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2-25-2010

Interview with Allejandro Tecum, Adelante Mujeres, 2010 (audio)

Allejandro Tecum

Recommended Citation

Villareal, Adam, "Interview with Allejandro Tecum, Adelante Mujeres, 2010 (audio)" (2010). Sustainability History Project. http://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/10883

Portland State University Oral History Project
Interview Index

INTERVIEWEE: Allejandro Tecum

Interviewer: Adam Villareal

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Date: 2/25/2010_____

Location of Interview: St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Forest Grove

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Research Assistant: Steve Rosin

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Interview Series: SUSTAINING NORTHWEST LANDSCAPES & COMMUNITIES

Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE) WITH AN
EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
0:00	Background Came from Guatemala ten years ago because wife is from here.
3:57	How did you get involved with this issue? Had first contact with sustainability in Guatemala at the university. Discovered damaging effects of chemical fertilizers while farming there.
4:48	When you switched from pesticides to organic farming, what challenges did you face? It was difficult because the soil was dead from the chemical fertilizers. You have to start from zero. It will take years to rehabilitate the soil.
8:28	What is your typical day like? Come in at 9:00 am; check emails; currently contributing to a manual, in Spanish, for organic farming; fighting invasive grass; looking for more land.
10:20	The problem you just mentioned in leasing land and fighting grass, is that the kind of thing you've run into before? It is new. When we started the program we had a space that had a thistle problem, but we could fight it.

12:18	What part of working with the disadvantaged populations, specifically the Latino population in Oregon, do you find most rewarding? It's seeing them grow their vegetables, follow the principles we have given them, and come to the market.
13:20	I read that Adelante Mujeres manages the Forest Grove Farmers Market. Do you feel that ties the Latino community together here very well? That was the idea at the beginning, but it hasn't been the reality.
14:30	I know when I lived here, El Cento Cultural, St. Andrews Catholic Church, and also St Bedes is a really good place to tie together the Latino community. Do you see that? Yeah, here there is no Latino members but they are working on it.
15:10	What parts of working with the Latino community do you find frustrating? One is because of the economic situation, they cannot keep coming to the classes. The other one is Latino people are not ready to work in cooperation.
20:14	You mentioned some ESL classes that you teach. How do these integrate with sustainable farming at Adelante Mujeres? Or is it mostly another program that you offer? The ESL and GED classes are for women but this is for everybody.
21:09	Does it help empower the Latino community for Latino women to take ESL and GED classes? Yeah, throughout the years many women have got their GED certification. Several have gotten jobs now. Besides ESL and GED we have leadership classes and nutrition classes. All these help women to grow. Also the friendships they make last for years.
22:46	Do you feel like that helps go above the whole Mexican, Guatemalan, Venezuelan divisions you see in the community? I don't know. For me, it has been difficult because when I speak to people, we speak Spanish, but there are different words for things in the different countries.
24:33	I read that Adelante Mujeres was recently awarded a $300,000 grant from the federal government. How do you feel this resource will expand organic farming in Oregon, particularly for the Latino community? We are expanding services to Yamhill County. In doing that we can help more

	Latino farmers to grow.
27:53	Being in Yamhill County, I know there is a lot of vineyards there. Have you ever given thought to expanding into the wine business or is that way off in the horizon? As long as they are owned by Latino people.
29:14	I also saw that the Paul G. Allen foundation was a recent donor to you guys, in your case, for small business development. Can you explain exactly what this will be used for? I don't know. Adelante Mujeres has six programs. This grant is for Adelante Imprezas.
31:05	What local partner groups do you see as really essential to Adelante Mujeres's goals in the Latino community? One is Pacific University, also some churches.
32:20	Given the new grant funds that you've been awarded, do you have any new programs or goals on the horizon? No, it seems like a lot of money, but it is for three years.
35:56	Your website lists that political involvement is a service that Adelante Mujeres offers. How far does that go? Do you help Latinos get registered to vote or do you go further than that? Well yeah, if their situation allows them to vote. We organize them to go to Salem and talk with legislators and marches. It gives them a sense of hope.

Time	Notes
39:27	About four years ago, I went to Salem and they had an immigration rights protest at the capital. Were you there? Yes. Every time there is a big protest, we are there.
40:10	What are some of your proudest achievements, whether they relate to Adelante Mujeres or not? Is Adelante Mujeres one of them? I don't know. I can say that Adelante Mujeres is an achievement because when I was in Guatemala, I was told that when I came here I would be a dishwasher or something like that. But I only do the dishes at home.
43:2	Before we end is there anything you would like to add? I just want to thank you for doing this. What I really want is for this program to be

	known around the area.