

Palm_School_Garcia_Red

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Palm School, community, family, education, political participation, childhood, enclave, Salvation Army, recreation center, invisible boundaries, acts of kindness, teachers, Marine Corps, Vietnam War, patriotism., Palm School, cultural differences, Mexican American history, academic language, bilingual education, community involvement, Salvation Army, segregation, integration, Cub Scouts, family bonds, school experiences, teacher impact, student behavior, educational challenges., Palm School, friendship, acculturation, assimilation, segregation, education, military service, teaching, community, enclave, cultural heritage, empathy, academic achievement, personal growth, social dynamics.

SPEAKERS

Jonathan Cortez, Felipe "Red" Garcia

Jonathan Cortez 00:00

Today is Saturday, December 14, 2024 My name is Jonathan Cortez. I am interviewing Felipe red Garcia in Austin, Texas for the Travis County oral history project. We are at the University of Texas at Austin campus. Mr. Garcia, thank you so much for agreeing for this interview. Just a few quick notes, the raw, unedited recording of this interview will be archived at the Texas County archives, where it will be available to anyone who wishes to access it. As we said earlier, if there is anything that you don't wish to talk about, we respect your wishes. Also, if there is something you want to discuss, please do make sure that we discuss it. Please let us know if you need to pause the interview for any reason. And today, we are going to talk about your life experiences, particularly as it relates to the palm school. We'll also discuss your relationship to community, to family, to education and to political participation. Mr. Garcia, are you ready? I'm ready. Let's begin. First question, can you please tell us your name and your relationship to palm School.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 01:08

My name is Felipe "Red" Garcia. My name, I love my name, okay? Was given to me by the children at Palm Okay, and we went to school, we all spoke Spanish first. That was, that's our first language, and our dominant language became English later on, you know, because of school and whatever. But when I got to school, we all huero, Colorado, and stuff like that. And then we learned the word red from Colorado. And then that stuck. That stuck, that stuck is my name, my nickname for the rest of my life. But it's not used. It got picked up. It's not used by the people that I call that I go back to diaperland with, which is palm Elementary, and we go back to diaper land, and they still call me Felipe to this day, once in a while they might slip and say Red. But in the political life, the education life and military life and all that, it was Red. And where does Red come from? It come from. I was red hair. I had freckles, you know? I was cute. I was, you know, and I was Venu. There was only a couple of two or three families get on como real light, complected like me, uno eran los trevinos los Trevino and his sisters. And it just

it was there I was red hair. I had the red hair and the freckles and stuff. So that's where it came from. And

Jonathan Cortez 02:38

so people who call you by red. You know you by your nickname, but the people who call you Felipe, like you mentioned, are from diaper land.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 02:46

They know my name Red, but they also they go back to diaper land. They call me Felipe. And when I came, I graduated from school here at UT, and they wouldn't put my name Red down. So I had to go legalize red, because most of the people, because you grew up in an enclave, but you go and you spread out in the city, and you're, you know, they know you about whatever it is they call you, and it was Red. But the people from palm to this day, Es todavia Felipe, you know. And so that's where that comes.

Jonathan Cortez 03:20

Let's talk about the Enclave. Where did you grow up? Where? What was your childhood like?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 03:25

My childhood was like. It was in one little area. The majority of us it went to palm we stayed in that little enclave, in that little area from I 35 from Red River Street, Rainey Street, parallel to east, down to, I'm gonna say, down to Canadian street, or no comal, comal Street, And then from the river, Colorado River, up to 19th Street. It was that enclave, and it was very instrumental throughout the ages. It was instrumental with politics, with education. And when we were kids growing up right there. We didn't have interstate upper deck. We had the interstate two lanes going south and two lanes coming north, and from Holly street or the river, from the Colorado River all the way up to 15-19 Street, se llamaba la calle ancha, and la calle ancha had an island right in the middle of it, the two lanes going south, the two lanes coming north. Y la calle ancha estaba alli and that's where everybody in those days there were no air conditioning, but everybody that lived close to 35 Five that's where you found the young folks. You found them because everybody went outside and everybody went out there to play in la calle ancha. Palm school was used during palm Park was used during the summer by all of us. And we had a swimming pool there. We had a softball field. We had the park was there during the summer for us and but during the winter, spring and fall and that ella la calle ancha, it was that island right there where everybody, so people would migrate back and forth. And you get, you got to know the people that lived up the road up to 19th street, and they got to know the people that lived down the road all the way down to the river.

Jonathan Cortez 5:48

And where did you live? Where was your

Felipe "Red" Garcia 5:50

I lived right there. I was always lived in that little pocketed area, okay, from Third Street, or what was first street, water Creek. My first years with water Creek to I 35 no further than that. It was just a narrow the house I was born in is two blocks away, is one block away from Palm Park and two blocks away

from the palm building at 305 Red River Street. And I was born in that house, and I stayed in that area, and then we migrated to east of First Street, to Medina Street, okay, and Waller street, I mean, San Marco Street, and that was it. And I stayed in that area until I started playing later on, when I was playing little league ball and Babe Ruth baseball and stuff. Then you start meeting other people because of the leagues.

Jonathan Cortez 06:52

Let's talk about, let's talk about your home life a little bit. So you mentioned you were born on Red River Street. What was home like? What was home life like? What languages were spoken at home? Who? Who did you live with? Who were your family members?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 07:06

Okay, the house I was born in with my was my aunt's house, my uncle's house. Okay, I was born in that house, and that house is the fourth oldest wooden structure in the city of Austin. Okay, it had been a at one time. It had been a corn loft, a brothel, a free slave home. It's a lot. It's still here. It's still in there, down, down there, and it's still it's got a lot of history to that house. But I grew up mostly on First Street, okay, in Red River Street, and it was always close to downtown. If we were growing up, our playground was a state capital. Our playground was the alleys of Congress, Avenue, East First Street and up to 11th Street and stuff like that 12th Street. So we lived. We were city folks. We were city boys. You know, we sold newspapers, we sold cardboard. We hustled when you hustled my brother, I learned to work from my older brother. Okay,

Jonathan Cortez 08:09

so when you say we, who are you? Who are you referring to?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 08:11

I talk about me and my cousins and my brother and stuff like that, this is who I'm referring to, not so much the friends yet, because the friends were from school, okay? And then as I got older, or as we started growing up, we started going to a place called The Salvation Army Youth Center. And that was very instrumental. We went to school at Palm but instrumentally, the one that had an impact on us. Was a recreation center. It was, it wasn't a recreation it was a recreation center, but it belonged to the Salvation Army. We used to, used to, used to fund it. And we had the people that supervised us were from the Barrio. They were from the neighborhood there, and they all the people that went to palm went to UJH, University of junior high, which is the right next door to the to the swim center here at UT. And they went to Uj, then they went to Austin high and then some of them, a few of them went to Johnston High School. Johnston High School had opened up, but that Recreation Center was very instrumental. It was part of this enclave, and they we all got along there we were. The way I describe the recreation center is the way my wife's cousin would talk. We had a guy that grew up on Rainey Street, Johnny Gonzalez. And Johnny was explaining to my wife one time about this environment. And he says he was telling, he was telling my wife, you know, Mary, you know that when we were little kids at grandma. Was way over there, across town. He says, All I knew was my cousins. You know, my cousins, my uncles, my aunts, my grandmother, he said, but when we moved to Rainey, all of a sudden, my role opened up, we said. He said, all of a sudden, I belong to a community, and we had hundreds of friends, he said, and I went to palm and I went to uj. He said, there was nothing but friends. He said, Yeah, we

had to squabble and fight with each other, but we were friends right after that, and we all hung out at this recreation center, and our personalities were developed there our behaviors. We were the majority of us were really good people. We were good kids. We you know, even if we weren't doing good in school or whatever. But we were good kids. We were nurtured there by Jimmy Ruiz, a man named Jimmy Ruiz, and then later on, his brother was instrumental in Danny Ruiz and stuff, you know, with the running the center and stuff like that. And we were all nurturing. We were nurturing. Then the big guys, we would get out of school, run to the Salvation Army as soon as they opened. But they had a pool table. We all wanted to shoot pool. We played basketball, baseball and all that, but we wanted to play pool. Well, we'd get the table, and then the guys that were in junior high had come back and kick us off the table and take control of the table, and then the high school guys would come and kick them off the table. But we all grew up knowing each other from high school, tell them. So there was a lot of collab, not collaboration, a lot of bonding going on, you know? And we still to this day, or we're dying off, but we're all friends. We were all from that same enclave, from that same that same neighborhood, the same value system, and that they knew all of us. We all knew everybody, the old guys, the young guy. But it was, I can't anyway, it became very and that's why all this other political stuff grew up out of that area. Because these people had been dealing they didn't just go to elementary together and then split not no, there was a lot of knowledge in community involvement with all of us.

12:31

Real quick, I hate to interrupt, I'm sharing a lot of rustling with your jacket. Yeah. Would you be okay if, for the remainder, we did the interview without,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 12:39

oh yeah. I just wanted to fly my brothers. I wanted to fly my brother's colors. Brother, that was all, yeah, we can put them back there. I was hoping to take this booger off

Jonathan Cortez 12:53

in here. I was like, We can hear you. It is cold,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 12:55

but I wanted him to see my stable muscle. They say I aint got no muslces, but I have my stable muscles. I still have my color. Wait, I want to say this in a minute.

13:13

Thank you so much. I just, if they just use your audio, it'll be nice. Yeah, it's

Felipe "Red" Garcia 13:19

good that you it's good that you did this, because I'm gonna

Jonathan Cortez 13:24

Okay, we're good. Okay, let's go ahead and that one. Let me go ahead and ask you a question, because you you keep referencing we, but I want names who are okay. I'm

Felipe "Red" Garcia 13:33

talking about it for school. They mean everybody had nicknames. It was a bunch of people. Ramirez's , Chayechos, Were the older guys and challenging them. They were, these are people that they we were all characters, okay? And we all were very what came out of there. We were very patriotic. We were very UT had something to do with that. You know, we were all that united us because we all lived here in Austin, UT was down the street, and we were all ut fans, but we didn't know that they were they didn't have black players or Mexican players, all we knew is La UT. UT, UT, one of the words that the older guys would use all the time at the if the thing was, uh, you know, for Wow to mean wow, was a la Mo, www A la moo Mo. And we do this, a la Mo, a la Mo. To this day we're using that word a la Mo. We didn't even know it came from San Antonio until later on, you know, the Alamo, when I snapped and I said, Oh, it means the Alamo, you know, in the cry of the Alamo of, you know, during the Santana's time and stuff. So we were very patriotic. We were big. Came very neighborhood conscious.

Jonathan Cortez 15:03

Did you spend a lot of time outside of your home? Yes? What was home life like?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 15:09

Home life was, for me, was there wasn't much of a home life, okay? My life existed outside of the house. Okay? I was raised. I grew up, me and my brothers grew up without a mother. So we were part of the village. I call it the village del Barrio. We were raised in the Barrio. We were part of this community. Okay, what are your brothers names? My brother's name is Tony Garcia. Everybody knew Tony, and Tony was a year older than me. He's very famous in the neighborhood. Everybody knew my brother. My brother was was special ed, but he knew people. He loved people, and they loved him. And my younger brother's name was Mario. I was a year younger than my older brother, two years older than Mario, but Mario, he was different. He was a different character than me and my brother. We were hustlers, workers and stuff, very never got in trouble, never did anything but Mario, he was complete opposite from us. So who raised you? We were raised in the streets. And my wife, to this day, she's amazed at how we lived in the streets. We lived in the streets. We hustled in the streets. We had a place to go to sleep at, which was my home. And my father was not a worker. He wasn't a working individual. So we grew up different from my father, okay, but my stepmother, and when I talk about being poor, there's a guy, there's a guy that I'll talk about. His name is, his name is Robert Pineda. I know Robert pineda, he had a brother named Ernest Pineda, okay? And they were from the Barrio, and they were there. They used to hang out with guy name and possum hanged out with him, Joe Ramirez and possum. And possum had two brothers. One of them was Mullet, Luis Ramirez, and the other one was Huicho. Huicho just passed away here a couple of a few months back, and Huicho was Augustine Ramirez. You know it was we all had nicknames, everybody, everybody, and we all knew each other. You had all these guys that hung up at this recreation center and stuff like that. And Robert would tell people, y'all think we're poor, yeah, that damn Red and his brother, they poor as hell. "Boy, esos cabrones si estan pobres chico". and, you know. And so we lived in the streets, me and my brother, Tony and stuff. Tony was a worker and I was a hustler, and we would go anywhere. We We didn't have Premier, we didn't take we didn't get permission for anything. We just went, we get up, I'd leave two or three days go stay at one uncle's or another aunt or whatever, and my father wouldn't even look for me. But that's the way the community was. And there's a term that I've picked up in my lifetime, and I call it invisible boundaries. You know, you don't cross that boundary. That dude over there, he's a doper. Is marijuana. Kill is Bora Cho you know, I killed he's a molester, or she's a molester. "Ella es una bruja"

and you would do that. And we picked up this language, and I've seen it finally labeled it with something which I call invisible boundaries that we knew that in this enclave, that was a good thing about it. Everybody knew who everybody was, and you were basically safe all the time if you stayed within these invisible boundaries, okay? And it was real interesting to grow up like that.

Jonathan Cortez 18:57

So in this community between your Father, who who worked very little, your stepmother, and the larger community. What was the role of education? What did anyone talk to you about the importance of education, of reading and writing, math?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 19:13

One person, Eloisa Campos. Eloisa Campos. She was a secretary. There. She was like a mini social worker. She talked to everybody. She came from a small town, you know, I think it was Alice, Texas, you know. And she did a lot of organizing there at school. She was a secretary, but she was, and I get this term, a little social worker was because I had the principal, Mr. Hildebrand, called me one time. Years later, he called me, he looked me up, and he called me, says, I'm gonna do a I'm gonna do ,ay que, what was it for for me and my brother, Tony, my brother said, because you guys did good, y'all, you got. Up. You got to educate it. Your brother did good, you know, and you guys stayed out of trouble. You didn't do it. He said that I'm going to do something there, at church, at his church. And then he said, was it? He asked me. He said, Do you, Was there anybody especially that did something good for you, or whatever, at school, at Palm school? And he and I said, Yeah, Eloisa Campos, the Secretary, oh, he said she was more of a social worker than she was a secretary. And she would have, you know, like the girls, she had been a majorette in school when she was going to high school. She was a very pretty lady. And when she got there, well, she thought all the little girls that would want to join and bought them batons. Then we want to do all this stuff, throw them up and do this and that. And she even with me, she bought me a coat one day. She used to always tell me all the time say Lipe for short for Felipe lipe, you need to change your name when you grow up, you need to change your name to that. Tu estas huero, pareces gringo. You need to change your name so you can get a better job. You'll get a better job. You'll have a better life. She used to tell me that all the time. Drill that into me, and she bought when I was in the third grade, she bought me a coat and a tie and a white shirt, and she had me do a presentation of Gettysburg address for the PTA, okay, and that Gettysburg Address didn't mean much to me then, nor did it mean much to me until years later, when I started getting becoming educated. Then I started realizing the Gettysburg address was something super, something important, super important. Okay, and I've been back to Gettysburg, and I've been there to look at the place and study the place and stuff like that, and Abraham Lincoln speech. So she would do these kind of things and motivate people to want to, you know, she did the PTA always had programs. There would be a program there, because she would put that program together and get all these Mexicanitos to do this stuff, you know, and do this stuff, these programs and stuff like that. She was very instrumental in that, okay, and that was at school. We all went to school. We like school. I went food was good for me. It was good anyway. I went to palm school. Six years, six years. I never missed a day. 100% attendance. And I didn't learn to read. I didn't and as I grew older, I realized I said I was always like second to the lowest reading group. But I didn't understand that, because when we played ball, I played ball better than most guys, or enough, you know, was good enough to play all the time with the teams. I was fast in the streets of learning stuff street life was very good. Street life I was, I was

a hustler, selling paper, selling shoes, cardboard, whatever I could do. And my brother, too was like that. So I didn't understand why. I just went on with life, and then later on, I came to school, later on, when I became educated, and I came here and I got a teacher's degree, a bilingual Ed degree here in University of Texas. And it wasn't then that I realized that I wake up what was happening there at UT or in life. When I started teaching, I was confusing. Now I was confusing being a good teacher by being popular, not by being effective in the classroom with education and reading. And I spent my whole teaching career, 20 something years, 27 years, trying to put this picture together. Why do Mexicans had such a high, big drop out rate? It's always been like 59% 51% dropout rate in the state of Texas and in Austin. And I had seen and I had seen my life, and I'm not a pessimistic person. I'm pissed off. Okay, I'm telling everybody when it comes to education, I'm pissed off because my parents weren't able to go to school, or my father and my uncles and all of that, and they're from Bastrop, Texas, and one thing that I've learned in life is when you, when you when you when. Yeah, when you start looking into the Mexicans and stuff like that, you'll find that they'll say, if you start looking at the documents, birth certificates and all these other things, or the documents will always say they don't speak, they don't read or write. My parents were very religious. I mean, my dad and my uncle, they were very religious. They were literate in Spanish, but the system if they didn't speak in if they didn't read and write in English, well, they were put down as illiterate, okay? And I figured that out, okay. Well, I went to palm school in spite of the Austin Independent School District, I was able to come to the University of Texas and graduate. I went to school. I came to UJH, went from palm to UJH, and I was just floating around. I don't know what the hell I was doing. I didn't know how to read. I knew that. But in the ninth grade, I didn't stay at UJH, I went because all the action was at Johnston High School, and they had a ninth grade so I went to the ninth grade over there. And Mr. Bailey, the principal. A lot of people didn't like him, but he used to watch. He used to go out and recruit players in the pony leagues and stuff like that. In Lily he was already watching players because he was a baseball player. So he was creating his farm league, boy he was going to and he tried his best to keep me there at Johnston, you know, he said, Look, I want you to play baseball. I want you too. He says, I'm gonna I'm gonna feed you free lunch, and I won't give you, because I had to come across town for the bus. He said, I'm gonna give you the money to catch the bus, which was the 10 cents. But I didn't stay there. I didn't stay there. I dropped out two weeks, three weeks after being Johnston ninth grade, I dropped out, went to work, wanted money, I needed clothes. I didn't have clothes. I didn't have I wanted to party, I wanted to hit the streets. And then I did everything opposite both me and my wife did everything opposite of what people are told to do. We got pregnant. We got married. By the time I was 16, I was a father and married. My wife, she got all the way up to the 11th grade. Didn't go to that grade, because in those days, they wouldn't let somebody was pregnant go to school. So we got married, pregnant. Get married, then you go to work, okay? And I'm working. My wife worked like at lubies, and I worked at a place down the street here, which was very instrumental. My cousin was the manager of a place called the Holiday House Hamburgers right here on basically 20th in Guadalupe, that exposed me to college people that were going to college, mostly white people, white kids, you know, white young people that were working their way through school. I didn't know that then, but they were so I was exposed to college. People know, you going to college. What's that college? You going to college and stuff like that. And I was working there flipping hamburgers, 16. My wife was working at lubies and stuff, having kids. So we go on with life. Then I go to the Marine Corps. I joined the Marine Corps. They were taking anybody, it was the Vietnam War.

Jonathan Cortez 28:49

Before we get there, let's go back. Let's go back again. I want to talk about a little bit more about your family life before we move into the poem school. I want to talk about language and religion. So tell me, what did you grow up learning language, which language? And you mentioned your father was very religious. Tell me

Felipe "Red" Garcia 29:14

No, no, they were religious his family, but my dad stopped going to church when their grand when they're when my grandfather died, who I never got to meet. Dijo mi tia, one time, I took my aunt to go look for relatives and stuff up in Bryant, Texas and Bastrop and and she was talking about, and I said, Well, when did things change in our family? You know, because they were all she said, when we were kids, they were in Bastrop, Texas, and they were kids. They said we would go to church a lot, but we would go work in the you know, we would work on the ranches and farmed and she says, and after work, we would go, we would eat supper, and then my father would set us down, who was my grandfather set us down, and we would preach to us out of the Bible, and he would and we would sing hymns. Okay, preach out of the Bible, we would sing hymns. And she said, and I said, Well, when did y'all change? I said, I know that y'all put us, took us to church, and when we were young and stuff like that. And she said, when he said, When, when my father died, everything went to hell. Se murio mi papa, y porque la mama ya se había muerto, mi Abuelita, who I never got to know, nor my grandfather. And she said, all went to hell before we knew it, your uncle, Steve, and your uncle, so and so, they started a juke joint out there in the up there in the place, you know, they had a beer joint going, selling pot, doing this stuff. And I was amazed at that. That was where you can see where the structure will stop once one of the older people will die. Okay, they so she explains that to me. But when we were little kids, we go to church, and the church was right there. Two churches were splintered off from Baptist Church, from Bastrop, Texas into Austin. One of them was Govalle Baptist Church, and the other one la Primera Iglesia Baptista, and that's the one that we belong to. That was all in Spanish. Everything was in Spanish and stuff like that. So whatever religious thing I got there, it lasted till about the third grade. After that, I hit the streets, you know? And it was, I was street wise. When my brother passed away, I went looking at this one flower place, and I was talking to the lady across the street from Mission funeral home on First Street, and she said, I said to "estoy aqui" "Oh", Y dije "y mi Hermano tony" "oh ustedes son los huerfanos" and that's what we were labeled los huerfanos Because we were in the streets, running the streets. They always reported my father to CPS, you know, you know we were, I have a friend. Okay? Anyway, we'll talk about these other people later on, Captain Vasquez, the police department. Later on, he but she says, "ustedes eran los huerfanos". That's how they knew us, because we were always running the streets. We were out in the street. I would my daily habit was going straight down. I lived on Third Street. I go down, get out of school, run home, then run down Third Street, and then come back Second Street, then come back to first street and then go to the recreation I mean, I go to the recreation center first. But sometimes when we had extra time or whatever, I'd hit the streets, and I'd say, we'd say hello to everybody. We talked to everybody, me and my brother Tony, and we got to know everybody. We weren't just we had nobody, no direction, no anything. We just were street people and but that center, the recreation center, was the thing that kept me going in the correct on the correct road and stuff like that. And we, we knew everybody. Everybody knew us. My brothers, too. I love like that lady was talking downstairs about my brother Tony. They love I said, my brother Tony loved them, and they loved him, and we did this so we lived in the streets,

okay? And I went from sleeping with my brother because everybody shared the same beds and stuff. I went from sleeping with my brother to sleeping with my wife. I never had my own bed or anything like that. You know what I mean?

Jonathan Cortez 33:50

Tell me about Tony.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 33:51

And Tony was a hustler. Tony tava bien. Tony polaco my family would call him Polaco. He looked like a dingo. He was my Tony was was he was a hustler from the time he was strong and big and healthy, and he was getting work all over the place, and, you know? And he'd take me sometimes, but he was always making money. He had money in his pocket because he he'd sold newspapers, and then he'd go run and work for somebody else here and there his whole life here at the University of football games, he would get us all in free the relatives and friends, because he came over here and he knew all the guys at the gate, and he'd get us into the football games, and we'd come into the football my kids came to football games all their life because their uncle Tony and he worked till the day he died. He worked at these selling at the concessions, going around selling sodas and whatever they sell at the football games. He was, he was a hustler. He was work. Everybody knew him because he worked all the parades. And everybody knew it was Tony and and they all knew the same thing. To Tony, you got to be. Careful with him, because he'll come and he'll just knock the shit out of you when he's saying hello to you. Y te mete un chingado y estas tu "hey cabron que tienes". Oh, okay, you know, he was real rough, you know? And Tony was resource. He was a special ed kid. My younger brother was special. I guess I got lucky. But he was a worker, and he made a lot of good contacts, and people liked him. He was honest, he was straight, and they got him jobs. And that's how he got his job at the University of Texas. People that knew him from the streets when he was there, Tony, you come over here, we're gonna get you a job. You know, we got you a job already, and they do the, you know, and get him a job. And he worked here for years, okay? And that's how you know that he, I was real lucky. He, he Tony was lucky. He married a lady, and she was, she didn't like me much of anything, Betty, and she was bipolar as hell, boy, but he had all the rituals that a person would want in life. And he had, you know, marriage, you know, had a job, had a truck, had bought a house, went on vacation because of his wife, you know? And I think what it was he wouldn't all that Swift. I think she just said, Tony, you're gonna be my boyfriend, okay, okay, Tony, you're gonna become a Catholic. Okay, okay, Tony, we're gonna get married. Okay. And so he had all the rituals in life that we were real fortunate for him to have Mario. Well, he went to jail and, you know, but he stayed out of trouble later on in life. And but Tony was a hard worker. Everybody recognized him as a hard worker, as a good man, as a good, you know, honest human being. So that was really beautiful about Tony. It was to this day, all these people that you'll talk to about pop, they all know Tony. Everybody will know Tony. And he was a good brother, a great uncle, a great a great uncle, great cousin and stuff like that. And he he was lovable. He was a big teddy bear boy. So, you know, he was very lovable.

Jonathan Cortez 37:25

Did you look up to him as when you were young? Not when I was young?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 37:28

No, not when I was young. No, no, no. I didn't look at, I was smarter than him, but he was a hustler and I wasn't, you know, and and he wasn't academically smart. He was street smart and he was hard working, okay, so he went from there, and he dropped out too, but did real well in spite of the Austin Independent School District, you know, and Me too. And so we did, you know he was, he was, he despised, he hated bad people. Si alguien era un boracho o algo or they were out there whoring around or something on the on, you know, on their wives or something. Although he just No Ma, like, you know, he would start they no good boy, that dude, no good, you know, es marijuano. Or he says, you know, he didn't like people that were not good citizens. Okay,

Jonathan Cortez 38:24

Okay, tell me about you and your brothers as children. Tell me about going to school together. What was it like getting up in the morning? What was it like getting dressed their own? Wait, let me finish. What was it like getting dressed? What was it like? Who would you go with to palm school? Tell me about the morning routine?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 38:41

Well the morning routine is, everybody got up on their own. Se llavaron la cara, whatever. And then we'd go to school on our own. Okay? We would the Tony would go his way. I would go my way. Mario would go his way. And when at school, we had our own clique of friends, okay? And so we were all in the same family, but we were all on our own schedule, you know, and that's the way it was. And and we all did our own thing throughout life too, you know, I got married very young and left the house, and Tony got married older and Mario, well he didn't get married to a way later, when I had children and stuff like that. But we were all on our own path.

Jonathan Cortez 39:32

Did you walk with anyone to palm school? Where'd you walk by your

Felipe "Red" Garcia 39:36

Oh, no, we all just went to school. Everybody went to school. And you'd run into them in the street, and you, I might be with you today, walking and with Gustavo there the next day, or the way later, you just everybody was in their own it was like a herd of cattle. In the morning, you'd see people, and then all of a sudden, one or two, and then all of a sudden, you're in a big group. And we went. At palm school. And at Palm school, they had a fence. By this time, when I was going, they had a fence around the school, in the front on the street. And in the beginning, we never went, Oh, not even in the beginning, we never went to the cafeteria or anything. Everybody hung out outside, and we all played. Everybody played tops. People be fighting. We were out there in them school grounds, in in the you're there with the big kids. My first, first grade, my cousins were here, the ones that went to and then they went to California later, they would go with us. They took us like the first grade. My dad took me to school the first day, and then after that, my cousins would take us and walk us to school. And then, but we got to the playground. I mean, not the playground. We got out to the yard, because the yard outside the front and the side is where everybody played. And they were shooting marbles, playing tops, you know, and visiting, fighting, squabbling, always a fight, a good fight. Every morning, it seemed like and everybody congregated there. And you're mixing with everybody. You're mixing with the older kids and stuff. We're at Palm school, and I tell you all my teachers names. They were all we

Jonathan Cortez 41:32

want to hear them. What were their names?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 41:35

Okay, first grade was Mrs. Wheeler. Second grade, I think was Miss Butler, or something like that, and then third grade was Miss Hubble. And Miss Hubble was my third grade teacher, and in first grade, let me go back to first grade. I want to talk about Miss Wheeler. It was a Dick and Jane books. Look at Dick run. Look at Jane run, and all that simple stuff. Then the second grade was a little bit more difficult. In third grade, Miss Hubble, I was in her class. We were out in a portable and she took me and another couple of people. I don't remember where it was one afternoon to her house. But it wasn't a house. It was a barracks building where her husband was a student here at the University of Texas, and they had these old barracks that were down on the other side of Deep Eddy over there. And it was amazing. We're hearing, they're in this her and her husband were living there. He's going to school. She's a teacher. So that was these things really intrigued me, they or they didn't treat they, he's going to school, he's going to university. You know where they going to university? And here, you know, I didn't know that my teacher was a college university graduate or a college graduate, and she fed us hamburgers and the barbecued up there and stuff, and she did that. And that was, that was nice. I never forgot that. Ms. Birch, I mean, not better. Birch, my second grade teacher twice, one time, one year in her class I didn't get free lunch. Okay, so I had to run home for lunch and come back. And one time, I brought tortillas, and everybody was ashamed of the tortillas and beans and tortillas and other and she traded me one time twice, traded me my two tacos of beans and tortilla and bought my lunch, and she was just eating away at my food. And I was like, what she eating? Everybody's looking at me with tortillas and stuff like that. It was real, whatever. So Miss birch was there. I wrote her a letter. Later on in life, found her address, and I wrote a letter to thank her for taking those tacos from me that made me now, that made me real proud of being Mexican and beans and tortillas and stuff. And I remember writing her a letter. Never got an answer back, but I wrote the letter. And then third miss bubble, Miss humble. And the thing I remember about third grade was we had the statue. I mean, the Liberty Bell was brought in, not the Liberty Bell itself, but a replica. And they had a big truck, and you go in, you'd walk in, and we saw the Liberty Bell and the crack and stuff that made and made an impression on me, because it was hands on, you could see it and stuff like that. Fourth grade, Miss pepart, Miss pepart. I don't know what I was doing in class, but you can tell I like to talk okay. And she always had me, and I always felt that she was mistreating me, Well, whatever it was, but I always felt that I deserved to be in a bit older, and not in the older, but in a higher reading group, and I didn't deserve it. I didn't know, but she took me out there and she was going to spank me. They used to spank us in those days, she had them. And I said, you don't want to spank me, man, because I thought I learned a lesson there about fairness, what's fair and what's not fair, not that she was a mean person or a bad person. I said, "you don't want to spank me" she said, "No, you bend over. You're gonna get" I said, "No", because I didn't feel that I had done anything wrong class.

Jonathan Cortez 45:35

What did you do?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 45:38

I knocked the shit out of her boy. I turned around she hit me, and I turned around and I hit her, and she went and got the other teacher. "Oh, he's hitting me. He's hit me", but Mr. Hildebrand was the principal. Mr. Hildebrand grabbed me, and he set my butt on fire. He spanked me. Boy gave me like, two or three licks, and I never went back to his office. I didn't have any problems. He had no problems out of me after that because he set my butt on fire. Boy hit me so hard, he's spanked me so hard. And

Jonathan Cortez 46:13

why were you in trouble? Why were you in trouble?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 46:15

because I got in trouble for talking, I guess, or I was talking, it's all I was doing. I was talking of whatever, you know, and I can't remember what it was, but I remember that I felt that it was unfair, okay? And I've learned this in life, as I've gone in life is when you're fair, like I taught for a lot of years, when you're fair with your kids or somebody else, they will always come back and apologize to you or come back and befriend you again, I'm sorry and stuff. But if you're unfair, they won't talk to you for days or weeks. And then you know that you've crossed the line as an educator or the parent or whatever. You know you've crossed that line, you better always be fair. Always be fair. I learned that, okay. Then in the fifth grade I had Miss Bain I mean, Miss pepper, I mean Miss Rhodes, Mrs. Miss Rhodes was my fifth grade teacher, and two or three things happened in that year. One was she was a real mean strict la llamaba la perica. She had like a sharp nose. Boy, la perica que era la perica. Well, two things happened in that year that were very instrumental in my life. One was somebody came in. In those days, it was hygiene. They were doing some stuff with tooth paste and the brush, and they were giving everybody a tooth brush and stuff like that. And for, you know, doing dental hygiene stuff. But they would, they picked. Happened to be me, yeah, I want to be picked. He said, Here, you going to use this? And they gave me. They said, Go. They said they had these little red tablets. They said, "Here, go brush your teeth and come back in". They brush my teeth, and then I chewed that tablet, spit it out. And my teeth had all these little spots, you know? And they said, Oh, no, see, this is what happens when you brush your teeth. It's not doing good. I went home from that point on, and I don't think I ever brushed my teeth before that. Hell, I went to the drug store, Anderson, drug store, which is the popular spot and I asked, Mr. Anderson. I said, Mr. Anderson, I need a tooth brush. What's the best type of tooth brush to buy? He said, a hard one, a hard one. Brush, it hard. And I went home, and I destroyed all my enamel throughout the years from brushing it too damn hard. You get the soft brush. She should have told me, hell, he told me to use that hard brush. And I never forgot that embarrassment that I got there, but it wasn't a bad embarrassment and stuff. The other thing that happened her student teacher, her student teacher brought in a guest speaker. I don't know it was Indian or Pakistan. I think an Indian, you know they come in. She had this attire, you know that she had brought some friend from college, and they were because we were doing world history in fifth grade, and she was talking about being, you know, the little dot means you're married, the red dot, and you got this, and this, this, this. And this was real instructive boy and I fell in love with that presentation, okay, and so I never forgot that. Never forgot the toothpaste thing, the the dental hygiene. Never forgot this presentation, how wonderful it was. You know, she had this real life person. And then we were talking about the Arabic countries one day, and I asked her, What I. What are the palm trees that come out the the little things that grow up, grow grow on those palm trees that the little man I'm forgetting. I know

what I'm talking about, but I'm forgetting it's a little what they eat, what the Arabs eat. You know, they come up off of these trees and stuff. And I asked her, I said, "What are these?" And she said, "You don't know what that is?" I said, "No, I don't know what that is." So the day or two later, or the day later, she brought that, she brought those things from me, from the grocery store. I said, what you might eat? And she said, so this little store up there by her house. And I said, yeah, those are good dates. The dates. Boy, they were good. Boy, they were damn good. I had never eaten anything like it. Didn't understand, but she did that for me too, you know. And those acts of kindness, and when I talk about my neighborhood, I will use that word acts of kindness. What I want people to understand this, not that I was poor, everybody was poor, everybody was poor, hell, just at different degrees and stuff like that. What I want people to understand, what I got out of this neighborhood was the acts of kindness that beautiful acts of kindness from my community, the love I got out of my community, the impact it had on me as a human being. You know, everybody was kind. Everybody was wonderful with us. They were, I remember my friends growing up with my friends, and we get in trouble. And then they grab my friend and beat the hell out of my poor friend and me they pull me aside, "Mira mijo Por favor, you know, tu eres huerfano. You need to, you need to use your head". They would counsel me, but they beat their child, you know. So I was counseled a lot, you know, because they had nos tenian lastima, and they would do all of this stuff, okay? And that's what I want people to hear. That's what palm school, that environment, the Youth Center, the Salvation Army, okay? Palm school was a school where we were all come together. Got to know the neighborhood. It was part of the neighborhood and stuff like that. But the Youth Center and the rest of the neighborhood was kindness, wonderful, como dijo la senora. When I went in, I tried it. Was buying flowers for my brother, and she said, los huerfanos they they took a lot of pride in me and Tony because we never got in trouble. We weren't doing we weren't breaking the law or stealing or doing anything. So the kindness was there that that I couldn't pay for the for what it did to me as a human being. You know, it taught me, you know, you do monkey see, monkey do the most powerful words I've ever learned in my life that I used to this day I learned right here working at the holiday house hamburgers. "May I help you, sir?", when you're waiting on customers, "may I please help you? Can I do something for you? Can I do this please? Thank you". I learned that from working there at the holiday house, and to this day, those are my strongest, if not the strongest. They're pretty damn close to it powerful tools that I use when I'm dealing with people. Kindness. Be good, be kindness. And I got that from the that environment, okay, and that was so I went and then the sixth grade, Mr. Carroll. I was in the second grade with Miss Birch's class, and Mr. Carroll was teaching sixth grade. He was a male teacher, and we used to look at him, and the big kids used to say, no, he's mean, he's mean. He's real, mean. Y era malo el cabron and everyone. He's mean, he's mean. And I was in the second grade, and I said he was, I hope I don't have him in the sixth grade. Hell no. We don't want this guy, all of us. We don't want Mr. Carroll. John Carroll, Well, John Carroll, the next year, when I went to the third grade, he was gone. I said we were all when we don't have to worry about him. So we went to third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and then the sixth grade came back, and guess who showed up. John Carroll, God, have Mr. Carroll boy and all these other guys have Mr. Carroll, that damn Mr. Carroll, he was the that conversation I had with the principal, Hildebrand. He said, Well, I had trouble. I told her. He asked me about I told him, Miss Campos and Mr. Carroll. I thought he was pretty good teacher. He said, Well, you know, I used to get some bad reports about him. He used to was always throwing the erasers at kids and, you know, and getting on kids and stuff like that and but Mr. Carroll was my sixth grade teacher, and he didn't teach us to read either hell he sat up there at the desk and whatever you know, I know that now you know, but he talked to me later. He

contacted me later too, you know, because of one of the jobs that I have with the city police, and he he did. He went up there and stole it, the recreation center, the Salvation Army. He stole all of us ball players from Palm school to go play with his team in the sixth grade, and he would take us to go we were playing against Pan Am Recreation Center at that time. Era la Pan Am y La Salvation Army, you know. And that's the way it was, you know. We were always going at each other and playing baseball against each other and football and flag football. And then Mr. Carroll started a team of us kids, and he would do other little type of activities like that. You know, he liked working with us that he did. It came out. I could understand it later on in life, he had, he had sympathy for us, or empathy for us, and he tried to work with us, but I think he was a teacher where they would bring him to the to the to the Mexican school, and not keep him at the white school. He was too aggressive. You know.

Jonathan Cortez 56:31

It's amazing that you remember all of your teachers, because I'm trying to think back, and I can remember a few, but it's amazing that you remember all of the ones that you went to school with. I'm really interested to hear about you. Mentioned earlier you remember your dad taking you to your first day of school. Tell me about that first day of school. What were you feeling? We're all man.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 56:48

Now, no, I was. I don't know if I was excited, but I know I went to school. He had to register me at school. He took me to school. He took me to the classroom and all I basically what I remember a lot about the I still remember a lot of the kids and stuff like but the kids that were crying, lot of kids were crying. Boy, they were crying. And I was like, what the hell they crying for them, damn sissies, you know, and stuff like that. And I learned later on that they were just used to being with their parents. They weren't used to being and I was used to living in the streets, porque yo tava, ya corriendo, waller Creek, Red River Street, all of that. With my cousins, the older cousins and stuff. We would go up and down sixth Street, Congress, all of these other streets. And we were real poor. I don't know how my tias did it. My dad was one boy, but my my tias, we're living with My Tia. You know, I don't know. She wouldn't rent a big house, like there 404 East first street. She would rent a big house, and then my father lived in a little bitty room back over here, outside in the garage. She'd rent the garage to dirt floor to people, and she kept us all by the kitchen, in the living room, and then the other rooms were rented to other people, and that's how she was paying her rent. I realized that later on they were housing women when they were talking about the women down there. Women are it. Women keep things together, and they're slick. Women are slick. They let the man believe that they're in charge. Okay? They let that man knock down doors, the shot of my ...but it's the female in that house that's keeping control, even if it's a passive female. I've learned that in life, you know, and

Jonathan Cortez 58:46

tell me about your tia what was her name?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 58:49

Her name was Sarah Garcia, Sarah Torres, and my other aunt, Felipa. There was two sisters and a bunch of brothers. Okay, I was named after an uncle, and I was named after m yTia. I found out later my aunt was named Felipa for Felipe, one of her uncles, and I was named after her, Felipe for Felipa, and that was ma Tia, Felipa and my Tia Sarah. They had a lot. They were instrumental. My cousins and

all of them were very instrumental with raising us, you know, and having, because they felt sorry for us, because my father was on the streets and just whatever. But they in those days, it was so easy. You just walked over to your cousins and your aunts or uncles and stuff like that. You were, you were a scream away, you know, Felipe or and then the through the grape vine, everybody, it was easy to find somebody. We were just all in that invisible boundary thing. And when you wanted somebody, you just, the women just would not stuck their head out there on the porch and just, "Hey, Jonathan onta Jonathan," "orita vengo, y lo agaro, yo voy yo se donde esta alla el cabron," no dijan cabron they would go. So it was through the grape vine. Everything was it was just a network, a wonderful network. Everybody knew everything. And my tias, I would like when I was going to UJH, right here, I would get out of school on Friday and just walk to my aunt's house who lived in North Austin. Back then it was North Austin. Now it's called central Austin, but I'd go to and I'd spend all weekend over there, you know, I'd spend Friday night, Saturday with nothing in my house. It's all boring. But over there, they had good stuff. They they had they were poor too, but they had like they were the older. Kids were older, and they worked at restaurants and make Frito salads. And my aunt made wonderful tortillas, both of them, but this one over there, Felipa, is been with wonderful tortillas and stuff like that. And my cousins were there. I had a lot to we were never treated as of I don't know if they were just tolerating us or whatever, but they gave us a lot of love, a lot of nurturing, and it's just, you know, I can't tell you, the love, the kindness that I got from my family and the neighborhood. It's it makes me cry. I think about it on a daily basis now, it's wonderful. Just this, this, you know, I don't know how to, I don't know how to tell you the the benefits that I got from that kindness. You know, it's just and it's rubbed off on me. And if you

Jonathan Cortez 1:01:58

If you could, if you could say thank you, how would you say that to your thes, to your community,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:02:02

Oh gracias, they knew it. They loved me. They loved ma Tia Sara, the one I'm talking about. She was the one that delivered me, right there at 305, Red River. She delivered me, and I was special, but I didn't understand why until later on, you know, she delivered me, you know. And they and then the other one, Tia Felipa, she liked me a lot because I had her name, you know. And my cousins, to this day, were very, you know, I'm very thankful. I'm super thankful for my family, man. I'm super thankful for the people in the neighborhood. I'm I don't know how to it's not a day that doesn't go by. I'm thankful for my brother, Tony, you know, and my brother Mario. I still have his ashes. He died a couple of years ago. I still have his ashes right there in the living room where I could see him and cuss him out because he didn't take care of his health. You know, he didn't have to die of a heart attack. He, you know, he didn't. He would, he wouldn't go to the doctor. So I'm very family oriented, okay? Very my brother Tony. He knew all the relatives. He knew everybody in our family, and he died, and we didn't realize that he was going to what he took to the grave. He knew everybody. How the network worked in our family, because they came from Bastrop. I was telling you about the people when they said, like on my grandfather's death certificate, and some of the other it says, doesn't read or write. And they're at Bastrop, Primera Iglesia Baptista they have. He was the scribe, you know, the Secretary for a couple of years. And you can see his writings. Man, beautiful penmanship, very literate. They knew. They read the Bible. They did it with all in Spanish, and people didn't. They weren't given credit for that, that that intelligence, you know, that they were literate. They they went to church when I was a little kid talk

about, I grew up in a Catholic everybody was Catholic except we were Baptist. My family had converted to Baptist. And Bastrop, right there, la primera Iglesia baptista I'd go to church as a little kid, they took us all my aunt tía Felipa, they'd get that little bottle of perfume and put it on our shirts. We always had the little circles on our shirts and stuff. And we were in the church in I would go to class, and they would give you something to color, give you a little story, you know, the Bible tower, tower of Babel or David and Goliath, whatever you want and they tell you all this stuff, but they always gave you a piece of candy at the end of the class. And for some reason, they always got to a point to where they would say, "Now, remember, remember now that y'all have the correct religion". We had the Methodist church down the street, the Catholic church down but "no les pones atención a aquellas otras iglesias la perfecta es la de nosotros" And they would tell you, you know, and it was in Spanish all the time, and then London, and I would say anything for that piece of candy. I would say anything. And they would say, "y aquellas iglesias allá" "chinga su madre aquellos cabrones vayan madre" Yeah, I'm a Baptist. We go and do this and do that well during the week, in those days, Third Street, where we live, that Fourth Street, Fifth Street, they were all dirt streets. So we're in the state capitol, we're just down a mile away from the State Capitol in in the neighborhood of the Mexicanos, we were dirt streets, and you could always see we all, everybody had cones in those days, and they would put that royal crown gel on their head. You know that royal crown gel boy and petroleum jelly, hell and and we were played out there, and the cars would go by, and then we all our hair was gray, dirt gray. We're from the from the dust from the caliche Street. And everybody carried a broom, and they carried a tooth pick, because they would not a comb. And they would always comb their hair, because everybody had long hair entonces se los píanaban, and it was all that grease would come off that royal crown boy, they get that grease off, and then they'd have a tooth pick and clean between the teeth of the so we would always run around dusty and stuff. But they had Doctrina for the Catholics. They had catechism classes every Wednesday. I want to say I think it was Wednesday, no me acuerdo que día but it was always on the same day. In post, we would be out playing in the street. Then the nun would show up. In this one house, they had benches, so we would go out there and get the benches, line them up, and then the nun would do catechism classes. Okay, well, son todos Catholics ay esta la Iglesia Guadalupe down the street here. Beautiful church, wonderful place, and almost all the kids went to church there, and they would do the class. And of course, I had to go because I was losing all my playmates. Ain't no way I was gonna stay out there waiting for them. I didn't go in there and tell them I was Baptist. Hell no. And then the nun would get to a point at the end. And I knew what was coming. Boy, you know, the nun would "que usted estoy, y que usted", and they always gave us two little cookies. This cookies, two for a penny, and a little cup of Kool Aid. And I would say anything for them, cookies and the Kool Aid, ya la nun would always say, "ya sabes que esta es la Iglesia perfecta, y que estoy y eso, y que ellos baptistas no vayan para nada, y que aquellos cabrones de los metodistas que estoy" And I would say anything, yeah, "chinga su madre aquellos cabrones" dame me mis cookies, one of my cookies. And for any kind of treat, I was always there, and you saw me down there, this food that I did. Oh, that's important. It takes me to my childhood getting this free food. It takes to my childhood the kindness. I come here and they're going to give me a breakfast. That's kindness. I drove all the way to San from San Antonio. That's not important. The act of kindness that I got, the kindness that they given me the opportunity to talk about my enclave and talk about this wonderful world that we grew up in. I'm still friends with these people. I still know these people. And you know what? I dropped out of school. Okay, I'm a high school drop. I'm a drop. I was pushed out. I understand that now. I'm not pissed. I'm not a piss in this person. I'm a mad, pissed off person, because the education system, in spite of it, it still

hasn't changed much, okay, so this is you know, but this community nurtured me, okay. Now, when I went in the Marine Corps, that's where I saw I had potential. That's where I started to learn to read and write and stuff. You know, I knew I was outspoken. I knew, and when we were in Vietnam, I'm gonna say this about Vietnam was war is what people don't understand about war. There's a section of war that's real boring. You sit there and you're waiting. Boy, you want to get into combat. I want to fight. Boy, but you get to write letters. And I wrote a lot of letters. I would write the same letter 10 times because it was free to mail. They gave us free. And I would send that same letter to 10 different people, even if they didn't answer me back. And that's where I picked up my voice and in the Marine Corps is where I learned that I had potential, I had I had had some good stuff there. So all of this is mixing in together, and it's making me in it's making me what I am, you know, is a patriotic person as a loving person. And one thing I learned here at University, I'm very patriotic, and it was here under the teachings of I learned from one of the guys here Andres de hernina, Dr Andres, I don't know if you know him. Oh, he ain't right. Tell him, I said so. But anyway, I learned from his classes in Mexican American history on patriotic because he was a veteran too. Pero, no estoy pendejo. Okay. This place was rough to me, this university campus, it was rough for me because I came from Vietnam. I came as a veteran, soldier from not knowing how to read and write, and all of a sudden I go to ACC. At ACC, it was the first it was a new Junior college. I was the first student body president. I was from the first real graduating class of ACC. Then I came to UT and all of that, I attribute to Nam where I picked up my voice. I didn't know punctuation, I didn't know anything. But it was I picked up my voice, what they call writing and writing voice, and that tower has played been more than instrumental to me in my life. It has the truth shall set you free. And I would look at that get into fights over here and stuff verbal fights. And I would look at the tower and say, "What the hell did the truth will set you free. The truth will" say it didn't mean much to me. But after a while, the truth was killing me. It was killing me. They beat me at this campus. I still have flashbacks. They were beating me with the truth. I came with the gung ho mentality. I No, I was a Vietnam veteran we were saving those people, and we were doing this, and we're gung ho. Holy kick. "You know, I'm an American patriot, and I'm gonna do this and do that", and these people here shoot me up and spit me out. Boy, they were all it was during the height of the protest marches and the student body president, John Jones, something like that was this guy's name, and he was one of my instructors at ACC. And that dude, he was 100% correct. He would say shit in class, and I would "oh pinche puto, chinga su madre cabron," you know, I'm a veteran, and I'm this and I'm that, but over here, everything I put my hands on, I was reading about, you know, it was real political. It was about Vietnam. Everything I was reading, everything I was here, was the truth. And I had to eat that I was having a hard time, and that had a big impact on my life. That tower the truth always stick to the truth. The truth prevails all the time. So these things are you know that I that I've taken with me.

Jonathan Cortez 1:14:30

Red, what years did you attend palm school Oh,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:14:34

1960 to 19 oh? 1959, 51,50, 51, 52 53 four. Okay, from 1957 58 to 1961 something like that. I can remember there. That's the time that I attended palm school.

Jonathan Cortez 1:15:02

And who do you remember? Who were your best friends while you were in school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:15:06

All of them, everybody. That's why I'm not going to say a lot of them, because then they gonna get mad at me because I didn't say their name, you know, but they we all. Everybody was friends, just like my my wife's cousin explained to her, man, everybody's friends. You're everybody's a friend, you know, everybody is your friend, everybody you get along with. Everybody gets along. Y se quieren, you know? And then the people that became like, kind of extra well it, it's hard, man, I had people that I've never really hung out with, but they're still my good friend.

Jonathan Cortez 1:15:47

who were the ones that you hung out with?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:15:49

but the one that hung out with David Serna was very David Serna had it together. You know, David Serna had a lot of perica. He was a David Serna, was always the girls like them. And he was captain of the patrol, the student patrol. You know, we were the patrol to go up there and help people cross the street with the little flags. And he was the captain of patrol. He was always when we had the football team, like with Mr. Carroll stay with the quarterback. He was the baseball pitcher. He was all into this day. We're still friends, but he just didn't do a lot of good things in his life. But he he's still a real tight, good friend. I had a lot of the ladies were friends of mine to the parents of the kids, because they felt, you know, empathy for me. And I'm still, I'm friends with everybody. I'm still friends with, like that young lady down there that's that's gonna that was talking about her grandfather and all of that was Roy's cabs, Roy's Taxis, all of her uncles and stuff. Everybody was my friend. I was everybody's friend.

Jonathan Cortez 1:17:05

Well, tell me about, maybe this is more specific questions. Tell me about some of the families who whose parents you got to know very well because they they looked out for you. Who tell me about those that would

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:17:15

Ok that would have been Cerna's, Jimenez, Villareal's, Cardenes. I mean, all of them, all the mothers knew us. They knew us, and they were. It wasn't that this was special, of this was they were just all normally Nice. Everybody was normally nice. You know, they I can't. I had relatives there in that area and stuff like that. And

Jonathan Cortez 1:17:57

can you tell me an example of what you remember of a family doing something nice for you?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:18:03

I remember what teachers did, something nice for me more than I do what friend, family, friends, you know, please tell us the teachers would have been like, like, Miss Rhodes did that little bitty, simple thing another there was a teacher, a science teacher in a new JH, seventh grade science she brought me three pairs of pants and three shirts. You know, I'll never forget that, and she gave me those she

she gave me those clothes for Christmas. I was so happy. I wore the hell out of them, you know, I just, you know, just for them, and just wore them till they were shreds. Boy. And whenever a teacher would do that, or they'd give me a kind word, or Miss Campos Eloisa Campos, who was my mentor my whole life. Got to meet my family. Gave me advice till she passed away, you know, and David Cerna's mother, was real sweet to me, y me decia "tu sabes que tu no eres mi hijo, Red pero yo si te quiero mucho te quiero como si fueres mi hijo" I would get that kind of things, you know, from, from Senora Jimenez and other people, what were their names? For first names, okay, Fortosa Jimenez and la senora Signs, you know, it goes, Yeah, I'm forgetting everybody's name. Now, my right here got an opportunity to sell these people to you. Jovita, hovita, she would tell my wife all the time. "olla de Grandes, ya sabes mary, ya sabes el martillo el martillo mete un chingaso Cabron con el martillo" know, they would do stuff like that, you know. And they were, they Jovita there to the end, you know, because I stayed close to her. And then you had, you know, there was just a bunch of people, you know, there, but the ones that I was real close to that, I would say, because I stayed with them till they passed away.

Jonathan Cortez 1:20:37

Okay, tell me about the kinds of school activities that you participated in.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:20:42

Oh, there was always we did. It was always, it was always, you know, the regular Christmas stuff, you know, the regular Thanksgiving stuff. What do you remember about those? No, they were just activities. The most important one was that one was a get gettysburg address that Mrs. Campos, you know. And I was a little gopher for her too. Anda pa alla y agara me estoy y agaramo estoy. I really enjoyed being with another touching moment for that principal to put my butt on fire. He is the Hildebrand. I used to hang around at the school when Miss Campos was there. I used to hang out all the time, until she she quit and went to another job at the state and stuff. I would be there, and I'd run errands for her. And I like she let me hang around the school. I have nothing else to do. I'd hang around at school. But I remember one time they had a TV in the cafeteria on the stage, because the cafeteria and the stage were the same. I remember one time following Mr. Hildebrand, he was going to go. He said, I'm over there helping Ms Campos do some stuff, Eloisa Campos. And then he says something, I'm gonna go look at TV. My brother's coming out. And I said, Yeah, and he was gonna go turn the TV on. It was American Bandstand in those days. So I said, shit, I'm gonna go see American bands then, boy, I'm gonna go see that, see who he's talking about. And it was a high moment for me, because I saw a good side of this man. Well, he was, he was a good man, he was a good principal and stuff like this. But we were in there, and he turned that TV on, and his brother came out on American Bandstand singing with this young lady. And it was a big hit back then. And he sang, "hey, hey, Paula, I want to marry you too". And it was a big hit. And he was there all excited, man, it was he letting, "oh, you son of a gun, you eat with me." He was so proud of his brother, man. And I was seeing that, seeing that good side of him. It really, it impressed me, you know, or it left a certain image in me and and I saw that, and they were very religious. He was religious. And then later on, his brother only made that big hit, and then he got out of that business, because it just wasn't for him, because they were from Burlington, Texas, and they were very religious, and that just that rock and roll. Life was just all that, that sing and stuff. He made a big hit. He made his but, but to see Mr. Hildebrand be so proud of his brother, you know, it allowed me to learn that behavior. And I learned that there in that palm school, you know, of you know, be proud of

people. Be you know, take pride in this, take pride in that, and stuff like that. We learned that at Palm school.

Jonathan Cortez 1:23:53

And what other life lessons did you take from from Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:23:57

I took that the other one I took from Palm school was the bonding that I had with all the students, not so much the teachers or the people. Mrs. Campos, she was like us. She was like us. Ms Campos was but not so much with the girls, but the guys, in those days, it's the guys over here, the girls over there. And I got the friendship. I still have these friends from hundreds of years ago. Boy, they're still there in those streets. I go down those streets and I see things that I'm having flashbacks of positive, laughing, giggling, which made up for my home life. It was my extended family, these friends, these palm school people, and then the power came as an adult, not as a kid. It. Became as an adult. Here we are, 100 years later, and I see where I got my behavior. I see where I got my my potential in life, where I picked up my language, my politeness, how to participate when I came back from Vietnam, it's, it's when I started getting involved in politics, and I became, you know, coming to school, coming to college here, and being very involved in the community. Belong to all kinds of boards and community groups and stuff like that. From that environment, I've learned I serve to this day, I still do a lot of volunteer work. I still am very involved, you know, like with schools. I went into education because I wanted to teach. I wanted to give back what wasn't given to me. You know, I wanted to not even palm school gave it to me, but the recreation center gave it to me. My friends gave it to me. I have a friend, a guy went to a funeral here a couple of years ago. And this guy that went to school with us, Raymond Perez, Ramon Perez, and he was from this side, over here, by closer to the university. And he, he passed away. Young, had a heart attack. I think it was, or I don't know what it was, but anyway, I went to it. I went to his rosary, and I ran into his uncle there, and his uncle, see, we're at school, and we had kids that their uncles went to school with us or their you know, it was we were all mixed. And his name is Walter Aleman. Bien pachuco, bien hablador, mentiroso el cabron. Man, mas mentiroso. But he grew up a guy. He was street wise to the max and stuff. Always talking trash. Boy, good dude. I got along good with him, and I liked him and stuff from kids, but I didn't hang out a lot with him, but I knew we were I would say I was close to him, and I think he feel the same way, because when I saw him at Raymond Perez del Orio, he dijo Colorador. I walked in, and he said that we were outside before going into the chapel. He said, "Colorado bien para aca cabron", that's the way we would talk to each other. All of us talk like that to each other. The guys, no. He said, Well, "me dijeron una mentira de ti" "como que una mentira" "ya cabron, me dijeron una pinche mentira" just like that "una pinche mentira cabron" "que?" "que tu fuiste a la escuela" "como que fui" "que graduaste que fuiste al colegio que tu eres un maestro" dije "ya Walter" "no es una mentira cabron, tu nunca fuiste a la escuela" he knew I had dropped out, but those moments were beautiful, moments like that. "te veras fuiste a la escuela!" when I was teaching at Sanchez Elementary, I had a guy came up to me after a program at Sanchez, and he's telling me "mira este es mi amigo, este es Colorado" And they said, "no, no. ese es mi maestro" He was saying "diles Red que yo y tu somos camarados" que we're friends those moments, you know? And he, um, his kids wouldn't believe him when he would tell him at home, red is my red is my friend. You know, es mi camarado we were kids together, and they "No, no, you can't be friends with the school teacher", you know, and stuff like that. Those moments were, these were friends. These were my friends. We were

tight, and they know I was a drop out. I'm not bragging. I just saying they knew I was a dropout. I just later on matured and I did something

Jonathan Cortez 1:29:25

Tell me about the population of the palm school. Who was it just Mexican students? Was it

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:29:30

100 % Mexican? We didn't have any blacks and one. We had a couple of white kids, white guys, uno era bien pachuco. He was one of the older guys, but he was with khaki y se juntaba con los pachuco stuff, you know. And then we had a What was his name? Do you remember? I can't remember his name. He was an older guy, pero se paraba con los pachucos boy. And he would say he picked up the cuss words already, you know. So he knew the cuss words. Stuff like that. And then there was another white guy that showed up for a little while. And then we had a little kid named Donnie, and he was only there for a few months, and he left again because he they were coming into this neighborhood, and they didn't like it, I guess, and they would leave. And then a couple there was one white girl. I remember when I was in Miss Birch's class. That girl was but I didn't know then that she know she's she could read. I couldn't read, and she could read real good. And I was like, well, she learned how to read. I didn't realize that that was her master language, you know, and stuff like that. Did those things I've contemplated on now and then, get into figuring out what is happening. Why that happened?

Jonathan Cortez 1:30:50

Tell me about Spanish in school. Did you get to speak?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:30:54

Oh, yeah, we spoke spanish all the time when we weren't supposed to nos castigaban y mi primo. I have a cousin, Jerry De Leon, Hermano de Marcos De Leon. Jerry was he still to this day, will say, "I don't know why they spank me. I didn't know we couldn't speak Spanish in the bathroom". You know, they spanked him for speaking Spanish in the bathroom. You know he was we weren't supposed to speak Spanish anywhere. Okay? So we started our first language, Spanish, and it was funny, because you use like yellow, the word yellow, we're learning colors. And yellow is the color red, but yellow, yellow, yellow, yellow, you know ice, meaning that it was ice, you know, he in you, or chi and stuff. We had all this, these words that would so we would laugh about those, okay, but everybody spoke Spanish.

Jonathan Cortez 1:31:52

Did you ever get spanked?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:31:54

Oh, yeah, I got spanked all the time?

Jonathan Cortez 1:31:56

for speaking Spanish?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:31:58

Yeah. I mean, no, no, no, I was smart. I didn't get caught speaking Spanish. Eran aquellos otros tapados they got you know? A mi nomas una vez me pegaron en la mano, they just, me paso una vez but after that, I got smart. I went, you know, but then we started learning English, and you're in an English speaking environment because of Spanish. I mean, it's English. The books are in English. Everybody speaks in English. The teachers speak English. So we're talking more English because we're talking about the subject matter, whatever it is, whether we were good at it or not, whether we were learning academic and we weren't people like myself. We're not picking. We were not acquiring or picking, picking up the the academic language, and people don't understand that when you social and they would hear us, they didn't understand just like a lot of the teachers that I worked with didn't understand, they say, "Oh, that kid can speak English. He can", No, he can't speak English, speaking social English. You got to learn this. You got to understand that there's things that you have to see. And they didn't understand that they would hear us speaking social English, thinking that we were going to and and I can see that now. I couldn't see it back then, but I can see it now, now that I have acquired some, some some experience in life.

Jonathan Cortez 1:33:30

Could you read and write in Spanish?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:33:33

When I was a kid? No, we could just speak it. We couldn't read it. I can read and write it now, but we couldn't speak it. I mean, we didn't know how to we just spoke it. Everybody was poor. Now, if you had some kids that were, I know now I can see it now. I can look back that were very involved with church, like with the Baptist at the Protestant churches, they had acquired reading and writing in Spanish. I can see these people now. I can understand it now and before. No, the Catholic Church didn't do a lot of the kids didn't participate in the reading and writing of the Bible and stuff like that, the like, like in the Baptist and Protestant churches and stuff like that. So these kids I can look at now and say, "esta cabron aprendio" or "esta carbona" I'm not gonan say this person, this female, this male. I remember who was going to church and what church and the ones going to the Protestant church, it's they were becoming good readers in school, I can see it now. I didn't understand it or see it. Then,

Jonathan Cortez 1:34:44

were they learning Spanish or English at the church?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:34:46

No, no, they were learning. They were all the churches were in Spanish. Then in this, in the in the Catholic Church wasn't. Was in como se llama it wasn't in Spanish. It wasn't in English. It was in Latin, Latin. It was in Latin. All the churches, all the Catholic churches, were in Latin. So these guys weren't picking up these when people were not picking up any of that stuff. But Protestants were okay?, and the Protestants, a lot of them were assimilated, you know. And I would see these, like in my church, at the Baptist Church, Primer Iglesia. I would see the way they would dress and stuff like that, in jeans or clean, you know. And they were picking up these habits from from the like I want to speak about. I remember the time that they introduced Juan Vasquez in my church. John Vasquez got married, and he was a Protestant too, but he got married to one of the older girls that grew up with my prima. I

months, and he was one of the first Mexicans to get to go work at the police department. Up to the first two Mexicans, he was one of them, and John Vasquez, you know, the girls, I'm important making this his wife and all these girls that were growing up, you know, they were already in high school and stuff, and they were learning now, I can see them now. They spoke Spanish and English. They wrote Spanish and English, because I saw them do it at church in Spanish. So I'm assuming that they did it in English too. And they became very literate in English and very literate in Spanish, because they were academic. The Bible is a lot of academic language in there. And so I could, as I grew older, I made those ties. I could tie these knots together. And it was very interesting. It's been a very interesting life to wake up later in life, not to just go in and go to school and then go on with life. No I started backwards. So I see this, you know, I'm able to look back and look at all of these behaviors from people at school, the academic inclined students were students that were like the ones that were in the Protestant churches, as opposed to the ones that were in the Catholic Church. And I spend a lot of time thinking about all these things and stuff is

Jonathan Cortez 1:37:39

is one quick question. So did you the only when you went to palm school, were you already speaking English, or did that happen when you get there? And then also, what were your textbooks like? Could you

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:37:52

Oh, the books were all in English. They were all in English, okay, all the textbooks were in English, okay? We came to school speaking Spanish, what's called BICS it's, it's basic interpersonal communication skills, you know, just it's at the lower level extreme of that. Okay, we came speaking Spanish. Okay, we didn't speak English, and then we started picking up English in school, because now they're pulling out textbooks. The only English we would know is if we were reading comic books, then that's when. And that's real simple. That's real good. That's teaching material, because you have one word, one picture, one sentence, one picture.

Jonathan Cortez 1:38:43

Do you remember any kind of comic books reading?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:38:47

Yes, all of us did in the neighborhood. A lot of us, the ones that weren't home bound. I would call them home bounds, because their parents kept control of where they went. But a bunch of us would go to the Austin paper company that was in that enclave right down the street from Palm school, right down the street from and it was called the paper company. And people would go there to sell cardboard paper. And then the guys that had magazines, the companies that sold magazines, comic books and stuff like that, the ones that didn't sell, they would tear the cover off, cover off. And they go throw them away over there. And we would be like flies, boy, just waiting for those comic books. And we would jump on those comic books and get those. And the Mexicanos. I didn't know then que eran Mexicanos de Mexico. Pero ahora asi ya se que yo pense que todos eran Chicanos and they would kind of slow down. They was their job to rake that stuff up, put it in there, and make the bundles of paper and cardboard and stuff, you know, tie them up. But they would kind of take their time real slow and let us attack. You because the court, the comic books had already been weighed by these people and they

were selling. So we would get they would let us come in there and just attack this, these comic books, and everybody would get whatever they had, and they go home. Did you have a favorite? No, oh yeah. My favorite would have been Tour. And the other one was Door, Spider Man. And I like the love books, the love comic books. I was amazed with him, you know, because you just I like the love books. I don't know why, but they were they, you know, well, they were good stuff. Maybe because I didn't have a mother. I don't know what it was, but I grew to kind of, it was a, it was a little bit, I guess it was a little bit higher reading, you know, with, you know, when the guys and the girls are talking to each other and stuff. Oh, little Archie. Little archie is what I want to say, those kind of books and stuff and and so that was, but you could just see the picture and understand it. You didn't have to read the text. So that was real to enjoy, but that's, that was the only reading I did and a lot of my friends, we didn't never read. I used to love the Miss Cyrus was with the librarian. And when I went to school. I remember at one time, one of the when I got interested Dr, Dr Seuss had written his first book, Cat in the Hat, or whatever in the hell it was, and I didn't understand, I understand the power of it now. She would read a story to us every time we went into the library or read something to you. So I used to like that, because I used to love hearing the story. Hell I didn't have to read it. I was hearing the story. And Miss Cyrus would and and I liked her a lot, you know, because she was we would go in there and check out books and stuff like that, and she was polite and all of that. But one time when I was in the fifth grade, I want to say a fourth grade. No me acuerdo, they pulled us in. No, I was smaller. I was in the second or third grade somewhere, they brought in a student teacher was there, and they wanted us to hear this letter that the student teacher wrote. Took me years to understand this. She was reading this letter about how bad the students were, that she had wanted to become a teacher, to be able to work with kids and all of this other stuff and serve the community and the Lord and all this. And she comes here, and we don't know how to read, we don't know how to act. We don't know how to do this, and I couldn't put the picture together. And I used to like Miss Cyrus, but when I became an adult and I became more educated and stuff, I said, "this bitch, ain't good". To allow that person to read that letter to us about how bad we were as kids and students. I didn't grasp it till years later.

Jonathan Cortez 1:43:47

How did you make sense of it? What did you make sense of it?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:43:50

Because I became I became an educator. I became a person. I knew what was involved with reading and teaching and all of that. And here this lady, all she ever did, she allowed that to happen in her library, for a student teacher to come in with these teachers, and then to read that. They were reading it to us when we were in that and they were reading it to all the other students in the campus. Why? Because they saw us as not performing, producing, as if we didn't have any interest in learning, you know, we were backwards. We were, you know, and now that I'm older, I understand why. I understand why I didn't learn how to read. They just passed us on. You go to third you go to first grade, and you go to second grade, you go to third grade. And if you're first grade, you get first grade work, you get second grade work, second grade, third grade work, and third grade, fourth grade. And so we're behind. We're not learning how to read. We're not learning academic language. Okay? We know social language, but we didn't learn academic language. And the kids that were learning academic language, they were really good school, okay? They read well, they were good reasons. I've got my philosophy. My philosophy is this, you read, you learn to read by first grade, and then you read to learn second

grade and above, but you got to learn how to read first okay, we're going to school. We're speaking Spanish. They're teaching us in English. That's why bilingual education was created, not because we need, we already know Spanish. Bilingual Education to teach them in a language that they understand until they can make the transition into English.

Jonathan Cortez 1:45:57

Okay, so why? Why did they not find it important for you all to learn how to read?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:46:02

No, I'm just saying they passed us on. They knew it was important to teach us to read. What they didn't understand was a system of educating somebody they didn't know, or they didn't understand, that this kid is coming to you speaking in this language, and you're trying to teach him to lead in this other language. He doesn't know that sec, that other language. My second language is English. Everybody else's second language, anything we come in, teach us in Spanish or something Spanish is simple, you know,

Jonathan Cortez 1:46:41

does that? Can you? Can you? Tell me of an experience that you remember, that you feel like you can that helps us understand this dynamic, because this is the very big picture you're painting. But what does it look like? What did it feel like while you were in Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:46:53

What it felt like when I was in Palm school is I didn't understand. I hadn't mastered first grade academics yet, and they put me to second grade. I haven't mastered second grade, so I'll get to third grade, and I'm never gonna master I'm behind on the academic language. They're not teaching me at my level. They're not teaching me with what I know and understand.

Jonathan Cortez 1:47:20

And do you think this was happening across Austin,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:47:23

It still happens. They passed the kids. Teachers are wonderful that it manipulating the system. You know, people don't understand teachers. And I'm not gonna say I know, I'm 100% completely, but it's a damn big difference when you have a teacher and the teacher. Ill tell you about how the system works. Okay, you can go on when you get a class. This is one of the big complaints that teachers get right now. Well, I've got these kids, they're not on the same level, and I can teach they're using that third grade book to teach third grade and the kids speaking first grade English, we haven't they just keep passing you and passing you, and you get passed and you get passed. And then after a while, you get these tests that the kids take, you know, the TOSS test, the STAR test and all of that. And I had to go to another town to start to broaden my horizons there to figure something out, which was, they keep passing us on, and these kids go on because teachers are slick. They know how to work the paperwork and the numbers and stuff, to keep passing them on, to not make themselves to look bad when a kid doesn't pass a TOSS test or star test in the fifth grade. That's not the fourth third grade teacher's fault. That's a kindergarten first grade, second grade, teacher's fault. They weren't prepared correctly. Okay,

Jonathan Cortez 1:49:08

I want to bring this back to the to the palm school. What were some of your top score assignments, please.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:49:13

This is what I know now, what I can see, okay, this is what I'm seeing now, because I can see the kids that were slow, like me. I can see the kids that were making good grades, okay, and I understand why they were making good grades back then, because I could see them. The school system is made for 12% of the population, and you got to understand that when you walk in that room, they're 12% of the population. And that 12 percentile is for a certain purpose, because of our history and the way we were preparing people, you didn't have all the technology like you have now. Okay, so most of the teachers are in that percentile. You. They know how to do the work. They're a students. They don't want to be bothered. Don't bother me with this, you know, just give me, tell me what you want done, and I'll do it. Okay. So you have these teachers that go in there and they are teaching people, okay? They're teaching people, but they're teaching at their grade level, whether the kid is accepting or not or, I mean acquiring the stuff, 15, 12% in the other 80 percentile how we just stumbled through school. Okay? And you've got to know there's a difference in the age of when you send the kid and stuff. And at Palm school, I can see it now. I can see how they were passing us up. I can see how they didn't retain us when they needed to, as opposed to some of the kids that got retained. And I can see them now a couple of the three or four of the kids got retained, girls and guys, all them other rippers, they were held back so they had a second chance to learn how to read.

Jonathan Cortez 1:51:10

Do you remember their names?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:51:13

There was one girl named Pauline.

Jonathan Cortez 1:51:15

Why was she held back?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:51:17

Taba morenita ella, bonita morenita. I'm just saying that's an example of a person because she was retained. There was a couple of other guys that were that had retained, you know, three or four people, and they had, I got another friend, a couple other friends, I remember, they retained them, and they ended up with us. And then they had that second chance to start acquiring the language. You know, they were passing people on. They still do it. They pass them and they pass them. They don't they see retaining a child as a punishment instead of an opportunity. Let's retain them one more year and give them the chance to catch up and learn to read. They weren't doing that stuff in Palm school. Okay, I'm not knocking it or nothing. It's good. It was all round robin teaching, what they call round robin, where you you're in little groups, and you all guys and one teacher, and the teacher stays up here with the main group. They don't work with the lower groups until they have to really have to work with us. Okay,

Jonathan Cortez 1:52:29

so were you part of the lower group?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:52:30

I was always the second to the lowest group. Okay, now I understand that they don't do round robin anymore.

Jonathan Cortez 1:52:34

How did you end up in the second to the lowest group?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:52:36

Because I was low I don't know. Hell. Could you put me in there, but not the lowest one, not the highest, the lowest one, because no, esta pendejo, pero no pendejito pendejito you know, I was just, you know, I was, I was there. I just didn't know how to read. I could now the other guy, they wanted to hire the other people. And I can see this now. I see it for I see it. I see the dick run, Dick that it was all learning to read, word calling, they never taught us how to decipher the word or the language. English is a difficult language to learn. You know, it's sequence. It's difficult. You got 50, 54, 57 different sounds for the sound a It's not like Spanish, where Spanish A is always ah, E is always I, you know be V es B V de vaca B de burro. And you know Spanish, it's easy to learn if they had been teaching us in Spanish at the beginning and then transferring us to English. And that's what bilingual education was about. We already knew Spanish. We're not and people will say, you learn in Spanish. No, hell, we already know Spanish. We're learning academics, academic language. And in order to be successful in the school system, at Palm school, I can see it. You know why we weren't successful. We didn't master academic language.

Jonathan Cortez 1:54:03

What did you all being Mexicans have to do with all of this?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:54:07

Pos hablamos Espanol. We were a different culture, a different group of people. You had some people, the ones that we call que eran los gringos chingado. You had some people that would here's the difference between assimilating and acculturating. We didn't assimilate, nor did we acculturate. Okay, we didn't we. We were, I guess, I guess, right now what I'm talking to you, I could say we were so proud of who we were at the palm area, our self esteem was so good that if we weren't learning to read, that's fine. If we weren't going to go finish high school, that's fine. But almost everybody I grew up with, they went from palm to UJH, from UJH, they went to Austin High School and they graduated. But you know what? When somebody Jonathan, when somebody, it doesn't scare me for somebody to drop out? Okay, I come from that system, and I've lived long enough now I live. I have lived long enough to know who was successful and who was not successful. For my environment, childhood, okay, and we, the majority of us, did not go to jail. The majority of us were not out there getting in trouble, not from the palm area. The majority of you might have been alcoholics, you know, and stuff like that. We had some drugs and stuff, but the majority of us grew up to be good citizens, okay, and we stayed out of trouble and stuff like that. Okay? So we knew how to act, but the majority of the I know didn't learn how to read

good, didn't learn how to comprehend, because we didn't grasp academic language. I can see that now. I can see us in the classroom. I understand it and I see this, but that's the palm school and you want to do but palm school is not just palm school. Palm school is an enclave. It had the recreation center, palm school had that was where everything blossomed in politics that enclave. Our first city councilman came from that area. Our first county commissioner came from that area. And all of these people, you know, we had different groups that came up in politics. When I came back, I didn't realize when I came back from Vietnam, this is where I saw the change. There was a change, and that Enclave was, you know, where it was, ma little one or two blocks where I grew up at. That's why I got involved with politics. That's why I got involved with wanting to do something with myself. Like, yeah, I can go to school, I'm smart, I got potential, okay? And we do this, okay? It's not just one group, and that's what I was trying to say here earlier. That lady mentioned one group that was just a little splinter of little bitty group, the other ones that did something outside of the Barrio or prepared us for outside of the Barrio. With this other group,

Jonathan Cortez 1:57:38

I want to pause because I want to get to those people, but I want to finish our conversation about palm school first.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:57:43

Okay, palm school, I can see the wrongs of palm school. Let me put it that way, okay, I'm not telling you that the palm school wasn't great, because I learned my behavior at Palm school. All of us learned how to be social, how to be successful in life at Palm school, okay? Plus the Salvation Army, okay?

Jonathan Cortez 1:58:04

What was your favorite subject at Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 1:58:08

I would say it would have been, it had to have been history. It had to have been history. It had to have been because, and that would have been to the fifth grade. Thanks to the fifth grade, to miss Birch, I mean to miss Rhodes, because it was World History. And in that class at world history, I learned something, and I was real disturbed about it for years. It disturbed me. Another thing I learned from Miss birch, I mean, Miss, Miss Rhodes, she was telling us about rain one time. She said I was coming to work, and she was explaining to us that it doesn't rain just all over the place. I thought when it rained here, it rained all over the world. It rained all over Austin. She said, No. She said I was coming down across 19th Street and it stopped raining. I said, no, no. How did that how the hell did it happen? She made me think, you know, how did the hell did that happen? She said, it doesn't rain everywhere. I learned that Austin was on a plateau in that class, because what I didn't read, she explained, or she said a little bit, you know, something wonderful about it. Was exposed to that young lady that made me a part of the world. She explained all this stuff. And then I was talking, I was getting there to talk about our history, because it was World history, and it was about but she made a statement one time. She said, "there's more in the United States. There's more white people, Anglos, and then. It's blacks, the black population and then the Mexican population is the lowest population". I said, no, they in my head. Ain't. No way that can be true. I live in the east side here, but I didn't know the east side was the only I didn't know anything. I never paid attention when I walked down to Congress Avenue back then, that

was all it was. Congress Avenue, everybody shopped sixth Street. I didn't never realize that all the shop owners were white. The majority of the population walking the streets were white. I lived in the Mexican area. Everybody was 100% Mexican. One white here, one way. I didn't pay attention to the people that own the drug store were white. The people that own the hamburger stands were white, that all the business people come down to Congress Avenue, and all the business people were white. I didn't know that. All I saw was Mexican. I had no problem being a Mexican, light complected Mexican, because I spoke Spanish all the time. I spoke English broken, no Spanish broken. It didn't make a difference. Everybody in my community was brown. Everybody in my community was Mexican.

Jonathan Cortez 2:01:09

How was it walking down Congress Avenue as a Mexicano around fully white stores? Did you ever go into them?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:01:18

Yeah, we lived. Everybody lived at the Woolsworth, because everybody caught the bus and stuff the Woolsworth was the most popular store, okay? And then you went to Seventh Street, and it was all the stores were all Anglo owned, all Anglo spoken, you know, and the Mexicans went to these stores and shopped the grocery store on six street with the Humpty Dumpty, and that Humpty Dumpty was an important place. Everybody shopped there. Everybody we didn't get an HEB until years later, okay, and the Humpty Dumpty is where the Mexicans went, and it was two Lebanese own that store. They made millions. Boy, I don't know they made millions, but they made a lot of money, and they bought a lot of property and stuff. But they were kind to the Mexicans, and everybody went shopping there because they were very polite. They made the point to learn the people's names, who they were, who were they were not they. So everybody would go there to buy the groceries. We had, we had a gypsy cab compnay, I guess the guys in the east coast called it Gypsy cab. We had the Yellow Cab cab company. And then you had Roy's and but they were Roy's taxi and stuff like that. But then you had the two nickel. The two nickel was right there on Sixth Street, right there by 35 and six Street, and two nickel was with a black market taxi people. They had a phone in the shop. You would call that phone say. "Hey, come pick me up. I need a ride to so and so" it was cheaper than the other one, and that's why they call it two nickels. You get the ride for two nickels. You don't have to pay that other when they first started to shop, it was two nickels a dime to get get across town or

Jonathan Cortez 2:03:20

whatever was, there still lots of segregation when you were growing,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:03:24

Oh yeah, to the max. Tell me about it. To The Max. Brother, you had brown East Austin, black East Austin, and then you had white Austin. Okay, all over. You know, that was segregated to the max. And it was a I was working over here at the holiday house and stuff like that, and that's all that. And then they started in not integration, because it was all the Mexicans went to Mexican schools, the blacks went to black elementaries, and then they ended up going to Kealing junior high, and then they went to Anderson High School. That was it. They were not going to go to school. They weren't integrated. It didn't get integrated until I was in the seventh grade. The schools got integrated at my school, at Palm school, go Valle, Zavala, Brooks, Becker. I mean, not Becker Becker and South Austin mixed. Brook

school, go Valle. They were all Mexican schools. And then when they got up, they only went to either Allen junior high or they went to UJH, and then from there, they went to Johnston and Austin high it was segregated. When I was in Vietnam, I used to get a paper, Marcelo Tafoya. I used to print this paper, Mexican neighborhood paper. And I used to get one of those ladies, the young girl that worked there since. Sent me the paper in Nam. Do you remember the paper's name? Oh yeah, it was just Marcelo Tafoya, I can remember the name of the newspaper, but I would get that paper, and I used to love to read that paper, because it talked mostly about the community. And in that year, when I was in Vietnam, it talked about one of the articles dealt with McCallum High School, okay, McCallum High School in that period, 19, 70, because I'm in Vietnam, 17 families were Mexicans out of the whole high to school. No blacks. That was a population of that school, okay, and these families that usually live there were the families that lived in Round Rock or Georgetown, they moved closer to North Austin. And I was intrigued with that article. Years later, after I read it, I said, Wow, McCallum, Scotty Lamar, high school, junior high was the other junior high, and the high school was McCallum, and the people there went to Rosedale Elementary, and they were Mexicans or whatever, and another one pero. You know, they, they. It was segregated man to the max. You know, when it started changing, all of a sudden, you have people that don't like each other starting to share the same cigarette. They couldn't stand each other. Wouldn't even they'd kill each other in a minute, but they'd sit there and smoke the same cigarette together. You imagine what that was. It brought that. That was a change of before that. You had heroin addicts hung out here, pot smokers here, alcoholics over here. But then marijuana, when that came out, when they started crossing the interstate 35 to start mixing with each other, that was because of the drugs and stuff. Now they were multi use. It wasn't no longer normal. Now it was pot. Everybody spoke in pod, doing drugs, popping pills, and that was in the 60s.

Jonathan Cortez 2:07:23

Let's go back to palm to finish this up, because there's still a few things I want to I want to hear. Tell me about a joyous moment you remember from palm and that made you smile

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:07:34

every moment, every moment we were there to take pictures. I'm telling you, I never missed a school day. Picture Day was good with getting pictures. Nobody bought them, but a few family you know, and it was hard to get the pictures. But every day for me, every day was a good day at Palm school. It was we had all bonded. We weren't bonded. We had already bonded. You know, we were there at school. That's where we all mixed with the bad kids, the good kids, the smart kids, the dumb kids. All of us were there in the same room. All of us were there. We were getting to know each other now we see each other. We're grown man, we're old man, or we were young adults, hey cabron ya me acuerdo de ti de la escuela, like I saw this one dude a couple of years ago at a dance and San Antonio, and he was there with his brother in law and me mira and starts saying UJH, UJH you know. And I mean, it's every day was a joy day for me. That's why I went to school. We all had Salvation Army shoes. I donate money to the Salvation Army now all the time, because we all got our shoes there. You could tell who got Salvation Army shoes, you know, and in every day was a good day for me. It wasn't a bad day. It was, it was a bonding day, but it didn't teach me organization. It didn't teach me skills that came from the Salvation Army Youth Center, from being in the streets and going to church and stuff, you know, but there at the school, ay estaba la palomilla. Okay, I go to San Antonio. Moved to San Antonio because

hay esta el baile. I wanted company. I wanted visitors. My wife wanted visitors. People come to see us. They got a free hotel in my house, and we go good at Tejano music. You don't have that over here.

Jonathan Cortez 2:09:43

Were there any, were there any dances or anything at Palm or,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:09:46

Oh no, no, no. We had school dances all the time at Palm. Tell me about it. We would dance and stuff like that. We would have the little sock hops and stuff like that. Oh yeah, that was we did the dances. But it was mostly like the twist and all that. We didn't do any of that cumbia. And then after Cumbias that much, and you didn't have the polkas, because we weren't gonna touch the girls, and girls weren't touch us. But they did have the auditorium, the Coliseum. It was limited. You talk about divisions. We had limited entertainment in Austin. Okay? We had jamaicas, the Spanish music and stuff. And you know what the white people were doing Austin back then? We know now I know that they didn't sell Budweiser. I mean, they didn't sell whatever it was, jacks or slits, they would sell Budweiser, and the Mexican men weren't going to buy Budweiser. And when we were growing up, we weren't going to buy Budweiser because it was a nickel more or dime more beer. So that's a lot of money.

Jonathan Cortez 2:10:54

And what beers were you all drinking?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:10:56

All the Mexicans were drinking Falstaff first, then it switched over to Jack's, then it switched over to Slits, and then it went over to Bud Light, Budweiser, and then Bud Light, Bud Light came later on, you know. And it's Bud Light, some Coors and stuff, but mostly bud.

Jonathan Cortez 2:11:12

So who would you go to the dances with?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:11:14

Oh man, it was all of us went that guy, Ramon Perez. I'm telling you about, I had a conversation with Ramon Perez. I went to, went to my wife, prima. She had 50th anniversary by her and her husband. Okay, Ramon Perez was there because his wife is married to to to to the, to the guy, to the girl that's married to the to the, to the, to the husband, to Reuben and and I had to have a conversation with with Ramon Perez. Okay, I needed, I was dying to talk to Ramon for years, and he said, he didn't say that. I mean, Ramon Perez never finished school, but he ended up with a job, doing big jobs, supervising, you know, doing construction jobs. I mean, not construction, you know, a big construction sites, not just any, any kind. And he never graduated from high school, but I needed to have a conversation with him. So we went down there, and I saw him at the dance, and I went in and I talked to him. I said, Come on, because everybody would say, "No, Ramon, you know he's doing this. He can read blueprints, and he can do this, and he's super just ask him for a job. If you want a job, go ask Ramon" in this big construction company he was working with. Okay, now the point I want to make is my conversation was, I was aching I was dying to have is because I had Ramon's daughter in my class in the sixth grade. But now here we are, 100 years later. We're at this dance and at this dance tabamos bailadores.

We're all old people now, and the people that were serious dancers back then are still serious dancers. So we're we got Ruben Ramos playing and stuff like that. But I go talk to, I had to talk to Ramon. And I said, "Raymon, platicame cabron, me dijeron que estabas aqui coriendo big, you know, this big business up here reading all these blueprints and stuff". And then I set them up for the conversation, boy for the conversation. And he said, Yeah, yeah. "But you know what a octagon is, and you know what degrees you can I mean, you know what this is". And I start throwing some math his way. He said, "No, I don't know, God damn it, but I do know this red, sabes que cabron. I can tell you what that angle is, degrees wise". He can't tell you the name of the angle. Okay, a geographic thing, but he can tell you the degrees the curvature. He can tell you all of this stuff about this stuff. And this is a high school drop out. Where did he learn it? On the job, but he was smart enough when he was young to have picked up something that made him successful at this part of his life, you see, and that's where my education goes. But I was happy to be a palm. I loved Palm. Don't get me wrong, I loved it. I didn't learn a damn thing there. And don't hold it against me, you know, I didn't, they didn't teach me, you know, I know that now, okay, I went to Vietnam. When we were in boot camp, in the military, people would say, I would tell people, well, I didn't like the way they treated us boot camp. They'd beat the shit out of it. They would do this and stuff, and the guys that were in the Marine Corps with me and stuff or before, "oh no, they just trying to make you a better soldier". And they never made me a better soldier. Shit. I was ready to die for that flag. You know, they were beaten us because they were frustrated. The sergeants, I know, because I worked with Recruits later on. And what I'm saying is, in the military, they were beating us. I would volunteer they didn't have to beat me. You know, they'd have made me a better soldier if they had talked to me. Right? That's in the military. Okay? I was there with my cousin Joe. I love being with my cousin Joe. We went through we have the same friends in the Marine Corps for in the training, we served in Vietnam in the same areas. Did Joe go to palm school? He went two years to palm school, and I went six he went to another school. They took them back across town and but

Jonathan Cortez 2:16:07
they what's his full name?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:16:09

Joe Steve Garcia. Esta feo el cabron. Yeah, that mother Ripper. Love my cousin Joe. My cousin Joe. I love all my cousins, okay, but we were, we were in the military. I was finally going to do something on my own. I was going to go into the Marine Corps. And I came back, and I told Joe, Joe, I'm joined the Marine curriculum. Two weeks later, he comes back, and I was all happy. I was going to do something about myself. I've done been with all my friends and my relatives. Never done anything with my life by myself because I lived in that palm school area. Okay, still the same, friends, relatives and stuff. They if Y viene Joe y me dice they said, red, red. Pull it. Hey. Red, red. Guess what? I'm joined. I'm going with you on the buddy program. They had a buddy. I said, Oh well, I ain't gonna get to do this by myself. So we are in boot camp. We go to boot camp and all this stuff. And I'm still mad at him, I'm still mad at my cousin Joe, because I'm not gonna get to do this thing by myself. You know, go do this. We all have to do something important in life. Everybody has to do something important. I've been lucky to do several things that are important. Okay. Besides have children, you got to do something and and we're and I'm mad, we get up there, and then we got to put our feet on the yellow footprint. They're scheming at us. They're cussing at us. They're beating us up, boy, and we're there. They shave our heads, and then they make us go into this room and they give you a box and say, Here, put everything in there. You're

going to mail everything home. And I was so mad at my cousin for going with me, y alli todo me estan gritando me estan dando en la madre y estoy alli llorando” “Joe onta mi primo joe, onta joe” and I go around looking for him. You had brown spots, black spots, in white spots. And I'm looking at all the brown spots to see if I can find my cousin Joe. “Onta mi primo, quiero mi primo” and then I was real glad he was there, because I had somebody to cry with in the hole my head and and anyway, you know this, every day was a good day at Palm.

Jonathan Cortez 2:18:32

How are you treated by the other students, by the other teacher, by teachers. How are you treating?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:18:36

It was respectful the most of them, you know, they would talk to us, and because you stayed at the school for six years, so you got to know everybody, okay, and the good and the bad of everybody and stuff like that, we knew the invisible boundaries which teachers would mean, and some would come and go and but the majority of them just stayed there. Okay? And the kids, they stayed there, you know? So it was a big family, teachers. I had a reunion years ago, and I need to find those pictures. I had a put together, me and a group of kids. Put a put together a palm school reunion. Okay?

Jonathan Cortez 2:19:21

Do you remember what year that was?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:19:23

Oh, that was here, back a good 20-30, years ago. Okay, we did it. We got together at Zilker Park, at Barton springs, Zilker Park, and we had several teachers show up. The kids. Then that was, those are the kids, the good kids. That was Jerry and them. That was a that was a general, that was kids that were a year or two younger than us. What's Jerry's last name? I can't remember. I have to go dig them , todo estos cabrones, the ones you mostly remember the last names of the ones that you were in Sixth Grade with third grade, and we all went like that. You were in groups, first grade, second grade, third grade, and you stayed. You're in first grade, you stayed with the same kids all the way through sixth grade, and then you were with them in seventh grade, eighth grade, you know, but they were there in it was, I love palm school. I love going to school. I love eating the food. I love the people I was with. Never had a fight. Yes, never had a fight at Palm school. Never did I fight with anybody. I was a good kid. Everybody was a good kid. Now we had a few mean people and bullies and stuff like that, but by far, everybody got along real well, and then you knew them at school, because y'all were in first grade, second grade, third, fourth grade, but you didn't mix much with the second grader, the third grader, those you got to know at the Salvation Army Youth Center, that's where you got to know them. They were there. We're all running around together and stuff like, we're intermingling the old and the young, and you're growing together, you know? And you that's where that was the ice breaker, right there, the Salvation Army, and then the politics when I came back, that was these things that I learned.

Jonathan Cortez 2:21:30

Before we get there. I want to ask you, what do you remember about the building of the palm school? What do you remember about the classrooms, the walls, the building

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:21:37

They were all the same. They all stay. We had everybody had windows. We all had windows in the classrooms. Okay. When I was in the fifth grade, they had the Super Sonic the the planes from Bergstrom Air Force Base were breaking the sound barrier, and we'd be in class, and then all of a sudden, boom, boom. We the first time we ran to the damn windows and see what the hell is going on. Because the planes were over here, and they were taken off from Bergstrom Air Force Base, which is the airport now, and they were having the breaking the sound barrier and stuff like that. And then the teachers had they learned to control us at that point, because we all wanted to start running up every time they had the sound barrier. But then after that, it just, I remember that the windows, we had no air condition. Okay, in those days, nobody had air conditioning. We didn't even have air conditioning at home, I'm telling you, everybody hung out outside, salias a caminar en la tarde. The same people over here. You the kid. You see your kid friends over here, and you see their parents and stuff like that. And you walk through first, second, third, and in all other streets, Haskell and stuff like that.

Jonathan Cortez 2:22:53

Tell me about, tell me about walking around. Oh, what stores do you remember?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:22:58

Anderson drug store. And then they had another store. I forgot the name of the damn store. Was down the street by the recreation center. You had that store. You had Anderson drug store. And then HEB came, and they were down there on First Street. Okay, y ese H, E, B, le tumbo el negocio. Le tumbo el negocio al Humpty Dumpty Humpty Dumpty closed down because they lost all their business to heb got put. They put an heb on the corner of Red River and Sixth Street. They put one over there in my area, right there on First Street, and Waller. And then they put an heb on Seventh Street. So they knocked everybody else out of business. All the mom and pop stores closed, all the little bitty, las tienditas. Y todos because in those days, tienen los tienditas. And It's going to that way of life now, back to the. Y Estaban los chiquios, todos chicquios and you'd be with somebody y de repente "anda a la tienda y traeme nomas una Cebolla y una papa." There were no refrigerators "traeme una Cebolla, y una papa, una media libra de carne picada" It was always carne picada, so it was, it was, you know, so it was slowly but surely, it choked the other stores, you know, and we went away from that. Now I've gone back to that system, because it's just me and my wife, and there's no reason for us to part our past time is going to the grocery store, even if it's just to buy one or two tomatoes,

Jonathan Cortez 2:24:39

you know, red, I'm really fascinated by how the way you understand this history is really through geography. You remember the streets, you remember the where you turn. And so I really, I want to try this experiment with you. Could you imagine yourself walking from your home on Third Street to palm school? Tell me. I want you to slow down and tell me on your way to school, whose houses Did you pass, what kinds of stores did you pass? What was the give us a visual of what it was like to walk to school.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:25:14

Okay, you would go. I lived on Second Street, but I only lived two blocks from the highway. Okay? So go up to the corner cut up to Anderson drug store, because alli es donde le conbesean los pinches

chivos y las vacas. The thought we would all just all of a start getting into that. And then you would see all the people coming. And, I mean, I come in and going, just going, the kids. And then we would get over there to palm in school. And then in the afternoon, here we went back, and you had that big herd of animals going, and then they would be out breaking off. You know, it was real exciting. It was exciting when we went to UJH, over here in junior high, we had to go the thoroughfare was, we could have gone down night 35 okay, and you did a lot of time, but mostly on Red River Street. You would start on Red River Street. And all the follow me on were coming down from the same people you were in elementary with in Palm you're going down. It was a big herd of animals. It was fun. These people walking from way to HELL out there, down south by the river, First Street, like us, all the way down to 19th Street, you'd see the trail like that. That was exciting, all of echando madres y todo, y echandole gritando los vatos de alla, y ellos gritandote a ti, everybody, a lot of comradery you know, and then over here estamos todos huercillos. At Palm school, we're still kids, you know we're all kids and stuff, and we don't start discovering girls till about that. And the older kids that have been failed once or twice, well, they're more aggressive you know with each other. and but then one of the big differences is coming to junior high, because we didn't have middle school we had Junior High. Junior High was now we're getting girlfriends and boyfriend, and then you see this girl and guy being boyfriend and girl, and then all of a sudden they're broke up, and they're over here now, everybody's fighting with each other over the women and the guys, and it's that was a big change, discovering girls and discovering guys over here at junior high, but still walking with a big hurt. Over here, we're still little kids, you know, and the boys are walking together and the girls are walking together, and over here we're mixing.

Jonathan Cortez 2:27:44

Talk to me about the cultural differences between the community. You talked a lot really beautifully about the expansive community of the palm Barrio neighborhood, right stores, people, parks, rec centers, but then, right then, you talk about how school was a little bit color

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:28:01

red, not Ray. Red. Okay, red. You said Ray, yeah, I didn't say your name at all. Oh, I thought you said, no,

Jonathan Cortez 2:28:09

no, I'm asking the question is about outside you got to really explore your Mexican culture, but inside of school, how was your Mexican culture? Did they celebrate it? What kinds of events?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:28:19

No, no, no, no, ah, there was no celebrations about your culture. It was all American culture. It was all Anglo culture. When we did dancing and stuff like that, it was square dancing, okay? It was always an Anglo environment, because that's what the teachers were. They were Anglo.

Jonathan Cortez 2:28:42

Was there any Mexican American history?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:28:44

No, you never read. Heard anything about Mexicans? Never anything. Nothing was ever, it was never. You don't talk about the it's always American, gringo culture. Nothing Mexican at all. That we invented ourselves when we're in line, when we're outside, playing, you know, gritandonos en Espanol y todo. It was, no there was English, was in class, English and government. Everything was the American culture. Was that. That's why we didn't we still were not assimilating. We weren't acculturating with these people, and I'm saying with the gringos, we didn't we didn't identify with them. They didn't have our culture, they didn't have our customs, they didn't eat our foods, they didn't talk our language. They it was two worlds. This was an Anglo world, and you walked out it's a Mexican world, okay, that's the way it was. There was no in between. You know, we didn't, this stuff that we did at school. We did it there. We did a play, they had us do something like the pilgrims, or something like that. That stayed at school, that didn't come into the neighborhood, did

Jonathan Cortez 2:30:04

Were there plays like that for Thanksgiving?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:30:07

No, that that? No, there was, it was Thanksgiving. Was a white thing.

Jonathan Cortez 2:30:11

Okay, but did you do a play at Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:30:15

Oh yeah, we would do plays like that for Thanksgiving and for, you know, whatever Valentine's or for whatever else, you know, it was always Anglo organized. The only one that did something for us was Miss Campos. It was for the Mexican kids to do this stuff with the Mexican kids, and she did these programs after school or with the PTA that was on her own time that she was doing these programs that we would do at the school. What kinds of programs they were like Mila., the Gettysburg Address, a group of kids getting together and doing the baton stuff, like the girls, see, they love doing that stuff. And they would do those things, and they would do other things. They were angle Anglo directed type of activities, mostly, you know what?

Jonathan Cortez 2:31:13

What About the Star Spangled Banner?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:31:15

Oh, no, that that was part of the the that was part of the morning, or the Pledge of Allegiance. Yeah, that was part of the morning. Okay? That was the Pledge of Allegiance, the prayer and stuff like that, and that. That's why I understand. We went to school there. Okay? Madeline O'Hara, I don't know if you're familiar with her. Madeline O'Hara, people don't realize that the prayer has never left school. So I worked in the schools all my, you know, my career and stuff, and besides the other stuff that I did before, she didn't stop prayer, prayer still exists at school. People are so they're still prayer there. The reason we don't have prayer in school is because of Christians, because of religious people, because we were at a school and what Madeline O'Hara stopped, which is important for people to understand, is this, when we were there, we would get up in the morning, we would do the Pledge of Allegiance, okay,

we would do a prayer in the prayer was always a Protestant prayer. We have almost 100% Catholic population in school, okay? Very few of us are Protestant but almost everybody, it's almost 100% Catholic, and then you have Anglo people doing an Anglo Protestant prayer, enforcing or teaching Mexican kids to do that they're not it's not a Catholic prayer. It's an Anglo prayer. Does that make sense to you? So we're reading, we're doing now, a prayer that they're negative, not even being taught at home what they're being taught at Guadalupe church. They don't do that kind of praying. That's what Madeline O'Hara was talking about, you forcing a kid to pray something that it's good for you, but not good for them. Okay? And when I was teaching, the first thing I did, this was important for me, was to teach this was you go home today, on the first day of school, you have a you have a minute of silence to worship any way you want to. And I would tell the kids, "you go home and I want you to ask your parent how they want you to pray, or what prayer they want you to use at school". I would tell my students that, and when I had a parent come I'd tell them, Look, because I would teach my kids, it's okay to pray, but you do your prayer. Okay, if you're Baptist, do a Baptist Protestant? Do you Protestant? Whatever, ask your parents. And then during the parent conference, I would ask the parent be sure, if you partake in religious beliefs and prayers, make sure you teach your kid, because they do have that opportunity for one minute of silence to worship, and you need to teach them your prayer. I want you to teach them yours, not somebody else's. And they would come to school see and people think that they don't pray, that's bullshit. They pray Okay, and we did, and they still do, and we were not doing that at Palm. At Palm, you were indoctrinated to do now, I'm getting real academic. You know, you're indoctrinated to pray like the gringos, not like the Mexicans. Okay? You're being indoctrinated with the Pledge of Allegiance, which is good. I love the Pledge of Allegiance. I'm patriotic as hell, okay? But indoctrination goes a long ways. And Madam O'Hara was against certain types of indoctrination, okay? And me, I made parents very aware of, what do you want for your child? How do you want this to how do you want to use this one important moment? This is an important minute. You need to know this Jonathan, for your kid. You want them to be a devil, worship and shit. Pray to the devil, hell, whatever, but you have to take this moment and use it wisely, and that's very important. Palm we didn't do that. It was all directed toward the the most, the biggest population. Okay, we had a theater. The blacks couldn't go to the theater when I was a kid. They had their own theaters. Okay? They could go up in the rich theater and sit up the top. But the Mexicans could go to school, because it had already been where Mexicans were allowed to go to high school with whites. They were allowed to go to theaters with whites. You know, there were certain privileges there. You would go into restaurants with whites if you were in downtown Sixth Street, okay? But you weren't gonna go to a damn white restaurant over there in North Austin or way deep South Austin, because you weren't gonna be welcome. Okay, that's just the way it was back then, and stuff like that. And I'm looking at all of this, but I was given to the grace of God. I was given to to know that I had to learn, to have learned that I had potential. The other one was to been able to to have this vast knowledge, this world of palm School, where I saw all these wrongs and all these rights and stuff like that, in the neighborhood, in a segregated school with segregated teachers to teach Mexicans to become Anglosized okay? And in schools, we never mixed with whites. When we went to junior high and high school, they didn't mix with whites and blacks. Often I was nothing but whites and Mexicans. And the Mexicans were here, the whites were here. In junior high, the Mexicans were here, the whites were here.

Jonathan Cortez 2:37:50

Tell me about Junior High and high school

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:37:52

I only know Junior High, okay, in the eighth grade, okay. And the whites were white. We went into class with them. And we were put in at levels, you know, your low level, you go over here, your high level, you go over here. And you were usually the Mexicans were in classes with lower level whites, okay? And then you had a couple of Mexicans here. And there they were, oh, we would give them a hard time, school boys, school girls and shit. And now I look at these people, and I'm like, I we used to give them, we used to talk horale cabron, que lo tienes muy bueno. And now I look at all their parents. They were just trying to get these kids to have a better life. You know they work academically, because academic education is what's going to get you ahead. And I can see these kids now. I can see these guys, of these adults. Guess who they're hanging out with? They don't hang out with whites, these kids that were doing good in school. They hang out with Mexicans, us. They're still part of us. You know what I mean? They're, they're part of our culture. Now we're, we're all a unity. We're still, this is what we we became friends as kids. Then they went on. They were trying to do good in school, and we were couldn't do we couldn't even read and write and and, but it didn't make a difference, because now we're all together again. We're all together, all of us.

Jonathan Cortez 2:39:28

Just remember, read that the you

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:39:29

know, ruffle it. I can ruffle it. Yeah, I'm gonna try to do the best I can. But it's my brother's jacket. Brother, I want to show it all well. Tell me about the jacket. Oh, man, this is my brother Tony's jacket. I want everybody to see Tony's jacket. It's got his name. I stole it from him when he died. Okay? I took it away my brother, Tony

Jonathan Cortez 2:39:50

and he worked at UT. Correct? Was this his jacket that he wore when he worked here?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:39:54

No, his little jacket that he used to wear to go out, and three or four other jackets he had a lot of Ut paraphanelia. He loved UT. All of us did and not, but this is his jacket. Okay, I'm flying his colors. It's a beautiful jacket. Yeah, Tony's jacket. And I love my brother, love my cousins, I love palm school. And let me sing the school song for you. Palm school is my school, and I'm proud of it, proud of it. I didn't learn the other words, palm school, you know, and I still remember singing that song. That was a great time. We would we felt joy. We felt power with that song, you know, I could tell because we could all it was simple. We could all learn it.

Jonathan Cortez 2:40:42

Let's talk about, you know, I want to go back to this one memory that you mentioned earlier, where a teacher switched lunches with you and you had two tortillas with frijoles, one who made that food for you, who was making your lunch. Secondly, why was it, why did you feel maybe embarrassed? Or did it? Did it feel

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:41:05

We all felt embarrassed. None of us took tortillas to school. None of us at all. That was, I don't know what it was. It just was an embarrassing thing. The kids that did bring lunch, they had sandwiches. Okay, there was one kid, Louis Trevino, I mean, Augustine. Augustine Trevino and his parents were from Uvalde, Texas. I know that now. I didn't know it then, but she was the his mother was a Cub Scout, Tino. He's called him Tino, Tino, and his mother was the Cub Scout Den mother, that was a great time, you know, just doing, you know, I remember going to Salvation Army, and that's and I bought a, with my own money, boy, because my dad wasn't gonna give us anything else. I bought a little scar Cub Scout and a cap, no t shirt, nothing, not just a cap and anyway.

Jonathan Cortez 2:42:09

How old were you when you joined the Cub Scouts, nine,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:42:11

eight or nine? That was a very instrumental time in my life.

Jonathan Cortez 2:42:15

Was it part of the palm school, or was it part of the salvation?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:42:18

No, it was a lady doing it because they had come from Uvalde, but they were more they had more experience, they were grown, and they knew they had moved also, because they knew the importance of education. Their kids would come to school real, ready to work. Luis was his brother in humans. I was thinking no more. They always had their books, had their flat tops, and they were going to study, they were going to be and he gave me one time. I don't I had something on my lunch plate because I ate lunch for free. And over there, I guess I don't know what they were teaching them at his house. They were teaching them to to be proud and stuff like that. And you know, you don't have to beg for food or ask for food or whatever you bring your lunch. I gave him something on my plate. He said something he wanted to trade something for, probably was the salisbury steak or something. It was, it was something. It was good to him because he gave me his sandwich. He gave me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I've never forgot that. To this day. I can still taste that sandwich. That's the first time I ever had peanut butter and jelly together. Ate jelly, but never much, tieneamos haleah, we called it haleah but never at home, but never peanut butter, never, but peanut butter and jelly boy, all was in heaven. Boy, I never taste anything that good. Boy, Tino gave me that, and I tried to write him a letter. Three or four years ago, he went in the Navy, and he called me one time to talk to me, and I was in no mood to talk to anybody at the time. Was going through a lot of PTSD problems, but anyway, I tried to write him a letter, but it came back. I can't find his address. I'd like to talk to him about his, his because I want to leave something at one of the museums over here about, Well, really, I need to give it to maybe these people. Wow, it's a bought a uniform of the den mothers uniform, and I told my wife about it in California, the second hand store, say, I'd like to give this to either Emma, Emma's Museum, Emma Bariantos Museum or something, so that they can recognize this lady, this lady. But I can't find, I don't have a picture of this lady. Maybe through this process, we'll find a picture of her name. La senora Trevino, el papa se llamaba Augustin también Trevino, you know, pero era la señora Trevino, she did

that. She did Cub Scouts, you know. And that was a wonderful thing in that time. And they were trying to give what

Jonathan Cortez 2:45:19

What did you learn in Cub Scouts?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:45:24

Oh, boy, I learned about working for badge stuff, the history stuff, which I get turned on to, of how the Indians used to do all these signs and stuff like that and that was the only time I had the project to do, and I had to make, I was going to make a boat, and my father helped me. I was amazed. I was amazed, and I was and I'm thankful at this age, and even old age or whatever, no matter what my father was like, or whatever. He helped me make this boat, a little wooden boat, and I watched him, and he showed we were putting this little boat together. The only time he ever did anything with me. And he bent the wood by pouring hot water on it. And he got the wood and manipulated to make the front part of the boat, and I've never forgot that, and I learned a lot of things like that in my life.

Jonathan Cortez 2:46:29

Did you ever have homework from the palm school? Hell? Didn't do it? Probably about major projects.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:46:38

No, we didn't do projects. We didn't have science fair. We didn't have anything like that. The only thing was, there was what that lady was going to be doing with us and stuff like that. Okay, but we never had projects. We never there was no science fair in those days. It was just plain Jane, you go to school and you and you do this. And I was going to make an example. I'll give you an example. Me and you, Jonathan, we would have never hung out together as kids, and the kids stayed with her. If they were school boys and school girls, they stayed over here in this group. And if they were loud mouth like me, talking you stayed in this group. You know, if you were a ball player you stay here. But now we're grown adults, we would be back together, like, if we were palm school, we were kids, we would, you know, do

Jonathan Cortez 2:47:29

you have any examples like that from, oh, yeah, like, who now that you are friends with that you weren't, or necessarily weren't hanging out with in Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:47:37

Oh, that would have been the guys that played music mostly, you know, the more I know who I'm talking about, and I think, but I mean, I've got old timers age now, old timers disease for and Daryl Quintanilla that lady, his, his cousins there, you know, Daryl Quintanilla. You know, he started playing music later on. Now, he drinks a lot of beer, you know, and you you know people like him, but he was a school boy back then, lowly, lowly, god damn it, and lowly the manual. And lowly, he passed away here not too long ago. Nunez. Nunez, okay, el Primo de Johnny Gonzales and stuff. And lowly Nunez, you know, he was a school boy and stuff. He was with the the guys that were assimilating and stuff like that. And then he started playing. His brother had a band, and so he would play me. Then later on, they came back to their roots. They have no white friends. They have no black friends. They came back to

their roots, and we all now we're back at Palm schools, like little kids, you know? And that's because we didn't assimilate and we didn't acculturate, and the guys that wanted to assimilate and acculturate or whatever, they just weren't in those days. They weren't allowed in the door. You weren't allowed in the door. There was, there's a young lady. There's a lady there, Velia, her husband, her first husband, or her only husband, I think, was Buddy. And Buddy had a clique that he hung out with. They were older than us, but eso's mean mother rippers, boy, eso cabrones eran de la cliqua, matones y la fregada pachuchos but great at school. Took that little clique. Their vicious mean people and they took a lot of they took a lot of pride in being smart. You know, they all went to college. Every one of them had some kind of college or whatever, because they were, you know, even though que andaban en la calle coriendo en la Calle pelleando y matando gente y la fregada, they were real academic. And I see those guys now, and well, no buddy esta muerto. Andrew esta Muerto. Pero queda Robert Hernandez, y Ralph, I mean, Alan is, did and you got to see all this stuff in this enclave? Man, you see all those pachucos? Is it the invisible boundaries are there, you know? And these guys were smart. Man, they were smart. They were. They were gang bangers too, but they were smart. And my older cousins not to look. They were A student, graduates or not a student. They were A student in the reform school, Gatesville reform school, because they they also had that attitude of being smart.

Jonathan Cortez 2:50:39

And what were the names?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:50:41

Oh Jesus de pero ellos no eran la Parera, era Indio, Adolfo Baron and uh in Saturnino Torres,

Jonathan Cortez 2:50:55

you know, red. I'm really curious. What was it like growing up, light skinned, with red hair?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:51:04

Oh, I was hot stuff. Brother, I was hot stuff. Man, I want you to know I had my freckles, I had my red, and I had an opportunity to do stuff that other people didn't do. Okay, tell me about I'm gonna tell you I was and there was other one, one other family, los trevinos Arnold Trevino I can think of his sister, pretty girls, boy. They were real light, complected, like being a little reddish on the hair. But I had a lot of red hair, you know. And it made me popular, okay? It made me popular. I stood out, you know. And I could go like when I started playing, when I was finishing Little League, and I was going into Babe Ruth League and stuff like that. Then I was able, and I had met, I went to Sunshine camp. Sunshine camp was an outstanding place. I was young, nine years old, 10 years old, something. And I went to sun shines, a special camp that they had here. And I think they still have it down at Zilker Park and and I got selected as a camper, the camper of the summer of the year, or whatever. And I still have that plaque. I have the plaque, and some of the people I went to look for the people that word that would put this camp on, and they picked me. They gave me a blanket. I wore that blanket out. It had Sun camp. SC man, a blue, gold stream. Boy and I wore that blanket out. Boy, that was my main blanket for years and years and years. Boy and I met a lot of people there. They were from Montopolis from the other parts of East Austin. And people think back then, like when I got back from Vietnam, we only had like 10,500 at the most, 10,500 Mexicans in the city of Austin. Okay, you had the city of Austin, okay, and then you had the University of Texas. That was separate, you know, that was it, you know, you had, like, here,

what's the name of the damn, uh, up here, where the kids stay at and stuff. That big. Hall, that big. It's a big not Jester. Jester, jester Hall. Jester Hall had more people living in there than any than the majority of the cities or towns of Texas, more than Rodstown. It was, you know, it was, I learned that at college, okay, but we didn't, oh, that when I was losing my train of thought on this, you know that talking about red hair, red hair and stuff like American, okay? And then I was playing baseball. So I was playing playing.

Jonathan Cortez 2:54:01

Where would you play baseball?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:54:03

Played at that time. We played at Thorpe field. And then from Thorpe field, the Salvation Army, Pan Am Little League. And then we went to pony league in Go Valle Park. And that was all the Mexicans. That was where they went to play pony League, which babe, Ruth Lee, you know, and

Jonathan Cortez 2:54:22

were the other

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:54:23

13, 14 year olds? Okay? And there were a bunch of people there, but I saw people from Montopolis when I was playing baseball. I saw people from east side I was already and then re getting together again with with people that I was with at Sunshine camp, see. So it wasn't a big population, you know, and everybody lived in East Austin, okay, that was it. And what people don't know about you had like right here on the east side, you go down first street. If you're going east, you. To the right is one block that way. Is Metz Elementary, that was for white people, one block this way. That was before white people, one block this way, it was Zavala Elementary, or two blocks that way for Mexican people. In South Austin, you had one Catholic Church for whites. And then you go down the street San Jose is there six blocks down, five blocks down, and that's for Mexicans. That's the way it was nobody. And then the blacks had their black Catholic church over here by the cemetery. And everything was real segregated, super segregated. And we didn't start getting white people in the east side. First we.. the white folks migrated because they were getting all the good jobs and stuff. And left East Austin, it used to be all a bunch of white on that side of first street, on the south side. And then the Mexican started going in there and it became Mexican, okay, palm school first, over here, and then, then, but then the schools were Zavala, Brooks, Go Valle. They were all in a row. You know, they were all for Mexicans, all off of that first street corridor.

Jonathan Cortez 2:56:26

And did you ever feel different for having lighter skin and red hair?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:56:30

Oh, no, that did. I got caught up with trying to describe the divisions. No, because when I got to be about 13, 12, 13, I could go see they were. You had King B, that was in this enclave, and King B had their own little gang. And then Johnny boys had their own little gang over there on the other side, a few couple of miles that way. And then monopolis over there.

Jonathan Cortez 2:56:58

Well, where was Palm school in relationship, they

Felipe "Red" Garcia 2:57:02

They were East. I mean they were West. I mean east of palm school on the first street courier. Okay, and yo iba, I would go to these parks. And I would, because I would just go, because we were going to play a game there or whatever, or I was there, or Go Valle or anywhere. And these guys always talk to the guys, okay, and de repente, I'd go to them "hey que paso ese, como estas?" "que paso? Como eres gringo?" "No soy chicano, soy Mexicano" "hey huachete este cabron es gringo, and he's talking Spanish". I was in Vietnam, this guy I was telling you about earlier. Robert Pineda, I was in Vietnam in the middle of the damn rice patties over there, and we're walking down this dirt road, and I'm working with what they call a cap unit. Now, I came to work with this cap unit because all I had to ask because I had a specialty, and I was a long shooter. And all I had to ask was, hey, I want to go work at this place or work with this and we, I met a guy over there name Castillo, Tony Castillo, and Tony Castillo era de Austin and when I found out he where he was from I said, hey, I want to go work with this cap unit. And they worked in the villages, and there was Road, some dirt roads and stuff. So I went to work with Tony. I wanted to bond with him, era de Austin el cabron, and we're going down this little road. I wasn't with Tony, I was with his unit, but with another, another squad, and we're walking, and we're Jeep is coming down the road, and we all moved to the side, and we kind of stopped to let the car go by. It was a Jeep, and I see this dude driving y le grito "hey Robert, hey cabron". Y me mira, "pinche Red, que chingado estas asiendo aqui" se para el vato. and he stops, se para allí el cabron y dice "Gunny , Gunny", era un gringo, he said "man look at this dude, I want you to see this dude. He ain't no white guy, he ain't he's a Mexican gunny look", he's a gunny. "Hable Espanol cabron, hable Espanol" And we see each other there. We haven't seen each other. And who knows what, he went in his way, and I went on my way, but We're from the same Barrio, from the palm thing. And he says, "estamos alli" We're talking. And then them guys are leaving me behind, and I'm like, hang on. Be out here in the middle of this shit by myself over here, and these rice patties and and he and he, finally, we part the middle. They see you out there in Vietnam. He's in the army. I'm in the Marine Corps. It's a small world. You learn it's a small world. I'm over here working with Tony Castillo, another dude from Austin. He didn't know Tony. I said, No, no, Tony Castillo, no. He knew Ray Castillo, his brother, well anyway

Jonathan Cortez 3:00:34

And Pineda went to palm school as well.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:00:38

Yeah, we went to Yeah, we go, all up together, his sister, his brother and stuff like that, and they went to the Salvation Army Youth Center. They were, we were all from the same clique, and we see each other out there, and we say, I see you later. Brother y que la fregada and didn't see each other anymore until 100 years later seems like, his brother Ernest said murio de una ataque, he was living up in The Valley. They brought him back to bury him over here. So I went to the velorio, and when I'm there, we had told each other, it's been 20 years, 20 something years, and I hadn't seen him. And we live in that little enclave, but he's in a different place. He just drinks. He doesn't dance. He drinks, you know, he's over there, so I see him there, and then we see each other at the valorio, at the road, they

dice, "Well, we'll see you", y me dice, le dijo "hay te miro, ill see you later" he said "yeah, I see you in another 20 years Red." Pinche cabron y me dice. It's a small, small world, and you can still be in this small world and not see somebody and because of habits that are different from each other.

Jonathan Cortez 3:01:50

You know, it's really interesting red to piece together a few of these different moments you've talked about. You talk so passionately about how small the Enclave the palm school region was, and how impactful, how kind, how loving it was. And yet, when you're in school, right, you can't bring your culture with you, your food, Spanish language, etc. But there are still these moments when the world open up, opens up for you, the Gettysburg address, this guest speaker, right? These moments where the world you going to Vietnam is the world opening up for you. So my question is, how do you make sense of all of this? How do you make sense of coming from this small Barrio in Austin, Texas, opening up this grand world, and now you're able to reflect on it? Well,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:02:38

you see the injustices. Not only do you see it now, you recognize it like now, my life now before then, when that lady, that teacher and Miss Rose class, she said there's less Mexicans in Austin, I was like, no, they that can be True. There's no way there's there's. Now I understand all of that, you know, I'm able to look at that in that time, I was protected. I wasn't, I didn't. I saw whatever they were doing the teachers, that was the correct thing. I saw whatever I was doing was the correct thing, you know, and stuff like that. I come and I'm in the military, then I come to college and stuff like that, and then I go to do politics. And now, back then, I didn't look at colors when we were going to palm school. I saw the teachers as human beings, you know, I didn't know what the wrongs were. I didn't know Miss Cyrus was gonna have this young lady doing I don't know if it was her or maybe it wasn't her. I'm talking to you. Maybe it was the teachers that this student teacher was talking about with that group of teachers that I should be angry at, who I didn't know. Okay, but they were teachers at Palm, and these are the teachers that are teaching us now. It makes me angry or not. It makes me aware of what I have to change. It makes me aware of what I have to help other people understand, okay, and I have to, and I understand now, because now, when I go into a room, I look at colors. I go into a city building, I look at colors. Okay, an example of when I went to I went to a little bit the old town up there on the other side of college station to where I had to go get I went to go get a best, a death certificate. I was in gene genealogy stuff, and I was doing a guest guest, I mean, I wanted a death certificate of my grandfather. And I walked in there and I saw this negrita and I was wondering, I wonder when this negrita got her job. She was a lady about my age, you know. And I said, wonder when she got this job here. I wonder when they started hiring blacks, you know, I don't see no Mexicans in here. I'll see a black lady and some white lady and Austin was the same way I started seeing, I started counting. I look at all of this stuff. Now I've been educated to look at this stuff. Okay, my grandson interviewed me, and he was asking me about college. He said, You he had some questions, like you do, and he says, Uh, are you all? He asked me about college. He says, "Oh, what do you do for a living?" I said, Well, "I did for you to know. You know, I did a lot of jobs, but the one that my last job was my career was in education". And he says, "oh, and where did you go to school?" "I went to school at the University of Texas". And he says, and then the second, "did they prepare you to be successful in your career?" And I said, "No, they didn't, not at all. Not one bit". I said, "they set me up to fail if I wanted to fail". And I talked to him about being confused because I thought if you were popular, you were a good teacher. But I said, but once I

learned how to teach and I learned what I needed to do, which was to teach reading, teach people how to read and solve their own problems and learn their own knowledge, pick up their own knowledge. I said because at university they're teaching you. At the University they're teaching you, the people they're teaching you are professors. They're doctors, book doctors. They don't know the first thing about what's in that damn classroom. All they know is they do research and they teach you what's supposed they teach you skills that are supposed to be used in the best environment, education environment, I said, and I tell my grandson, you went to school. And I keep telling your mother where you went to school, and over here outside of Austin, and said, you went to school. I said, "you knew how to write. You knew how to read in first grade". Said, "yeah". I said, "and how about your friends?" "Yeah". I said, "all of you knew how to read. I always tell your mother that y'all went to school already knowing how to read. Your parents taught you to read. I come I taught in an environment where it wasn't the perfect situation and conditions and stuff like that", I said. "And what they did is, these professors, they're into theory, a lot of theory and stuff like and then they give you 5% instruction and discipline when you go into a classroom like that, where kids are at different levels, or they come to you with a different language, like in my case, I said, I'm doing this." I said to "tell him they have not prepared me to work with this environment. Okay, your environment was perfect for you, but my environment that I'm working in, I'm going to a classroom, and if I'm teaching fifth grade or seventh grade or something, I have a fifth grader, I have a seventh grade class, and I have kids that read from second grade on up to ninth grade or 10th grade level. And I have to serve and serve all these people, but the teachers are still doing what they did when I was a kid". You're in third grade. You're gonna read third grade books, but there's changing some of it, but they're not getting good at it yet.

Jonathan Cortez 3:09:14

So you becoming a teacher was Did your experience at the Palm school have any influence on you becoming a teacher?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:09:23

No, not at Palm school. No, not there, no that came later on. When, when I became a parent, I would say, and when I was in the military, when I had potential, I always wanted to teach. I knew I was going to teach once I ...

Jonathan Cortez 3:09:43

What did you teach?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:09:46

I taught ESL, bilingual Ed. Bilingual Ed, ESL. ESL is where it said it's, you know, in those skills, that's when I learned, in the teaching how to read.

Jonathan Cortez 3:09:57

It really sounds like that's something that you wanting, while you were at Palm school, right?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:10:01

That's what I wanted when I was in the military. That's where I realized I had I went to night school during my while, while I was in the military, and I talked to my I didn't talk to my grandson about that,

but I told him the difference. I had to use an example of explaining to human of who makes you successful and what's successful. It didn't prepare me to go into those classrooms, nor did they teach me how to do what I learned later on, okay, but I went to night school in the Marine Corps. I knew I had potential, but I was learning to read. I started learning to read in Vietnam, because there's books all over the place. You're out there in the middle of nowhere, but there's books, and you start to and I learned stuff like context clues and all these. So by the time I got into teaching and I got to doing stuff, then I knew, I said, Oh, these kids are just like me, you know, they know context clues, or they have voice, or I'm going to teach them voice first, and then I'm going to teach them this and that. I went to Sanchez Elementary, and that was my first teaching job, and I picked up there a piece of thing that a piece of knowledge. When I was teaching these kids there, all of a sudden, I had a kid, and I knew what was important on that report card and what was going to direct me was not the numerical grade, the behavior I had been through a system of my behavior, changing, improving, becoming a hard worker, and I knew that's what I had to work at if I had a kid, I got to where. When I left Sanchez, I was just barely grasping on to this. I was popular and stuff. But when I went to New Braunfels, I knew I needed to find out why in the hell the kids dropping out? What the hell the problem stuff? You get a kid and I went into middle school, and you get a kid in high school, middle like middle school, I'm gonna use middle school as an example. And they're taking this star test, and then all of a sudden, 30 minutes later, 20 minutes later, say, "Ya acabe! I'm done, Mr. Red", and that's a four hour test. Brother, what day is wrong with you? Or sister with you? "No, no ya acabe". Take it again, you know, "ya acabe!" and pues no sabien leer! They had gone through the same system I had been they had just pushed ahead. Teachers are good at lying on paper and not documenting what they're doing. It's easy to get a you get a kid, you give them a spelling test, and you give them a writing test, and then you mix the grade to make that English Grammar Test look like or look good to the parent. You're giving that kid a grade. Well, what I realized when I was the sun shit was, if I had a kid that was stealing, that's a red flag. You know, it's stealing. I don't care what it is, it's stealing, you know, they're stealing erasers and papers and pencils from somebody. You know, I realized I said I had, este cabron porque. I had this little girl. She was a thief and, I mean, a drama queen. Man, okay, and the drama queen was, oh, was shit. No wonder her damn grandmother grew up with me. Man, she was the drama queen. The damn grandfather, the diamond a drama King. I saw that. I could see, you see what is going on here. And then I saw this other este Carbone era ratero. He's stealing. His mama was a thief. Her grandmother was a thief. And I saw that, and I saw this. As soon as I was developing my skills and stuff, I realized the grade wasn't important to me anymore. I was going to pass the kids anyway if they deserved it or didn't deserve it, because I didn't know. What I started realizing was that I had a whole year to modify a kid's behavior. Okay? And I focused on that, modifying a kid's behavior. And then from there, I went to work for a lady that taught in New Braunfels that when you retain a kid, it's not a punishment. You have a certain window where they have to learn how to read. I had to beg to go work with this lady in elementary because I had already worked with middle school, high school, and I wanted to work with younger kids.

Jonathan Cortez 3:14:54

What did it mean for you to come back to Austin to the similar neighborhood where you were. And teaching

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:15:00

Ah I was in heaven. Yeah, tell me about that. Oh, that was beautiful. Oh, teaching, like I told you,

Jonathan Cortez 3:15:07

Where was Sanchez? Let us know

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:15:08

Sanchez was right there on the corner of holly. Oh, the playground Holly and San Marco Street, which is right there at Holly and I 35 How

Jonathan Cortez 3:15:18

far was that from the palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:15:19

Oh, oh. That was oh, but not even a mile, a half a mile from Palm school, because Palm school was on the west side. And this Sanchez is named after a famous professor out of here at San Antonio wrote the, I mean San Antonio here at UT, George Sanchez. E I, George Sanchez, who wrote the book with pistol in hand and some other things, and he so that school was named after him. Okay, too bad we didn't have people that was that were educated enough to be name, have a be name in an elementary school for somebody from Austin. And let me tell you something about Austin that we had Pan American Recreation Center. Okay, I was going to college, then close to finishing that old Pan American Recreation Center, Pan Am now we're there. There's the they're trying to get minorities from Austin to work in these positions, you know, or they're trying to find Mexicans that are educated enough for these professional positions, and they were looking for. they hired Ramon Garza, which was a good hire from Laredo Texas, but after Ramon left, they were looking for a person from Austin to run that Recreation Center in East Austin, off of Third Street and and they couldn't find not even somebody from Austin that had a two year degree that wanted this job, not that that some other people that were lawyers and stuff like that, they got their jobs and they had their profession stuff, but just somebody with A two year degree that could work at this recreation. They couldn't get that that wanted that position in Austin, okay? And the point I'm making about that is that we didn't, we didn't educate, they didn't educate our population. But these people that came from Austin, I mean, from other towns, of Corpos, Laredo, from the ranchos, or wherever, they came to UT, Austin. And then they stayed here. After graduating from Austin. They stayed here, and they became they were they all became involved with the politics of Austin, with what this enclave was starting. Now, these people were middle class mentality. They all got lot. Have we got people here from from Laredo. They're like cockroaches here boy los de Laredo chingado. Now we got them from Browntown. They don't go man corpo and uh

Jonathan Cortez 3:18:16

Tell me about Salazar. I want you. I want to hear about what was it like for you to come back and teach at Salazar? Oh,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:18:20

Oh, there the Sanchez I was, I was touched by it. I was touched by it because this is my neighborhood. This is was, this was my neighborhood. Boy, I was, "y el pinche Colorado, mira el colorado he graduated look que fue a la escuela el cabron, el no fue a la escuela. You didn't graduate, you didn't do

this". I was at a funeral years, a few years back in in that young somebody told it because her name was Jamie Jamie Jamie Reyna. She didn't go to palm. She was from the old school Johnson, and we were at Guadalupe at a funeral, and then all of a sudden she said "Red!". She was right. "You mean you went to UT, you never went to school. You never went to school! Tu nunca acabaste la escuela". That's they were playing the old tapes of the old Red. I was a nice guy. I was uneducated. I dropped out. Got married really young. My wife, too was a drop out. Now she's a graduate, and she didn't graduate in southwest until she was 41, 40 years old. But we believe in education, okay,

Jonathan Cortez 3:19:40

What are some of we're getting towards the end, but what are some of your accomplishments and highlights that you're especially proud of?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:19:49

That's easy, that was almost easy. One, I grew up in this environment that taught me my habits, taught me to be empathetic. Very important to be empathetic, to be knowledgeable, deal with facts, deal with the truth. UT, very familiar, you know, may have a lot of impact that tower out there. And the other thing was just the um, I had, I had the blessing to be able to say, I've done a couple of important things, honorable things. My wife has had an education, and she's done something honorable. Besides, she was honorable to have, you know, the great thing, to have children, and then to have your go out and still continue your education and get get educated. Me, I had honorable duty. I went to the Marine Corps. And I don't agree with that war anymore, and I have a lot of change this place beat me to death more and but in the Marine Corps, that was honorable, being a patriotic being serving your country. The other thing is, I had honorable work in the Marine Corps, I had honorable work, and then the Marine Corps said, did some things for me. I have a lot of anger toward the Marine Corps, but because the way it was, and stuff like that, and the war and but then I also have, they gave me the opportunity. I went to night school, I got a GED, and then I was able to get an Army and Navy Academy, high school diploma, and I qualified. I qualified to go to a school for six months at UCLA, okay? And this is what I was telling my grandson. I said, when you get when somebody does something for you, and they make it, make it, make you be a, be, be in a position to accomplish something. I said I was in the Marine Corps in college they didn't prepare me to do my job in the Marine Corps, they had this program that if you met certain criteria, you could go to this school. And this was a preparatory thing that UCLA was doing for veterans. Okay, they were paying you to go to school. I was getting my salary, and I was being I went to UCLA for a semester, okay? And they were all the college, all the course, I mean, all the classes were classes specifically put together to make you successful in college. Again, I was telling my grandson this, like I'm saying this now, and one of the things they did was one class was a speech class. Okay, you have to do research, and your grade was going to be based on you're going to do research. We're going to teach you a bunch of stuff, but you're going to be graded on the speeches that you make. You have to have two speeches that prepared me to put research together, to put a presentation down. Okay, and that's where I learned about one was a guy that had taken over the Congo, which had something to do with Africa, the world. The other was, I did a thing on Robert Kennedy. And what's that fool's name? I even forgot his name for the Senator McCarthy during the McCarthy era. And Roy Cohn. I don't know if you know who Roy Cohn is. Roy Cohn, boy, patient from hell. Boy, that Roy Cohn, I was introduced to him and how vicious he was. And I don't know what the hell Robert Kennedy was doing with these people, but anyway, how vicious he was. And then Trump

came later, and I was able to tie these two bands together. I'm proud of having, I'm glad I did that research thing back then in 1971 and here it brings me to my whole life. It's helped me my whole life, having knowledge. There was another one was, language, English, on how to write by that up to that point, I was I was only writing. I didn't put periods, I didn't put capital letters, I didn't just write and and I had my voice, but there I learned the importance of grammar. The other class was a psychology class that taught us certain things. And then there was another class was study skills, how to...where to sit in a classroom. Pay attention. Don't get in the seat where you're not going to be paying attention. And I'm a loud dude. I need to you need to har... You need to harness me down, and I paid attention. I knew I better have pencils, papers. When you take notes, you only take notes on the front side of the page. You don't put nothing on the back, because you might have to shuffle stuff around. How to take notes, anything that a professor puts down or a teacher puts down on that board, you better jump on it. That's going to be in the test, you know. So I learned these skills, and I was telling my grandson, these skills prepared me for college and helped me be successful in college. Yeah, and I went through the back door. I never took an SAT, A C, T, I knew I couldn't pass them. I went through the back door, went to UCLA got me in Junior college, and Junior college got me over here. So, you know those I did that that was honorable stuff, that the the Marine Corps gave me that chance. And then I graduated from the University of Texas, born and raised here, not so much that I dropped out, but I'm born and raised here, boy, all my life, this was my playground. What year did you graduate? 1975 I think it was, you know, and, and, and I finished in three years, something like that, you know, I mean, I'm talking about you, I'm talking about Junior college and UT, you know, that was, but I was going summer semesters. I wasn't stupid. I knew I was going to take all the, get the, all the hours I could get. Yeah,

Jonathan Cortez 3:26:58

red, we have, we have, I think, a lot more to talk about. But for the sake of this interview, and because it's, it's really focused on the palm school, yeah, you know, I want to my last question. One of my last questions for you is, what does the palm school symbolize to you?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:27:16

Friendship, people, bond in love. Nothing academic, nothing academic, I hate to tell you. And Mrs. Campos, Eloisa Campos, she came to that campus, and all of a sudden we were able to get involved with system there. Pero me leva, me mandaba, hiba yo hasta llebaba, me mandaba a la tienda a comprar manteca para sacarle los piojos a los niños. you know, and the palm school, the need to we haven't said anything about the palm Park. Okay, tell me about it. Palm park. Was it? Boy, they had Friday night movies. Palm pork in the summer we were there, and everybody would go swimming and stuff like that. I didn't even have to take a bath in the summer. I took I went to swimming every day. Boy, I went swimming. I learned how to swim there.

Jonathan Cortez 3:28:14

How far was Palm Park from Palm school?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:28:20

Right there. It's in the backyard. It was the belong to the city of Austin. It was behind the school at one corner was Palm school. At the other corner on Third Street was Palm park right there, all together in the swim pool. And everybody that went to palm Park went to palm school to swim, everybody one time

or other. That's what we did. And then on Friday nights, we were there looking at the movies. You know, they had a movie, the recreation department show a movie and stuff.

Jonathan Cortez 3:28:47

Were there ever any like, celebrations, like the 16 de septiembre?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:28:53

yeah, they were, but they were, but they were Jonathan. They a lot of these activities. That lady that Roy's, a lady that Velasquez lady that was down there, her grandparents, their father, her grandfather would he was a hustling man, a smart man, and he would have up there at the at the Zaragoza Park. It's a park because it was Ignacio Zaragoza, who is was a Tejano and stuff like that. I learned that later on, but he, um, he would do 16 de septiembre stuff, because he was a hustler, he was a businessman. He had his taxi service. He had there. He was gonna make money, having bands coming in, music celebration, renting puestos and making money. And his family did a lot of that stuff. They learned

Jonathan Cortez 3:29:52

go down to the to the parties, to the dances at the party.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:29:54

No, I only went one time. I remember the little kid going, and then later on, pues se acabaron, it got out of the fad was no longer a big thing to have 16, so that we never had anything like that anymore. It was just there in the beginning. Okay, so my childhood, I remember that vaguely, but then after that, there was no more 16, Cinco de Mayo na and then the school started Cinco de Mayo. But the time that I was starting teaching, they started doing Cinco de Mayo and stuff. Even though Cinco de Mayo is not that much of a big celebration in Mexico, it is, but not big like diez y seis now, it's really good to see that. And I'm in San Antonio. Diez y seis, and it is a city thing. Gringos come to it too. Negros come to it too. Okay, we have Cinco de Mayo. Negros, come to it. Gringos come to it. Now it's accepted. Tortillas. I'm here, brother, I'm telling you, tacos and coffee is breakfast here. It's not like California and other places where you have a donut and coffee, it's tacos and coffee and tortillas are no longer. Tacos are no longer just a Mexican food. Pinatas are not just a Mexican thing anymore. And this is I'm blessed to live, live this long to see these things. They're just America still like hot dogs and hamburgers boy tacos are American, and the music, Tejano music. I was reading on the daily Texas I'm not the Texas magazines were Johnny Canales, they're doing. I mean, it's, I'm floored with this. There's been progress. We just need to change the school system, and we need to change the teacher in the way they teach palm school. I want you to think about palm school. What I see now all the time was what I was seeing down there. We're showing the pictures of palm school. You see the windows, you were describing it. I mean, I was describing the windows and stuff like that, but all the classrooms had at least three boards or two black boards in the classroom. And this is where, this is what the professors from the University took away from schools. In the old days, you would go up to the blackboard and you could cheat a little bit, you know if you would do for the doing math problems or writing words or whatever, you just shit, I'm over here, Jonathan. What's Jonathan doing over there? And I'm copying you. I'm learning brother and I'm we had that, at one time in the school system. Now we don't do that. It's just one little thing. Do everything on screen. Do this and work. And we need to go back to those old buildings. I guess that's what I want to say. That old palm school building. We need to go back and

have schools like that for air conditioned, but let's put blackboards all the way around the classroom and let the kids get up and work with each other on the blackboard and let them cheat a little bit. And look at Johnson over there, Gustavo over there, you know and, or you know what? Jonathan, you go help Gustavo. You go help him over here. We need to use the classrooms. And if we had that palm school building again, I could do wonders in there. Boy, I could do wonders as this teacher. Give me a group of teachers, and I'll show them how to use that environment. And if a teacher said, use that environment with us. That's why I say, in spite of the school system, I was successful. If they had known how to use that use those boards.

Jonathan Cortez 3:34:02

How would your life be different if they knew how to use those boards?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:34:05

Oh well, I would have learned how to read and write. You know what I mean? I learned how to spell and spell. Spelling has nothing to do with intelligence, and they spend so much time on spelling because you know why they teach spelling has nothing to do with brain power. You know what it does. Jonathan Mijo, how do you spell jump and you're like J, MP, no, no, no, no. Mijo, no, no, no, no. J, U, M, P, that's the one subject parents can help with, because they have the word there, okay, and that's why they use it, not because it helps kids learn. It's memorization. It has nothing to do with brain power. And this is what I wish we could go to them buildings, give me them buildings, and I'll put you some teachers in there, and I'll show you the mexicans learn how to read and write boy and white kids and black kids and everybody. And we'll make academic people but and I'll show them love. The one thing that we had at Palm, I don't care who the teachers were, who the principal. We all knew the lunch room ladies, we all knew the janitors.

Jonathan Cortez 3:35:22

Do you remember any of their names?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:35:24

Oh yeah. Mr. Saldana yeah, uno de los. He was there forever. Y pues el otro era Jose Fauvela, and he left. He was only and then Mr. Martinez,

Jonathan Cortez 3:35:35

yeah. Could you ever talk to them? Would you, oh yeah, yeah.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:35:39

Oh yeah, yeah, talk to him all the time. You saw them in the street. They were part of the community, the janitors eran mexicanos those janitors eran mexicano, half the some of the ladies, not all of them, were Mexicans. They worked in the cafeteria. But when I taught at Sanchez, all the ladies, except one lady was black, and the rest of them were mexicanas. Okay, one of my childhood friends, wife was the manager of the cafeteria, and guess what they serve now? Enchiladas every Wednesday, best enchiladas in the world bought at our schools.

Jonathan Cortez 3:36:16

Red you're gonna have more opportunity to talk downstairs with photo voz, where you get to look at pictures and talk more. But is there anything else, as we close up, that you want to say in this moment?

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:36:32

Just that uh, the Enclave. When it comes to palm school was just part of the Enclave. The Salvation Army was part of the Enclave. Okay? HEB all these other things, and then enclave produced a lot of change in the future. You can't just look at one little group and say, well, this group, no which ones were the groups or the main group that opened the doors to jobs, education and all of that. Who were they? And that was the old timers. That was a group that I belong to. Names. Do you have any names? Gonzalo Barrientos, Richard Moya, Johnny Trevino. You know Mr. Ruiz? You know, Red Garcia, you know, because we want it, we want it, or they want these people, these old timers, they weren't just about we're going to do this, and we're just going to serve this little bitty part here. We're just going to work with the east side of here, and we're going to No, no, I see that. Why we need to keep palm school. Okay? I understand why. But it's not just about just a little group and stuff. It's about which group is opening the doors to jobs. Who got the jobs? Who got the education, who opened the schools up? I remember when we never had Mexican Principals, and then they started having to hire Mexican Principals, Mexican teachers, okay, who did those things? That's what's important, and that's what you do. You don't just, well, this is my little partake, you know, partake, no, no, no. It's open the doors. If you're not going to open the doors, move aside. Okay? And just like me, learn to teach or get out of the damn way. And there's a difference. I want to say this loud and clear. There's a difference between a teacher that has 20 years of experience teaching the same thing each year for 20 years, as opposed to a teacher that does research that expands, that grows and really having an impact, teaching kids How to read, teaching them how to solve their own problems because they know how to read, they do what Red Garcia did after he left school. I learned how to read, I learned how to comprehend, and I got good at it, and I know how to teach it now, but I wasn't, I don't know it because I developed it. I know it because I was taught, and I wish that we would change the system. Do you know who George Carlin is? Okay? George Carlin is a comedian from back there, and he's funny as hell, and he is the first one, and he cusses. A lot. He's known for cussing a lot on stage when they weren't supposed to. And he'll say, what did you learn at school? What did they teach you? They didn't teach you a damn thing, not a damn thing. And you know why it's these people. And he starts cussing out the school systems, because they only taught. I know why they don't. They taught only to 12% of the population, and we need to change that. We're in a technology world, we need to teach our children to be able to read and write correctly.

Jonathan Cortez 3:40:32

Absolutely Red. Thank you so much. This has been such an honor. We've spent almost four hours on talking about,

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:40:40

Are you serious? Pay for my biography.

Jonathan Cortez 3:40:43

Thank you so much, Mr. Garza, and we'll continue this downstairs with photo vos.

Felipe "Red" Garcia 3:40:48

Thank you so much.