Community Voices:
Postville Oral History Project

Interview with
Pedro Lopez

March 15th, 2015
Postville, Iowa

Interview Conducted by RaeAnn Swanson-Evans
Interview Transcribed by RaeAnn Swanson-Evans

Interviews conducted as a joint project with The Postville Project
Interview Description

Pedro Lopez grew up in Postville and attended the Postville Schools. In this interview he shares his experience of learning from the various cultures that make up the Postville community, making friends and having fun in small town, completing elementary and high school in Postville, and being a member of the Catholic Church. Pedro also explores what it was like to transition to college as a first generation student at Luther College in nearby Decorah, Iowa. Pedro recounts his experiences during the May 12th, 2008 ICE raid in which his mother was arrested, jailed, and deported to Mexico. At age 13, his life changed forever. Pedro has spoken about his experience in many different venues and participated in marches, protests, and rallies about the raid and national immigration reform.

Topics Discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics Discussed</th>
<th>Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedro’s background and involvement at Luther College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing up in Postville</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending school in Postville</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro’s experience as a member of the Catholic Church</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the Postville</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to college at Luther College</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The May 12th, 2008 ICE raid</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro’s experience of having his mother arrested, jailed, and deported</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking out after the raid</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in the marches and protests after the raid</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postville after the raid</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining visas and permanent residency</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro’s thoughts on the immigration system</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes for the future of Postville</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Voices: Postville Oral History Project

Pedro Lopez, Postville, Iowa

March 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2015

\textit{RaeAnn Swanson: The first question I have for you is could you tell me a little about yourself?}

Pedro Lopez: I’m Pedro Lopez, I’m twenty years old. I came to the United States when I was two. We lived in Postville, we moved when I was in third grade to Burlington, but a big city wasn’t really what we wanted. The schools were a little difficult, so we decided to come back to Postville. We have been here ever since. We’ve been in Postville for 18 years, so it’s been our home for 18 years. It’s really what I call home, because I really can’t remember when I was in Mexico in any detail. I graduated from High School in May 2013. I then proceeded to go to Luther College where I am now a sophomore. I am studying International Studies and Political Science with a slight chance of getting a minor in Chinese. At Luther College I am involved with Hola Enlaces which is a Hispanic based organization that does service projects throughout the Decorah area. One of the things I’ve helped with is teaching ESL classes to immigrant students here in Postville. I am also involved in the Diversity Center. Recently I was a part of the Ethnic Arts Festival which is a big celebration to commemorate the different nationalities that we have represented at Luther College. I got to carry the flag of Mexico as well as have a booth with a friend of mine Pablo. Right now I am on Spring Break, relaxing, having fun with the family, but at the same time I try to keep myself involved here. I am a charter member of LULAC in Dubuque. I am the connection between LULAC which is an organization, League of United Latin American Citizens, and they came and helped after the raid. I’ve been in connection with them.

Lopez_P_031515
after the fact and made some really great connections, made some great friends. We talked about what we can do with Postville and we made a scholarship happen. Now I am advocating at the different churches and I am going to go to school later this week to ask kids to really take the chance and fill out the application, and put in the work to get a possible 1,000 dollar scholarship. I plan after college to venture into the real world for a little bit, see where I can go with my degrees, see how far I can use my connections, possibly go to Law school. Law school is a big goal that I had for a while. I actually spoke at DePaul Law School when I was talking after the raid. That was one of the things that interested me a lot, immigration law. In a nutshell that is a little about myself.

*What was it like for you to grow up in Postville?*

Postville was a really great place to grow up partly because there were a lot of Hispanics here so there wasn’t anybody that I connected with that I thought was different from me. What I thought was always curious was that it was clear where the Hispanics lived and where everyone else lived. Other than that, Postville is a small community, safe, my parents thought it was a great place to grow up. The school is a very good school, they go far and beyond what they need to make sure we get the best education, that we are looked after, that we are helped if we are falling behind they will go ahead and help us out. The friends that I made here, I have American friends and Hispanic friends and you get to learn from the two different cultures. I say learn from the two different cultures because I am still learning about my culture. Because I am in the United States I am not really living life in Mexico. I have to rely on stories, on pictures that they send, sometimes videos if we are really lucky, so I get to see what’s going on there [5:00] and experience the culture through that. The American culture is something that I
personally have had to get accustomed to because I’ve been here in the United States for 18 years, but I don’t live with an American family, I live with a Hispanic family. Anything Americana-pop culture, I have had to learn. That’s been one of the big things now that I am in college, both my parents never really made it passed elementary. My mom was forced to drop out in third grade, no that was my dad. Third grade was my dad, my mom was sixth grade.

College for us was just the word college. I knew what it was from videos. The idea of college came from all the pop culture that I knew, but I didn’t know what it all entailed. As I have gone to the two years of school in Luther I have learned more, and in high school I got the idea of what you do, the dos and the don’ts, the list. Postville has been a great community to grow up in. Its small, its great, the people really get to know you and you get to know them. Because it’s small, everybody knows each other and they are very welcoming once you break the ice and really make yourself open to them and they are open to you.

*Can you tell me what you did for fun here?*

Growing up, the thing that I always looked forward to was the Taste of Postville when everyone showed off their culture. That was a lot of fun just the smells on the streets, the people laughing, the different languages. That was a lot of fun. I used to play a lot of soccer when I was growing up. I also did a fair amount of just hanging out with my American friends. That was more towards High School. Just hanging out, going to movies, riding bikes, being with family.

It’s a small town so we really don’t have concerts or a mall, so we had to make fun ourselves. It could be *let's go to a bonfire* which then turns into a night of playing capture the flag between the hay bails. If you work and you are working with a couple of friends say at the
grocery store, which I did, it gets fun after a little bit. You make your own games. Just hanging out with anybody, it was fun.

*What was it like to attend the school in Postville?*

I basically did the whole nine yards in Postville schools. I went through kindergarten to high school. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the fact that my classmates didn’t think twice to talk to me just because I was a little bit different, because I have a darker skin complexion they weren’t afraid of that, they went ahead and talked [to me]. The schoolteachers really didn’t look at us differently. It was a lot of fun I can say that. Teachers were great, they pushed you. If they saw that you could do a little better they would push you. If you were behind they would talk [to you] and make sure you did your work. I liked High School a lot. You are in the same building for four years so you make some great, great connections. The relationships I have with some of the teachers there are far beyond just teacher and student. Now that I am off in college when I come visit them I always have my go to teachers that I go and visit right away. Just because I enjoy talking to them, I enjoy them saying I remember when you were just a freshman and you didn’t know what the heck you were going to do and now you are doing all these great things. *Postville School was a great, great place to grow up and great place to go and learn. Again be more open to the culture that a small town like Postville has.*

*I learned from a previous interview that High Schoolers in Postville have to do community service hours and I was wondering what you did for those?*

[10:00] For me, we were very active in Catholic Church so I usually was serving, so I would serve which was an hour, but I also tried to force myself to do other things. I did some farming work with some friends. Also it was actually during the time of the raid, there were different events
that happened during the summer where they would help kids. One was called Project Noah, it was a group of Lutheran churchgoers and they came to Postville and they had this project for the summer. I spent my entire summer there. It was kind of therapeutic for me too because I got to experience the kid-like things, but I also got to help out the other kids. I was a member of various different groups that also had us do different service projects. So they would count towards the service project of that group and the required hours that we needed for High School. I remember I went once to the Ronald McDonald House in Rochester. It was a great experience. We were there to clean one of their kid rooms and we got to serve them lunch. I was just remembering that there was a Greek family that came from Greece because their kid was really sick and he was receiving the proper care. I will say this, its honest, I stink at cooking, so when I had to make them the food I was like I apologize if it horrible but it is from the bottom of my heart. Hopefully the love is a better seasoning than my actual cooking skills, because I’m a bad cook. So I did that, just helping around anywhere I could, half an hour here, an hour there. It was a good lot. It was a lot of experience and a lot of connecting with people. It changes your perspective sometimes when you look at different things.

What was it like attending the Catholic Church here in Postville?

I always joke that sometimes it seems that there are two different churches, because we have a designated time for Spanish mass and a designated time for English time. I would always feel a little intimidated when I went the English mass just because it’s so much more prim and proper. Everybody goes in with dress pants and dress shirts, sometimes they go the whole nine yards with a tie or a bow tie. The Catholic Church in Spanish is a little bit more about your faith, and I
don’t know how to explain it. You go because you really want to go and do the worship and go through the mass. It was a little different. As I went through the Catholic education as well, I was forced to go to some of the English masses. It was unique. I felt more at home with the Spanish mass of course. I felt that it was a unique opportunity for me to experience the more American version of Catholicism. Going to Church in Postville was a lot of fun. I had to learn to be orderly and conduct myself in an orderly fashion because it’s a church, you have to behave. It was a good lot of fun. It was just going to church, but you got accustomed to the different people. I remember I never knew about Mardi Gras until I started helping out at church and one of the things was signing up for Mardi Gras. It was one of the best things that I did because I got to meet so many people. Sitting down and having a coffee with a member of the community that has been here for God knows how many years is really great.

*This Mardi Gras celebration, is it a celebration or what do they do at the Church?*

They do a raffle drawing and after the actual service they have a breakfast so there is eggs, there are some pancakes, fruit, desserts, but the big thing is the raffle and for the older members of the community the coffee. Its always fun to do that. That is one of the coolest things, just sit down and have a cup of coffee [15:00] with some of the oldest members of Postville and just ask them you’ve been here how many years, how do you see the change? That is always a really cool question to ask them. In my 18 years that I’ve been here, I remember the veterinary move, there were a few things that happened, we had a bakery that burnt down. Things change just in 18 years. I wonder what their perspective is from somebody who has been here forty years or sixty or seventy years. What do they see that’s changed? That is a really cool thing to do as well.
Actually that was my next question for you, have you noticed any changes in town since you were growing up?

There was the gradual growth of numbers in the Hispanic community. The raid took that down very, very quickly. We went from a nice, healthy population of Hispanics to like a third, I think a third of the population of Postville was just taken out from the raid. When you take a third of 2,000, it’s a lot. It changes the mood in the town. Of course the economy in the town is going to go down substantially. It was rough times for everybody at that stage in Postville. There have been some things, I would call nicer things, that haven’t affected Postville as much. The Schools, we went from a smaller school to a growing number of kindergarteners which forced the school to expand their classrooms. That was a very positive change. Right now, we have a community of Somali refugees. In the town we have the Hispanic community which can be broken down into several different groups, but mainly Mexicans and Guatemalans, there are a couple Hondurans and Salvadorans. Then we have our American population which have been growing up here for a long time. We have the Hassidic Jews who have been here for quite a bit now. We have Eastern European people, Ukrainians, some Russians. We also have the Somali refugees. We also have families from Saudi Arabia and a couple from Sudan. It’s a great big variety. When I said the American culture, some are really big into their heritage so you have the Norwegians and Germans and they bring their own spice too. The changes have been you can see them open up a bit more. Postville has physically changed not too much. Like I said, there was a bakery that burnt down. There was a big turkey plant where some immigrants worked. That burnt down, so that left a vacuum of people who didn’t have a job, but wanted to work. Then Agriprocessors expanded on their meat processing area, so a lot of people just funneled into
that. I guess that was a big, big thing. Going from two large companies to just one, so everybody would just have to funnel there. The cool change in school is now they teach Spanish at a very young age just because there is so much influence of Spanish speaking people here. My friends, I remember, we started in Middle School. They have middle school through high school. Some of them have continued, some not so much, nevertheless they have some background knowledge in Spanish that they can use. That’s another cool change that I have seen.

*What was the transition like for you from here to Luther?*

Well the transition, it was somewhat difficult. Luther is a white majority school, but still we have a growing number of Hispanics that are going there, a growing number of African Americans that are going there. We also have an amazing, amazing amount of international students. Luther College has a lot of resources, a lot of opportunities. I was shocked at first at how genuine they were because sometimes colleges seem a little genuine at the visit, but then not so much when you do go there. The genuine feel of people caring, people wanting you to do better, people pushing you was there and I thought that was really great. For my parents it was a little more of a transition because I am a first generation to go on to college and for them it was a big deal for me to move out. They were a little worried, my mom was more worried, my dad was kind of like yeah he is ready to do it on his own. Making friends was easy because everybody as a freshman is at a loss, everybody is a little bewildered, you kind of huddle into groups and go off from that. The transition was hard, but now it is easy. I am helping some of the people that are going into Luther. Right now there are two, both are people that I know really well. One is my cousin and the other is a really good friend. Seeing
myself through them, being a little bewildered, I thought I would do what other people did before me and help them out, show them the ropes. It was a good lot of fun, but difficult at first. Slowly and surely it’s been better, building connections there. I think my very first job was in the Caf [cafeteria] and I hated it. I absolutely dreaded going to my shift, but the people that worked that same shift made it so, so tolerable and fun at some points. I worked my way up to get a job in admissions. From admissions I have just stayed there because it’s a good job, it’s an easy job and it’s a job which puts me at a big advantage because I get to work with other students. I am actually the assistant for the council that is in charge of diversity in the student population. So he tells me we are going to try to recruit more Hispanic students, so we go ahead and look for high schools that have a large population of Hispanics and we go there and talk to them and say Luther is a viable option this is how it works. If you want to visit we can make it happen, we can set you up with somebody so you can spend the night, etcetera. Giving back has been good. The connections in Luther have been growing. The transition has been easier and I hope that it gets easier. I know it will. Hopefully it can make a positive change to where there is a nice stream of Luther-goers form Postville like there is from Decorah to Luther.

*I’m going to take you back to the time of the raid, and I was wondering if you could tell me about your experiences during that time.*

I’ll go back right to the day. I was in social studies going into my reading class. There was a helicopter circling around the northern part of town. There is a National Guard station in up in Decorah so we thought maybe they got themselves a hold of a helicopter they are doing an exercise. *Prior to that there was a raid in Marshalltown. Some people saw that as*
a possibility of them getting closer to Postville, making connections and whatnot. When we did find out that it was actually immigration that came to Postville, ICE agents, it was a big hit for me. Both of my parents worked at Agriprocessors at that time. My dad worked in maintenance and my mom worked just on the line, is what we called it, which is where they process the meat. My mom worked from three in the morning until whenever they decided to end the day. My dad would go in around four or five in the afternoon. They tried to do that so there was an adult in the house. My mom was working her shift and I knew that she was there for sure. What happened after that was they did arrest my mom and she was scared because she heard stories about Marshalltown and how they would go into the houses. [25:00] Immigrants don’t sometimes know the full extension of the law and they would allow them sometimes to just come in not knowing what would be the consequences. My mom said she was here alone. She was not here with anybody else. She said I’m here alone, I don’t have any kids. If you are going to take me, take me, that’s all you are going to get. That’s really what they did. She was just scared. She didn’t know what to do, but she knew that she had a family. There are three of us. My youngest sister is a United States citizen, my older sister and I aren’t, so she was worried about us. And rightly so. She came from Mexico, 2,200 and some miles. They both crossed the desert, in horrendous conditions. She wasn’t going to give up all of that just because she was going to open her mouth and say oh yeah I have kids but she didn’t know that was one of the ways out of the actual process. She was arrested and sent to five different prisons. She was sentenced to five months in jail and was deported on October 25th, of 2008 which ironically is my dad’s birthday. My mom was taken out of the picture for a year. Us here at home it was very difficult. My sister was 17 years old going on 18. In a flip of a
coin she had to become a mother of two. My dad had to work double as hard because we had half of our income cut. I kind of had to step up. I was at the age where, I was thirteen, so I could do a little bit more, which I did. You kind of had to leave some of your childhood behind. What I told Luis Argueta, who was actually here filming today, I told Luis it was hard for me. I was a man at that time. I was expected to be a man, and be a rock. Just going through the motions and make sure everything is aright and not really express my feelings. Well that was one of the things that was hurting the most was my feelings because I didn’t have my mom, I had to give up some of my childhood just because it wasn’t necessary at that time. We were in constant fear of ICE coming back, most of the time we had half of our belongings packed. That was something that would eat at my mind like oh no, my dad is going to go and work, alright is he going to make it back? If not what are we going to do, what is going to be the process? Plus before my mom was deported, it was where is my mom? I wonder what she is doing, I wonder what she is feeling, I wonder if she is okay, I wonder if she is being treated right? It’s a lot on a thirteen year olds’ mind. Especially when they are thirteen, they are going through their own changes themselves. The fear of going to high school was completely not even in my mind because I was thinking I don’t know if I am going to survive another day living in the United States. Why do I have to worry about the next four years of possibly being in Mexico? It was a hard time. It was a time where I realized that my story could do a lot of good things, the story of Postville could do some amazing, great things. It was a time of change, it was a time of growth, it was a time to strengthen our family, but it was a hard time nevertheless. 

*When your mother was in the five jails were you able to contact her at all?*
She would send me letters. We took the decision of not going to visit her partly because it would be too much. It would have been nice to see her and nice to know she was okay. I never could see my mother in an orange jumpsuit behind a glass. Thinking of her as oh yeah she is supposed to be a criminal. She’s my mother. She has given up so much to give me the opportunity to where I’m at now. [30:00] She would send us cards, and that’s pretty much it. When she was in Mexico we would call her of course and get in contact with her, but while she was in jail we just kept it at letters. The letters were hard to swallow. She would try to be strong in the letters. She would say I’m fine, I’m doing great, how are you doing? I hope you are doing fine. This is going to be behind us. You are going to be fine. Just keep going, keep looking forward and don’t be afraid. It was hard. It was hard again, you have the half packed house, dad working two jobs, sister uptight with pretty much everything because she is in charge of the house. It was just one more thing, but it was a thing I always looked forward to, it was a thing that gave me strength. It really inspired me to continue talking and when people questioned what I did I took that as a sign that well maybe they really don’t want to hear what happened. If they question my story it might be because they are really in the dark of what is happening in the immigration system. I took that and ran with it, just kept talking about my story, about that story of Postville and what I thought was wrong.

After the raid, you kind of became a spokesperson of sorts, writing letters and doing some interviews. Can you tell me how that came about and what that was like for you? The first interview, I was talking to Sister Mary McCauley and she was like how are you doing? I told her I cannot feel anything right now, there is just so much that’s
going on. I told her my mom, she is gone. It’s just incredible what happened. I gave my first interview and I felt relieved, I felt that I did something positive. Then I continued with that. Different people asked for the little kid that talked about his mom. Anybody who came and asked for the story I’d tell it and I kept telling it and telling it. Soon some students like yourself came up and were asking, journalists, sometimes TV people would ask me and I did. There really was no structure behind it. It was like whenever they came, I would talk to them. Luis Argueta was one of the first ones that asked me hey I want to film you, but I want to film you constantly. I want to see what it is, what’s going down. I want to hear about your story, I want to hear about the story of Postville. That was one of the biggest things. With that he saw that I really wanted to tell the story of Postville, so he opened some opportunities. I traveled to Chicago for a week. I was on national TV, international TV. I talked to different Universities. When there was an event about Postville, sometimes I got invited and I would go. The connections that I built through the different interviews, one of the big things that I enjoyed was when I spoke at the fifth anniversary of the raid. They asked me formally if I wanted to speak and I said I would definitely. I collaborated with David Vasquez and we made an amazing speech. I delivered it. It was well received. After that more people asked me to give the story. It was a lady that approached me from an organization, I think it was Casa Guanajuato, she asked me if I was willing to go to Washington to be part of a group that was advocating for immigration reform. My mom and I in a heartbeat said yes, just tell us when we have to leave. We went there. Luis traveled with us, he filmed us there. I talked about my story, the story of Postville. I talked about how that story, when you look at it, it is an individual story, but if you replicate it how many times would you
find that story in the 11.7 million people that live here? The chances are you are going to find a lot [35:00] because the immigration system is so broken, things like Postville happen all the time. I talked about how much it mattered and how much benefit the United States could get from having another 11.7 million people to actually help out the economy and to function as an actual part of society rather than just throwing them on the side and saying well you can work, but it’s going to be up to your own risk and we are going to chase you down. It all started by just talking about why I felt it was wrong, what I saw was going on. I drew inspiration from my mom and my dad. I wasn’t going to let everything fall down from underneath of us. If I was going to get deported I wanted to let it be known that I wanted to try and change something before that. That’s how it started and it went like a domino effect from every connection that I got, that pushed me from another person to another person and another person.

Did you, you probably did, participate in some of the marches and protests afterwards?

Yes the first year anniversary I did that and that was with Rabbi Allen, he was here. He was the spokesperson for the Jewish communities in the Twin Cities, another connection that I made there, it was great. I also did some of the speaking outside of Postville, I did the Cedar Rapids march. When there were people that came here like Rigoberta Menchú the Nobel Peace Prize winner from Guatemala, I was here, I walked alongside her. She asked about the story and I went ahead and told her. I was very active and I still am. LULAC, which is the organization that I talked about, they have rallies. It was Rally for a Dream in Moline, and I went and talked to them. I gave the speech that I gave for the fifth anniversary of Postville. I have been active wherever it is that they want me to go and talk about that because it is a powerful story they
feel and I feel that it is an honor for me to tell it, and to speak of it in grander terms because it is an issue that is happening all over the United States.

How have you seen Postville regroup over the last couple of years?

I can say that the Hispanic community is a little bit more tight knit. We definitely learned our rights. There is a little more general awareness about the immigration system and how to navigate it. There is also more awareness of the American community that is out there to help people. I talked about how sometimes it felt a little separated. I think that the separation has broken down a bit. Postville has gotten a little bit stronger. It is the little town in Iowa that has a name. Backing it up, we are the town that really didn’t let the immigration system fool us.

Because of what happened in Postville, some things had to be changed for immigration, ICE, Immigration Customs Enforcement. They had to change some of their policies and some of the ways they go about doing raids because of what happened in Postville. I think there is a general sense of unity in Postville and also a sense of fighting when it is something that is wrong.

You mother is here with us today, could you tell me how that came about?

After my mom was deported on October 25th, 2008 we went ahead and tried to see if we could get her legal status changed. With success and a lot of hard work and a lot of push and pull, my older sister was able to gain a visa. Through that she asked if we could get visas and we did. My mom was one of them that received it too, and she was able to come back and work. But the visas were only good for a couple of years. We had to go through the trials and tribulations of getting two more [40:00] consecutive visas, which then would allow us a path to residency because after so many years of consistent living in the United States you can apply for residency. My older sister was the first to receive it, and as of last May we received ours. Now we are

Lopez_P_031515
permanent residents, which gives us a lot of liberty. We are not really afraid of getting arrested. My dad and mom can work legally, I can go study and I can get federal aid as well. It was five years of the immigration system that we had to go through. Now we are looking at possibly getting our citizenships taken care of. I have mixed feelings at times about it. But I know that the United States has been my country for a long time. I feel that, while I do owe my country of origin a great deal because that is where my parents lived, I feel that my future is here and this is where I want to have my kids. There is still some talk about what we are going to do. It’s been a long five years of immigration challenges, going to Des Moines and back to get our paperwork fixed and just immigration stuff, it is really complicated sometimes. Five years of the immigration system and now we have gotten permanent residency, but it all started with U-visas. That’s how it all began.

So we’ll have to watch Luis Argueta’s new film to learn more about that. Do you have any comments on the current state of our immigration system?

Gosh, I do, I have a lot. DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] was an amazing thing, an amazing opportunity for the Dreamers. I feel that Obama has done a lot of big-little steps, DACA and his executive action were two big-little steps that were amazing. I say big-little because they are things that are pro-immigration, which is rare to see these days, but little because it only does little, it only affects a certain amount of people and only affects them for so long before they are up in the air with their hands tied behind their backs not knowing what they are going to do. I feel that our current division in Congress and the House is really quite a poor representation of what the United States government should be. The deep partisan thinking where it’s like well I’m a republican, so I have to vote for all the republican
bills or I’m a democrat and I can’t work with a republican its ridiculous. I’m a sophomore so in Greek it translates to wise fool, wise because I think I know everything and I’ll say that it looks like they are kindergarteners sometimes just fighting about something, Congress is, but I’m a fool because I don’t know exactly the ins and outs of Congress or the politics behind everything. Nevertheless I just feel that they could do so much more and they could do a great job. It doesn’t have to be a bill that is completely biased towards one party or another, but I just feel that they have to work a little bit more in unity to make something happen. We have the Texas judge that doesn’t want the executive action to go anywhere and it’s like well if that doesn’t happen let each state have its own legislative body make what they want for the different immigration issues. But then again that for me isn’t enough because each state is only going to allow whatever it is and there is going to be people that are migrating from one state to another. That could also cause the economy of one state to go down while the economy of the other one is being overwhelmed because there are so many people there’s not enough land. There is a variety of things. I feel that if there is any action it should be taken at a federal level and it should be consistent and it should be bi-partisan not partisan. [45:00] Its something that the government has to own up to, because the United States has been built by immigrants whether they like it or not. The Chinese built the railroads and we treat them horribly. The Irish immigrants suffered through so much at the meat processing plants in New York. The Jungle was a great depiction of the horrible, inhumane states that some immigrants had to face. You have the Hispanics’ history in the southwest area picking all the food for the consumption of the United States. We have this great chance to have fresh fruit like strawberries and for us it’s a nice delectable fruit. I watched a film and the immigrants call them
the Devil’s fruit because when they grow everybody has to be stooped over picking them and that causes them to have horrible, horrible lower back problems. Its crazy to think that a nice tasty snack for us, which we finish in a couple seconds takes them so much pain and suffering and so much out of them while we just consume it at will and we really don’t know the story behind it. I think that if the federal government should take on this issue and take it on head on and say all right well we screwed up a couple of times, let’s make it right this time. Just hash it out, that’s what they need to do, just sit down and hash it out, really work on it. If they need evidence, well look no further than what happened in Postville, where we had a group of immigrants that worked hard. There were a few bad apples, but where aren’t there a few bad apples? We have a few bad apples in the United States that have caused great destruction. What difference is it if they come from a different community when their only aspiration is to come and work and have a better opportunity. Which was the same thing that drove a lot of people from Ireland, England, all of Europe to the United States. Before the United States was actually reaching out to immigrants come, come this new land is for us to take. Now its like oh, no this land is my land, this land is not your land. Which is something that I feel that the United States is doing wrong. Again I feel that it should come from both parties, it should come at the federal level, and it should come with intention, not just to get it passed.

*Do you have any hopes for the future of Postville?*

I hope that Postville continues to grow. I hope that the Hispanic community continues to want to better itself. I see a lot more kids graduating from the Hispanic community, which is great. I see them thinking about college, I hear them talk about *I’m going to visit this college*
and that college. If that’s your will then go for it, I really want to see more of that. In my speech I talked about how I was going to graduate in a few months and go off to college. I want to see my little brothers’ class, I think there are ten or fifteen Hispanic students, I want all of them to graduate, I want all of them to be, if not all of them a few of them speak at their High School graduation talking about how they aspire to change the world and if they can’t, [then how they] aspire to change the town that they live in by one way or another. I just hope that Postville can be an example for the different Hispanic communities around Iowa and further become a model for everybody to really look at. I hope the Postville story doesn’t become a passive thing. I hope that it is something that is kept alive. It is something that we should be proud of. While it did bring a lot of misery and somewhat destruction it gave fertile land for hopes and dreams and aspirations to be sown and now being reaped. I feel that Postville should be proud of being that town that said it ends right here, this is garbage what you guys are doing. Let’s speak up and be the voice for everybody around us. I hope they continue on that, build momentum [50:00] and continue having bigger and better things planned.

That is all the questions I have for you. If you have any closing comments or if you want to talk about anything else that we didn’t already mention, you have the floor.

No, I am just honored to have another interview. It’s a great opportunity to say the story. If you have any more questions at a later point, or if you want to talk about something else, I am more than willing to talk again. If you want to interview my mom or anybody from the family they are more than willing to as well. Thank you.

Perfect, thank you. [50:45]