to, try to speak another language. I mean, you grow up, you're learning Spanish and how to speak Spanish and how to express yourself in Spanish, and totally English is like you have to be careful what you say and how you say it.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

And it's like very difficult. It's not an easy thing to do.

Interviewer

You can smoke if you want to. [UNCLEAR]

Vega

No, [UNCLEAR] Okay.

Interviewer

So what were the reasons for you and your family, for leaving Puerto Rico and coming over here?

Vega

Well, because we lived so close to the island, to the beach, and the hurricane seasons were like getting to be, they were closer and every, every year it was different, so my father and my mother decided, because they had a, like, a family to rear still and small children, and so we just decided, like, the United States is a better place to live – education-wise, work, and, like, you could do just about anything in America. It is, it's just a wonderful [thought], and to be able to do whatever you need to do in America, and if you have dreams, this is the place to come to make them come true.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

Just in America.

Interviewer

Right. I remember you telling me about the hurricanes and your father being very, very concerned or, or –

Vega

Yeah, he was very concerned. It's, the storm, Nina, it's always a lot of concern to many people because the storm Nino can really destroy Puerto Rico and every time it hits the island, it does, it leaves it like, you know, the vegetation and, and a lot of homes get to be

destroyed over and over and over. And people do, don't have the sources to build it up again, so my father was like, he was tired, between going through all those emotions and the, and, and the storms, so, and he also wanted to fulfill our dreams in the long run that he wanted us to be all these hard working people but with good education like doctors, nurses, lawyers. My brother wanted to be a, a musician, as in, and some of my brothers wanted to be artists, and other of my brothers wanted to be writers. I sadly say that we couldn't make it in all, fulfill all them dreams, but I, I haven't given up on those dreams.

Interviewer
[UNCLEAR]

Vega
Yeah.

Interviewer
So you already told me where your point of entry was, that was Newark, New Jersey?

Vega
Yeah, Newark, New Jersey, and with a, and that's where we began like going to school, and, well, it, it was, the main thing was to look for a school where they spoke Spanish, and we could continue our education without hurting us, like missing out on school. We were able to find people that would help us how to speak English, write English, and the schools were great in New Jersey. The schools are good in New Jersey, yes.

Interviewer
And, and you had mentioned, too, that the, the, the reason that they choose, chose New Jersey, Cherry Hill, was, was through a religious network?

Vega
Um-hm. Religious network and _____ because the language of Spanish was in the schools. They had actually Spanish teacher teach in Spanish – social studies, science – because people that come from out of the United States come to here, they have

no clue what English is all about. Not that you have taken all your subjects in Spanish. You could get the extra subjects for speech, writing and reading, and so those three things, I mean to my everyday life besides science social studies that, which I took in Spanish, that helped me become like somewhat part of, part of this world in America, and it was very difficult to, to understand the people, but eventually we got used to it. We did.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

And we were so eager to learn how to speak English because we wanted to, you know, be able to communicate, and we wanted friends.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

We were so young. We wanted friends, friends. And that's important for children that move from one country to another. They want to be able to have friends.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

You know? So that makes you feel stronger and that you can accomplish just about anything. Okay.

Interviewer

Let's see, that, we already answered that, how did you get to the U.S. You mentioned –

Vega

An airplane.

Interviewer

You all flew, all twelve of you.

Vega

Yeah, yes.

Interviewer

Or fourteen of you. So how long have you been in Philadelphia?

Vega

Here in Philadelphia, I have, I have been in South Philadelphia all together 21 years, yeah.

Interviewer

And so what brought you to Philadelphia?

Vega

What brought me here? It was, it was very difficult to get around New Jersey because if you're a non-driver, it, it's harder for, for transportation, how to get transportation from one place to another. It was very difficult for me, so I decided that South Philadelphia is, it's more, more of a place that if you don't have a car, you don't drive, you still can get wherever you want to go. You have all, all types of transportation that helps you along to get to places you want to go. I mean, you really don't have to drive.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

New Jersey, you really do.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

If you want to go to the store, you have to walk like a mile to, just to get to a decent store.

Interviewer

Okay. Well, you just told me about South Philadelphia, but we've talked about your earlier experiences in coming to Philadelphia, and –

Vega

Yeah. Yes, that's true.

Interviewer

And you were going to, can you talk a little bit about those?

Vega

Okay. My, my future seemed very bright in New Jersey. I was able to, to juggle all these languages at the same time because social studies, science and English and all that stuff, it's very complex. I loved it. The challenge was great. I seen a bright future in, ahead of time, not only I could speak Spanish and read it and write it, I was able to learn another new language to read and speak and write it again. Then again, I felt special. I felt good about myself, and I said, with something like this, it's great. So, everyone's future seems very wonderful, good. Along the [run], I was like twelve years old, and my parents decided after 25 years that they were together, they decided to get a divorce, and essentially that broke the whole family apart. Everybody was angry. Everybody was in big denial. So my sadness in to say this, the older children in my siblings and my family were sent to colleges. As for the younger girls, we're sent, my mother didn't want it, the responsibility in raising six more children, so basically she just sent us to different homes, and we lived with different people. Our education stopped. We were used like – I hate to say this word – like slaves, but we, we were sent to these homes. And in these homes, you, you couldn't go to school. You had to stay there and clean and cook until like the people in the house come in, come home and expect of you have, to, to have the house clean and all that, so I became like the servant at the age of 13. I couldn't take it anymore, so I tried to live with one of my older sisters, and they were like building their new relationship with their husbands, and they just didn't want part of the young children. My mom didn't want part of us, either, so the struggle began there. I, I, I lived

in the streets for at least six months, visiting a few friends in North Philadelphia that I, you know, just older people that, they, they didn't mind for me to take a shower, get changed and eat something and sleep. The next day I didn't know what was going to happen. Along the way, I had found a, a, a guy who said, "If you come and live with me, I live," you know, "I live with my parents, and you can, like, you can come and live with us, and you have your own. And you can go to school if you want to." Well, Jose, I was thrilled. I said, "Oh! No more sleeping in the streets, and, and no more, you know, asking people for food or whatnot." So I began, like, say, "Okay. I'm, I'm all there with you guys." And I, and I did. And, and then again, I didn't go anywhere. I lived there for two years with them. I had my first child with, with a guy and he went to jail. And then I end up alone with the child. And then –

Interviewer

How old were you at this time?

Vega

And, fifteen.

Interviewer

Fifteen.

Vega

Fifteen. And then my mother-in-law didn't want me there, or my father-in-law, once he was locked up. And, so it was time for me to go on my own once again, and have the baby somewhere, and find a place. Eventually I had to find a place to live on my own, and _____ my own, which I did. It wasn't easy, but I found a place on, in North Philadelphia, in York and Front Street. There were small apartments there, actually, essentially, they were like rooms, but with a little kitchen and small bathroom, and no, hardly any room, but it was okay because at least I felt secure there, and the bills

were included with the rent, so \$100 a month, it wasn't so hard for me, even though I was only fifteen years old, and I wasn't supposed to go, be going through all this, I did it. Somehow, I did it. It was good. It was good, it, I held, I held on, and I prayed a lot that I can get through this without getting hurt. How to come out of North Philadelphia was even more of a challenge. I used to get robbed in my apartment, so it wasn't like easy to come out and, and venture where I can get a job or something because it was very difficult to leave my apartment. I would get robbed. Every time I left apartment, I got robbed. So the only thing I could do was to like go on welfare and pleaded the, the welfare people to help me, like, you know, get food stamps and cash and medical for my daughter and I. Nobody wanted to help. I wasn't old enough to collect welfare or sign. I mean, I'm not.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

Essentially, in real life, I was just a child having a child and living on my own. My mom moved a lot around and if I needed help from her, she wasn't _____ anyway. Every time someone gave her an address where she was, I would look for her in North Philadelphia, and she was never in those addresses, so I gave up. I started working, a small bodega on Fifth and, on Fifth and Venango, there was a bodega, and I, I worked there part-time, and my friends would watch the baby for me while I worked part-time, and I saved my money. I bought the things for my daughter, but not for myself. Just things that I needed for her and save as much as I could. Along the way, I met my husband, which I, which I got to live with him for eleven years. I got out of North Philadelphia. I got to move into South Philadelphia, and it was difficult as well because I

was so young, and I thought I had found the right man for me and that I was, which is, I felt relief. I thought I was going to be protected all the way. And, and it seems like after eleven years, he almost filled the role that all I could do is like raise children and, and become a housewife and house duties all the time, which I was uncomfortable with that because I had a dream when I came here to the United States, I wanted to be a doctor, and I almost lost the hope. But I didn't. I, I keep, I keep hoping that, that once my children are grown up, I can get to go on to college and get to become a doctor after, life has been very rough for me, but it has taught me a lot of lessons in many different ways, and for some people, they would have totally given up, but I, I, I have a dream that some day I'm going to become this wonderful person, and I'll be able to help people. Just like when I first came into the United States, I always wanted to be this doctor, that I would be able to help the community. It was, it's, it's just a dream. It's not going to die.

Interviewer

Let's see. Getting back to the more –

Vega

The more –

Interviewer

Simple questions.

Vega

Okay.

Interviewer

What kind of ties do you maintain with Puerto Rico? With your home, you know, or however. With your family or, or at home there in Puerto Rico?

Vega

Well, I can truly tell you I miss the beach. It, like, I love the sea. I love the smell, I love, I love the sun. I, I, I miss, I mean, the, being Spanish, I miss the food, I missed the, the

dinners we used to have on Sundays. I, I miss a lot of things. But mainly, I really our food, which is hard to get here in Philadelphia and to try to put one of the meals together, it takes a lot of searching in, you know, through Center City and other parts of the City that might send, sell Spanish food. But I, I, I just, I just miss the family values that we used to have. We were like such a strong family. We went to church together, parties were like, birthdays and anniversaries were very important to us, and we don't do any of it anymore, even during the Holidays, I'm very sad to say that we don't even gather anymore with my very own family to celebrate the Christmas, the Thanksgiving, and it's sad. But I, I, I do teach my children the value of what is to have a family and to hold onto each other's dream, and, and dreams can always come true, you know? But I do miss Puerto Rico. I, I miss it.

Interviewer

How, how do you stay connected with Puerto, Puerto Rico? I know you've been back.

Vega

Well, I travel every five years. I, I go visit my island. It makes me feel strong, and I wished that by now I would have my career, because I could really retire in Puerto Rico. I mean, someone with an education and you, you, you can live very nicely in Puerto Rico, yeah. But that was my goal, you know? If I, if I become this doctor, I can always go back to Puerto Rico and help aid the, the people in Puerto Rico which _____ not many doctors in Puerto Rico as well as here, but if, if one of the dreams come true, it can come true and it would be like wonderful, yeah, whether you can practice here or, or Puerto Rico. And one of my old favorite dreams is that if I stay here in the United States, I would love to build a Spanish restaurant here, and, and the, the, the, just show people how we live and how we eat, and, and it's, for some parties, it can be healthy for people.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

But becoming a chef is one of my major dreams to, that I would like to have, like, in life.

You know, become a chef, Spanish.

Interviewer

Let's see. I think the next question you've answered. I mean the question is what are the

things you miss most, and I think you –

Vega

Yeah.

Interviewer

Talked about those –

Vega

I miss Puerto Rico. The sun –

Interviewer

Puerto Rico, the family values –

Vega

La playa. The family, the food, the family values, yes. I miss it all. I miss my

grandparents.

Interviewer

What, what kind of things do you do, do you and your family do, to stay in touch with

Puerto Rico or your culture?

Vega

Well, my grandparents passed away, and the only farm we have left is, is in

[**Tancaguas**], Puerto Rico, and my cousin runs it. We don't have horses anymore. It's

just a big old house and a lot of land that nobody has touched – I mean, like _____

and cultivate and all that. It, it's [**older**]. I believe that the family is like fading away,

like totally from where I came from, it's almost like fading away, and I'm scared because

my children need that, need that sense of where they come from and whether it's still there or not. So, but hopefully, my cousin will be able to keep the farm and then maybe when my children grow up, and if they take interest, they can always run the farm.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

You can go back and run the farm and buy horses and cattle, whatever they want, they would like to do again. But it's a lot of fruits, it's a lot of fruits and vegetables growing around, yeah, that's, pretty much, yeah.

Interviewer

Olga, what are the, the kinds of things you do in, in your home with your children to maintain your Puerto Rican identity or the Spanish, you know, identity and culture?

Vega

I think when you say Spanish culture is teaching, number one thing is to honor your parents and respect your parents at all time or costs no matter what's happening. Two, to be good to one another and love one another is very important in, as, as, as a Spanish, inside in my heart, I grew up with a, a lot of respect for the elderly and respect for your parents. We, I continue to tell them stories as I grew up in Puerto Rico, how I loved the farming, and it's a wonderful, wonderful thing for your soul. Farming is good. But not all your life, you don't want to grow up and say, "Hey, I want to be a farmer." Some of us would like to other, you know, we, we have other dreams, some of them. So we, we listen to a lot of Spanish music, we still eat our rice and beans. We still stay in touch with those things, and we still eat Spanish food. People love our yellow rice and especially when I cook it like for parties and birthdays. They, the first thing they ask if I'm going to be having the yellow rice and the pig.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

We still, we still do those. Eating is our, it's, it's our peace of mind, to be able to sit down with the family and talk about each other's problems or whatever argument we have for that night, that's what's keeping me as, as in a Spanish woman, very strong. That keeps me very strong, to be able to communicate with children, and they can communicate with me as well. I mean, and being honest with one another is the main thing. I mean, being very honest. We don't sugarcoat things, and we don't hide things from each other. We like to be out open and explain what is going on, how you feel at the moment, love to talk and talk about problems, how to, and how to solve them. And how to solve them. And it's, it's a good thing. As, when my children were growing up, they had, they didn't want no part of my, my Spanish. I used to speak in Spanish around the house, and they did not honor that, so I stopped because they told me, "Mom, we live in America. That means it's all English. We don't need Spanish." But now that they are older and after twenty years of my experience in Philadelphia or New Jersey, for twenty years, it's, they have changed dramatically because everybody had tried to forget where you came, like, where we came from, and we just, my children say, "We're Americans," and I said, "But you have to understand you're also Spanish. You're a Spanish-American, and you, you have to honor that. There's nothing wrong with it." Sometimes they're embarrassed.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

But other times, they're proud of being Spanish. They are able to understand what you're saying to them, but they won't speak back to you in Spanish. They'll answer you back, you know, in English, but they're kind of like getting into the, the need, that they need to speak Spanish now. They, they, they're feeling the need.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

So that makes me feel better, and I, I thought that I, in the long run, I was going to lose my whole heritage. I thought I was just going to be an American, and that's, but not say that being Spanish, that didn't matter anymore. That almost died. That almost, almost died inside of me, and, with my family, but, well you know what? I was wrong. It's there, and now they want to learn Spanish. They want to learn how to speak and write. They understand it. They can, they can understand where you're coming from, but they want to go forward and learn more, which that makes me proud.

Interviewer

Good.

Vega

Because I thought I lost them there for a moment. After twenty years –

Interviewer

Sure.

Vega

I really thought I lost them all and say, "Oh, that's, that's it. I'm just going to be Spanish, and the rest of my children are just going to say, 'Oh, no. I'm 100% English.'"

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

"Don't talk to me in Spanish."

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

But they're coming around. It, it's good. They're coming around, which I'm proud of them.

Interviewer

In what ways do you see, you've kind of touched on that, but personally, having moved away from your culture, in, in, in, in adapting to your life here in, in Philadelphia, or in the U.S.?

Vega

No, that's a negative. That's, oh, it doesn't matter what we do, and how well we can get adapted to another country and their customs, deep inside you're still, you're that Spanish person. To prove it to you, all you have to do is put some – [END OF SIDE A]

Interviewer

Let's see. What is your favorite Holiday to observe?

Vega

My favorite holiday. Well, that's a good question.

Interviewer

If you have one.

Vega

My favorite holiday. I, I like, I like the, the, the – sorry. I like, I like the holiday where, I like the Christopher Columbus holiday. I like, I know there is a few more that we used to celebrate. It's, it's not an awareness in, among the Spanish community, but some of us, we are aware, and I am, my favorite holidays will be like when we were celebrating Columbus Day and we have a day where we commemorate our, Puerto Rico, the Spanish people, and then I, I love Thanksgiving, and I love Christmas, and New Year's Eve.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

Those are my three favorites. New Year's Eve is one of my, one of my favorites, you know? Because it is a wonderful saying that next year can be a better year, and you can always make new resolutions, and, you know, basically you can start all over again, and so, you know, for a little bit to say, "You can begin all over again – New Year." I love New Year's Eve. It's a, it's a, it's a chance for me to become stronger and better and hopefully that I have learned enough that year and that the following year coming around the corner, it's like going to be even better.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

Yeah, I love that. I love the _____. I just don't like the Mummers and all that. I love that, the fact that it's a new year, and you can begin again and try one more time.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

And make things better.

Interviewer

Better. That's good. So do you consider Philadelphia home?

Vega

Um-hm.

Interviewer

Yeah?

Vega

South Philadelphia home? Yes.

Interviewer

When did, when did you start to feel that way? Like _____?

Vega

In my early 20's. My early 20's, that's when I was like, had a job and I went to college for a few years and I just took general studies, just to see what it felt like to be in college, and it was not one of the most famous colleges. A community college won't do. For someone that I can, like, couldn't finish high school, I couldn't get things done. I was out of school for at least, let's see. I stopped going to school when I was 13. I had no home by then, and I was in my early, early 20's I could be a little bit, yeah, and I tried to, I signed up to go to college for general studies, I took a test and they accepted me, and I was in. It was good. I got, I got to meet a few professors who were very inspiring. I was very afraid. I thought I had, I didn't know anything. I said, "Oh my God. They're going to give me a test, and I'm not, not even going to pass them." But to my surprise, I passed their test, and I got to, almost got to go to English 101.

Interviewer

All right.

Vega

And that's good.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Vega

I mean, for someone who didn't go to school.

Interviewer

Yeah, that's –

Vega

I mean, like, finish high school. I went to school, studied, and I tried my best, and I had beautiful hopes and dreams, which they're not, they're still there.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Vega

I mean, I'm holding onto them.

Interviewer

So do you, are you planning to stay in Philadelphia as far as you can see?

Vega

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I wanted to visit, like, like, go to Drexel or, or Temple University. I like Drexel, and St. Joseph, as well. I like that college as well, but I see what the school, what they'll hold for me in the future and whether I'm able to attend in classes again and talk to me in about 20 years. I'll let you know.

Interviewer

Hopefully not that long.

Vega

Yes. You never know.

Interviewer

How, how would you describe yourself in the U.S. or, in other words, how, what do you consider yourself?

Vega

Oh.

Interviewer

If you tell people, "I am -"

Vega

A hard working woman.

Interviewer

No, no, no.

Vega

A single mother. (laugh)

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

A single mother, hard-working mom. Very caring. I'm very caring. When it comes to judging you, I'm, I can be, I can be strictly, but nice about it. I don't hide anything. I'm a wonderful person. I'm a wonderful human being, and in spite of all the stuff I've been through, I'm still the same Olga when I first came into America. With, with a lot of heartaches that I've gone through, I am even amazed that I'm, like, keeping myself together and have still dreams for me and my children.

Interviewer

How about in terms of like when you tell people your ethnic or you know –

Vega

Spanish. All of, there are many, they think I'm beautiful and they think, like, they love the way I speak. They just love that, yeah. They just love that.

Interviewer

So why, why do you choose Spanish instead of like Hispanic or Latino or, you know, Boriqua? Why, why do you choose Spanish?

Vega

Spanish, they, they all have different meaning for many different people. It, it just, at many levels, it changes everything. Spanish is a culture where everybody had lived to learn how to respect, and we know just about everything about them. When you say Puerto Rican, when you say any other types of being Spanish, you're taking away, to me, when you're not saying, simply that you're Spanish, and you say you're Puerto Rican, you're taking away credit from yourself. That, saying that I'm Puerto Rican and many other different things, it, it's minimized. It takes away from your pride.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

Like if, if you just say I'm just simply Spanish, that that means, that means everything. That means that you have the style. That means that you have the knowledge. That means that you have an education and, and a pride within you, you know? And let's get it correct. Spanish.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

If you would start giving me nicknames besides being Puerto Rican and all that, it, it's, it's very offensive.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

For many people, I mean, it's many different things. It, it can even mean you're coming, you're, you're from the ghetto –

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

And you have no education. I feel better if I say I'm Spanish, or even soul French.

Interviewer

Right. So you embrace that as pride?

Vega

Yeah. Oh yes, absolutely. It's very important to me. It's very important to me. And I can argue all night along about it, too.

Interviewer

Sure. Well, then, what does, I think you answered this in many ways –

Vega

Okay.

Interviewer

But I'll ask you.

Vega

Oh, sure.

Interviewer

And what does being Spanish mean to you?

Vega

Spanish?

Interviewer

Or what does it, what does it, yeah. What does it mean to you, being Spanish? I think you've said things –

Vega

Yeah, well, it's, it's like, Spanish. It's a wonderful word, and it has so many meanings, and if we, if we look into culture, and what is it that we do? We're, we're, we're like hard-working people, not only we, we have become from being and coming from farmers to doctors and many new different things, we are great artists. We're, we love poetry, and we love singing, and what a challenge that is, from Spanish songs, turning them into English so, because people want to know what we're talking about, and that's a wonderful breakthrough. That we are able to communicate with other people about our lifestyles and how we can express ourselves, and express, how do we express, the Spanish people express themselves within the music, the food, the culture and their art. And, and not, don't forget the poetry that we have out there, which is great.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

And it's very, it can help heal people, healing. It's a good aid for people if they, like, _____ into it and, and, and start listening to music and poetry and the artwork is even better because you can get lost in, in all them colors, and we cannot even forget how the beautiful sea is and all the wonderful things that we got there and, like, we can catch,

catch for the day and you can sit down and eat this wonderful seafood. We can't escape from that.

Interviewer

Right. That's an important part.

Vega

Oh, the wonderful seafood.

Interviewer

How do you feel similar or different to other Latinos that maybe have different backgrounds?

Vega

How do I feel different?

Interviewer

Yeah, like say from Peruvians or Mexicanos? Or do you feel different from, from people that, who are Spanish or Latino but maybe come from different counties?

Vega

Part of the country? Do I feel different? Am I supposed to feel different, or?

Interviewer

No. If you feel different, or –

Vega

Yes I do.

Interviewer

Do you see differences?

Vega

Yeah. I, I feel free. Freedom, I, I felt freedom all the way from my country. I felt the freedom because we do have freedom. We don't need a passport to come into the United States, and right away, get, get involved with the community and get a job and get a driver's license. What, what a wonderful freedom.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

We don't need to pay for a Visa. We don't need to do any of, any of those sorts of things. We're part of the United States, and we are so proud of it that I cannot believe how to describe it to you, how that Puerto Rico, it almost seems like the shield of the United States. I, I believe that _____ Puerto Rico, and which, which many other part of the world will help the United States, but even so Puerto Rico, that is far important to the United States.

Interviewer

Right. Okay.

Vega

Yes, and we are like really proud of that. Yes, yes.

Interviewer

What do you feel Latinos have to offer Philadelphia or, as, as a group or as a people? As a community?

Vega

What do we have to offer? Our new ideas. We can bring a little bit, a little bit of our culture into their community and for them to be aware that we're just alike, just like them, but a, a few, our _____ a little bit different, but our, but we're the same way. We feel proud and we feel that we have freedom, and that's the number one in the, in the United States, that you cannot even stop thinking about it, how much freedom that we have, and some of us don't appreciate it and take it for granted. As for me, I love it. We have freedoms. We do whatever we want, and we can be whatever we want to be. There is no such thing stopping us unless you stop yourself and not, not blaming those for _____. But becoming doctors, and, and, and becoming these successful lawyers and counselors, teachers. I believe that we can teach people how to speak Spanish and how to live, live like we live. We're not different from

them. We only speak another language and maybe we eat a little bit slightly different, but we, the Spanish community, loves American food, and, and, and vice-versa, the American people would like to eat something, I think they do like Spanish food, yeah. So, you know, we can exchange this, and this is what we have to offer. Spanish dancing, food, art, poetry, and many other things, yeah.

Interviewer

What would you like people to know, I mean, this is a very similar question, about your community?

Vega

What was that again?

Interviewer

What would you like people who are not familiar with Latinos or the Latino community, to know about our community?

Vega

Uh-huh. To feel free, get to, get to know, we need to, we need to feel free in learning how to help one another. We need to help one another, and we also need to open our minds and offer a lot of aid out there because there is not, we're not helping one another, and I think the United States can do better if we start giving out a hand in helping one another, whether it's financially, financially, physically, and as well mentally. If we are there for one another and helping one another, I think we'll do better. Trying to understand each other's culture, it, it is simple, because it's not that different, except that the language is in the middle.

Interviewer

Right. Um-hm.

Vega

That's the only thing that's stopping everybody. The language.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

And being afraid of facing something.

Interviewer

What, what do you see are the greatest challenges facing the Latino community in

Philadelphia?

Vega

Oh, challenges.

Interviewer

Either from within or from outside?

Vega

Trust.

Interviewer

Trust?

Vega

Yeah. Trust, trusting and being honest with one another is the biggest challenge. Like we were talking about one day that we were saying, we don't like asking for help.

Whether in Spanish or in many other ways, but what, we should, because that could make the, if, if we do, for instance, say, I would love to own a restaurant, and I would love to become a chef, so if you get involved with a bank and you ask them, you ask them for your help and with a goal, you need, you set, you want to set some goals out there. You want to be noticed. You want to be straightforward and, and, and come out and say it, and let's not be afraid about it. Okay, what can you do? Fail and it doesn't work? Okay, well, we'll try something else. But I think the biggest challenge is for people to go out there and try something new.

Interviewer

Oh, okay.

Vega

Different and make a change in, in their lives and many other people. As for me, I, I would love to make the change, and it's very difficult for me to say, "Let's own this restaurant, and I can help other people, like, come and help with me." I will be helping other people how to work, how to invest, and right now, in the Spanish community, they don't know how to invest their money, and, and, and how to become better, okay?

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

So that's a big challenge – how to change and how to learn how to invest and, and do different things. Take a chance and make things different because, then again, we don't like taking hand, a helping hand. "Oh, no. We can do it on our own." No. This is the challenge. Learning how to ask for things and make it, make a change, a difference.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

Making things better for yourself and your children and the siblings coming along.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

Because, you know, our families are getting bigger and bigger. It doesn't get smaller, it gets bigger. We came here, when my family came here, like my parents, and we were just fourteen of us, and, and it's been 21 years, and then, like 50. We're like maybe 56 or 57 without counting the other grandchildren I don't know about, but we're a big family after 20 years.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

That's a huge number.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Vega

So we need to make a difference. We, we need to go out there and, and start asking and start, start educating ourselves, and that's a big challenge, educating our children. That's a huge challenge. But if we keep on praying and telling them this stuff over and over that we must graduate high school, we must learn how to speak English, how to get in and out of things, and, and start asking the government for different things that we need. And we need to keep, for us to help us, we cannot like stop in time. We need to change our old ways, and something new and different.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

That's the reason we have different seasons of the year, you know? Summer, spring, and, and everything has to end, and new things have to begin.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

And I think that's our biggest challenge, how to make Spanish people change a little bit from what they are to become better people. Learn how to express themselves in a, in a, in an American way. We cannot be Spanish-Spanish. We have to be American.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

That's their greatest challenge. How to become an American.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

All right? You are, we all get caught up in certain cultures, and we have to break that, because all of it is wrong. Things are better, we are more modern today. We have to learn different things, and that change is, is positive. It's not negative. It's good. It's good for the community.

Interviewer

It's almost like, "Ooh, we have to learn to grow with this."

Vega

The community itself.

Interviewer

We have to learn how to grow –

Vega

Yeah.

Interviewer

With these changes, with the new things that we encounter.

Vega

Um-hm. It's okay. It's okay to change. It's okay. You don't have to marry by the time you're 17. You don't have to marry the man Mom said that by the time you're 18, you have to marry him. You don't have to do that anymore. You're in America. Freedom is great, wonderful. You know, it's like, go to colleges. Or you don't have to grow up as a female fearing that you have to like marry this guy from Santo Domingo because that was an arranged marriage. You don't have to, you know, that's, I can't express that enough. That all them cultures are like out of the way. You live in America, like the American people does. You have your freedom. You can speak your mind and, and if you don't that you can, even your parents are doing the greatest job with you, you can divorce them, you know?

Interviewer

Yeah.

Vega

And go somewhere, some other place and, you know, and become what you want to be.

Because sometimes the culture can, you know, send you, set you back, and, you know,

you feel like you're lost in time, like nothing ever changed.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

You know? Like if something, even for the Latinos, if something is not going right in

their life, they can make that change. But it's up to them.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

You know? Whether it's a bad marriage, whether bad school, and if you think that you don't feel safe there anymore, go pick out another school. Don't ever feel that everything

ends right there, or that you have no way out. There is always a way out. This is

America, the land of the freedom, and we cannot say that enough. And you have to learn

that, to speak their mind. Go look, search for their goals. Not to get stuck in that thing

that you're going to get out of school, stay home until you're 21, try to look for a girl to

support them or a man to support them, none of that. None of that.

Interviewer

I don't know, this, I don't know if you have anything else you want to say to this

question, but it's what are your greatest, what have been your greatest struggles? I mean,

you've talked about some of the challenges in your life. I don't know if you have

anything to add.

Vega

Besides of learning how to speak English and how to express myself and how to use proper words for certain things and certain sentences, and it's very challenging, very difficult, I'm learning that one word can have many meanings, so we have to be careful. The, right now, when we speak of a struggle, a struggle can vary in many different roles. This problem. If you are a single person, I wouldn't have struggled as bad. I would have, I believe I had, like, made it through and _____ been great, but I struggle with jobs. My struggle is how to maintain a good job. Send my children on time, always, never ever, I never want them to be failures. I feel like I've been a failure in all my life because of the way, I, I mean, my situation. I want them to feel free, I want them to learn as much as they can, and before they leave home, I want to be able, them, to experience how to deal with people, how to get jobs, and the main thing, that they go to college and, and fulfill those dreams that they have. We all do, have dreams to fulfill in the future, and if you believe in them, you can, you can do it. But my biggest struggle is to keep that faith and, and to keep my, myself, like, in that line, in that concept of, that we're going to do this, no matter what. Whether the house gets flooded, whether we lose the car, whether we have, we don't have the sunshine for a couple of days, we've still got to do this, and set a goal that we're going to finish what we started. It doesn't matter how long it takes, as long as you can get to finish it, and say, "Hey, I accomplished this." It doesn't matter what age we are. It won't matter. It's just keeping that faith, that's the struggle.

Interviewer

Well let me ask you this. Then what do you feel have, have been your most, your proudest, your triumphs, or your proudest moments or successes then?

Vega

Leaving my husband behind. That was a personal joke.

Interviewer

Yeah. I know it was. But it can be very empowering.

Vega

Made me feel good that I'm able to support my children all by my own and, that I'm able to support my children financially and, and I support them in, in any way I can. It's, it's my greatest accomplishment that I began doing something, I didn't, I had no clue I was doing so, that becoming a parent and raising children is a great challenge, but when he was, when I, I, now that I'm alone and be able to juggle all this, the job, the children, their education and in keeping, financially keeping myself from drowning, it's a good, big challenge.

Interviewer

But at the same time, your –

Vega

It makes me so strong.

Interviewer

Success. Yeah.

Vega

Very successful. It would have been even greater that, that when I'm done with them, I get to go to school. That's one of my, my greatest dream, and be able to become what I always wanted to have, and who knows? Maybe I'll have my restaurant and, as well, become a doctor. I don't have nothing else to do after that. Then I'm going to be, want to be busy.

Interviewer

Right, even you, you can conquer the world. Set out to –

Vega

I, I, love reading. I think it, it takes a little bit of a science, a scientist to tell you what to do, but it's basically all fall in places in time, and if you really want it, and you go out there and search for it, you'll find it. I believe so, yeah.

Interviewer

Let me ask you, have you ever felt alienation or discrimination because you are Latina or, or, or Spanish in, in, in Philadelphia? Or even in Jersey when you were young?

Vega

That's a good question. It's, it, it, it varies depending. It depends who you deal with. Some people are just really nice, other people are just nasty, simply nasty, but discrimination job-wise? Sometimes I feel, I feel that I have been discriminated because, maybe they all, all they thought about and maybe all I spoke with Spanish, and, okay, I was able to get a way to fill out an application in English so I can, but yeah, I have felt like that. No one would, no one would hire me for some reason. It always has been the wrong reason. Just give me a job, I'm there, and, and it's all good, but I notice that if you're Spanish and you go out there and get a job, the best thing to do is not tell your employee that you have these children.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

They really don't hire you.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

Having children and being a single mother –

Interviewer

Being a single mother.

Vega

And then trying to get a job, they don't want you.

Interviewer

Right.

Vega

Not only the one discrimination of being Spanish, being a mother. I almost feel like it –

Interviewer

Double.

Vega

Um-hm, um-hm. You just think about it.

Interviewer

Yeah.

Vega

And that's how I felt sometimes because I'm a mom, so I'm a single, you know, a single mom. It's like, it's bad. But it shouldn't be that way. It, it takes a lot of courage to be a single parent, whether you're a male or female, to become a single parent, it's, it's the hardest thing to do, and you must do what you have to do, you know? If, if being single, and makes you feel safe, and it makes your children safe, and you know you're safe, then everything is good. It doesn't matter whether we don't have a leather coat every year, but we're safe, and we're happy, and that's what matters, and that's one thing about Spanish people. I can say that, that as long as they are fed and, and dressed well and clean and that we can have an honest living, we're good. We don't ask for much. We don't ask for much.

Interviewer

Are there specific people or organizations that have helped you or your family adjust to living in the, in Philadelphia, or the U.S.? Either from your childhood or, you know, more recently?

Vega

Books comfort me.

Interviewer

Books?

Vega

Yeah, books. And programs, the Spanish programs on TV that come from

_____ and how me how to live, but mainly books and the law. That taught me that it's totally freedom. It is a, a decent way of living, and you don't have to live in fear. You, you have a freedom here, not just a sense of saying your freedom, but you, inside in your heart, you feel free and secure, and that's all that any human being asks for.

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

And you feel that you can better work and live if the medical is there for you and you can see your doctor and stay healthy, and as long as you're healthy and can go to work every day, I'll say I believe we're okay and we're happy.

Interviewer

Sure.

Vega

Yeah, and we are able to bring money home so that we can pay the bills and the rent and food, and we, we just basically are thankful for that. We are thankful from, from being a farmer to changing into a new, different lifestyle is great. It's great, you know?

Interviewer

Okay.

Vega

You don't want to grow up all your life thinking that you have to raise, you know, horses or cattle or donkeys or thinking of fruits and vegetables to sell where you can live on the

land. Just come here, it's different. It's totally different. There is nothing wrong with being a farmer, but we also have needs.

Interviewer

Right. Let me ask you this because [END OF SIDE B] Okay, so you mentioned schools. Were there any government agencies or, or churches that, that you can think along the way that, that helped your family? Or helped you?

Vega

My parents sold most of the land, so we didn't need financial aid from, and when we got here into the United States, for myself, in my early 20's, I can say that welfare. There was a time I was on welfare, and this is how I came to go to college because they had a program for the Spanish people, and it was called, well, and it was not just for my, for the Spanish people. It was as well for many other cultures that they _____ college and become better people so we can get better jobs and we didn't have to depend on welfare, and step-up programs, just like I'm saying, a step-up program, didn't have the financial aid for those single parents that qualified for, for it, so, they, they financially helped us, like, get ahead, yes. But, they had daycare centers, which is very important for a single parent to try to juggle work and at the same time school and their children. It is a very, it's a hard thing to do, but it is possible, and you can do them all. I got tired.

Interviewer

Sure.

Vega

I got a little bit older, and I got tired, and step-up program was cut out from, you know, the government that's a, more funding, but if they can come up with those funds again, they are a great help for single parents that you can push them towards college and they can have some type of degree in the long run, and they can have better jobs. Better jobs

create more jobs. More jobs create more money. More money creates more things. You know, it just, it creates, one thing, one things helps another. If we don't make that change in, in, in America, we are going to be totally broke. And like, right now, we're like desperate for work and, and more education, but financially, our financial state, and it all begins with the, and then once again, they're like hold onto those dreams. I mean, we can make some money. From what we make _____, with that money we have to spend wisely. And, you know, we have to know what we're going to like replace this money, we're going to put it and making sure that we have money for the future when we get older. I mean, we have to think about retirement funds and, and the Spanish community needs to learn all these _____, needs to learn how to get a job, from getting a job to keep a job, and how to finance their, you know, their money into the, I want to say that particular word – invest our money in, in things that are going to help us in the –

Interviewer

For security and growth.

Vega

In our, and growth, and when we get older, we have money to be able to, for ourselves when we get older. Retirement money. It's important.

Interviewer

Right. And even –

Vega

And a place to live.

Interviewer

To be able to pass down –

Vega

To your children –

Interviewer

To your children, if possible.

Vega

Children and grandchildren. If you've got grandchildren, and, and you want to keep that positive attitude in, in, in that, so I am proud being Spanish and, and, and be able to speak two, two languages. It is wonderful. I don't misuse it, and I do not, you know, I just use when I need it, and if someone needs to communicate with someone else and they cannot, I help. I'm there to help.

Interviewer

Do you feel like, and you've touched upon this, that you, I know some of the people in your family, you've talked to, to me about the first six of your siblings, have, have you all been able to accomplish things here that you would not have been able to accomplish in Puerto Rico?

Vega

Yeah. Go to school every day. Yeah, you, they, usually farmers will keep the children after a certain age, they, they don't have to go school, and, and that's nine years old.

Interviewer

They have to _____ work.

Vega

Yeah. That's to go on the farm, you know, and work really hard. You have to get up at 5:00 in the morning, and you don't come home, back to your house, even though it's your back yard, but you don't get to come back in the house until like 5:00 or 6:00 in the afternoon, in the evening. And that's a long, a long day for a child to be in the fields just cutting sugarcane or whatever it is that you're growing back there when he should be in school learning.

Interviewer

Right. Right.

Vega

If he wants to become a farmer, he will be a farmer, but with an education, which is more important.

Interviewer

Okay. I think you've answered this, but what are your aspirations for yourself and your family? You've, you've talked about.

Vega

Yes. Yeah. Be able to, I, all I want is that, if, when they leave home, that they have a good education and they are able to support themselves and become good men, a good man, and my daughter, that I, I, I had told her, that she in the future become what she wants to be and then be able to marry, then be happy. Good health and then wealth, okay? And that to believe that America, it is the land of the freedom and, and, and it is because we, we can, we can make things happen. We can make things happen. We can change it, whether we're Asian, Spanish or Mexican, it doesn't matter where we come from, where we're different colors, we just need to be united as one. Culture shouldn't be an issue. I want that culture should not be an issue anymore.

Interviewer

Okay. I just realized one thing that I haven't asked you is the names and age of your children because they're so, they're so important to your daily life right now and –

Vega

Oh, okay. Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Well, as, well, I, I have six children. My oldest one is 21, and she was born in December 24 in 1981, that was my first child, and she has a, a son now. She became a mother. She married and became a mom. She didn't want to study or nothing. She didn't want a, no interest in college, no interest in school whatsoever. Pure Spanish, 100%. And if, but if we would have the farm, she would have done great. She would have been great at the farm. Probably she would not even be

married, but as to, for my second child, her name is Vanessa, and she is 20 years old, but I haven't seen her in 17 years, okay? To be fair and honest with you, I have not seen her in 17 years. Through my struggles between North Philadelphia and moving into South Philly, and, you know, trying to find myself a place to be, to stay and to feel safe, it was very difficult. I lost my daughter, my second daughter, and through those processes, and _____ just a couple that needed a child and thought that my daughter was the perfect child for them. They became my friends over night and they had given me, like \$100 to put me up in, and a place to stay for the night. Before I knew it, she was gone. My daughter was gone, and very healthy, and, and all my children are healthy. So I didn't have children any more after those, my two daughters, the two daughters. One was born in 1981, the other one was born in 1982. It's, it's weird because, remember I was telling you that a, they're born during the Holidays? Like all the Holidays could be my favorite? So this, my second daughter, she was born November 24 in 1982, so I can –

Interviewer

Thanksgiving.

Vega

So, yeah, I have a Christmas Eve baby and then I have a Thanksgiving baby. So, and then I have Brian. Brian Vega. And he's, that's after five years later. I didn't have children once they had kidnapped my, the second daughter, I didn't have children at all. I, I was married, and, you know, my mom said you have to marry this guy, and that's it. No more, you know, this and that. Okay, so I, Brian was born in October 5, five years later, and he, he's a bright man. He's going to be a good man, and he says he wants to be a, a good man. He doesn't want to be abusive or anything. He doesn't want to be a Spanish man. He wants to be more –

Interviewer

He's a good person.

Vega

Yeah, a good person. And I said, well, that's good, because you get to make your own rules as you go along. A good person will do that.

Interviewer

That's three.

Vega

Yeah. So, and then we have Jesus, and Jesus is a very bright young man, and he thinks he knows it all, but it's okay. I think he should become a scientist, a mad scientist. He's always got crazy ideas, and, and he's, he's bright. He's, he's, he's slowing down. He don't like writing. But he's smart. He, he has all these ideas, but a writer that, you have all these ideas, you become a writer because, you know, writing is important for a person who has ideas, and he's someone who can always write it down, and that's only yourself, you can only do yourself, because people always, "Wow, you're insane." And then I have my daughter, Bianca, and she's a little bright girl. She's a little _____. She, she, she loves to argue. She should be like a judge or she should be an attorney. She, she just goes everything down to the T. Yes, she does, and she doesn't give up easily either. She always get it her way in the long run. If I think it's safe, she can get it her way. She always wanted to think she does anyway, but only if I think, if things look good, and, you know, she can do a lot of things. She's a bright little girl. And, well, she's eleven, and Emmanuel is 13. I call him Jesus from Emmanuel because he got, he gets upset every time people learn that his name is Jesus, you know –

Interviewer

Because of –

Vega

Ethnic –

Interviewer

Jesus, right.

Vega

And all that stuff, so, and I said, “Forgive me. But you can tell me people, you can call you Emmanuel. Emmanuel means Jesus.” “Oh, okay, Mom. That’s cool.” So, you know, I had to tell that to some teachers. “Well, why are you going to call him, you name him Jesus, and you call him Emmanuel.” I said it’s the same meaning. You’ve just got to go in the Bible and take it out. Ain’t no other place you’ve got to check it out, but, and those are all of my children. I’m very proud of them. They, they’re good kids. A lot of my friends, which I had lost like, you know, sometimes people have gaps or you don’t see each other for a long time, but sometimes you gather together and have dinner, and they notice every time, how my children have changed. I just want them to be honest people, honest and good people, but at the same time, to have the knowledge of what’s good out there in America. You know, that it doesn’t stop anywhere. It just continues. It’s a continuance of happy, wonderful things, only if you want them, and you go out there and chase for them, you know? Go for them. Go for the gold.

Interviewer

Well, that’s –

Vega

Is there anything else? Everything covered?

Interviewer

That’s all of my questions unless you have anything that you feel like you want to add or not, that, that maybe you, got left out, that I didn’t ask or, I mean, it’s up to you.

Vega

Yeah, right, right. First, well, we can, when it's done, we can, I can read it and if I feel that we need anything else in _____ there, I'll be glad to go through it with you, and this is a pleasure to be able to meet you and, and about time people are thinking about what's happening to the Spanish community. Well, we're going under because we think nobody's noticing us. It's a good thing that I believe that's going to change, and, and, if, if in the, if the politics changes around and get in the Congress and different people like that, Congressmen and all that speak the language of Spanish or at least that they're aware of the different cultures out there and that we need financial aid. Help us. We're there, we can, we can make a difference. And I'm sure, like 75% of our population is willing to get, get an education and get the English right down into where it needs to be, and let's go for it. It, and it's a challenge, but it's a good one. It's a good one because we came here for one thing – to, to work, and to have a good job and here's the place where you can make it happen. Here in the United States. And that's the reason, just about anywhere in the country, everybody wants to run to the United States. Why? Because of freedom and your dreams can come true.

Interviewer

It's true.

Vega

Yeah. Regardless of, sometimes I think God has put you, like, okay, this is like a playground, and they say how well you're going to do. And you want to know which game board you're on, but obviously He's not going to tell you.

Interviewer

You'll have to figure that one out.

Vega

And you have to figure it out, yes. If you're a good man, you will figure it out. If you're a nasty person, you'll never figure that one out. You're just going to end up in the bar drinking your ass off saying, "What happened here? Did someone forget about me?"

Interviewer

What happened to my life?

Vega

Yes, absolutely. People have to stop thinking that, that life is like a little box. It's more than that. It's, it never ends.

Interviewer

I had a good friend that told me just the other day, life is longer than you think. And what he meant was that we have to live with ourselves and our choices and the consequences and what we do.

Vega

And the bad part is we never stop learning, and then every day, once we start learning, we get, we get thirsty, and, like, we want to learn every day, more and more, and we get frustrated because we think we have not catch up with the rest of the world. No, it's up to us. We have to catch up with ourselves and see what we want and make, make it happen. If it didn't happen, try something else. Hey, if you're still _____ you're healthy, you continue, you continue, you can try new things. Who knows? Along the way, you can find yourself, "Hey, I was an artist. I didn't even know." But I found out through, you can find things like that when you read and when, and I think they're very fundamental to just sit down and read, and it doesn't matter what you pick up and read, it just, it speaks to you, and if you are what you are, and if that's who you are, that book will speak to you, and children say, "Huh? That book can't ever speak to you." But it does, and I think the older we get, it, it even speaks more, and it's better. And sometimes

we need to read the book a couple of times before we even understand because there is so much to learn from that, from that passage that it's wonderful. It's wonderful to learn.

Interviewer

Okay. Thank you, Olga.

Vega

Thank you. You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]