Series Title: "Town-Gown Relations in DeKalb, 1950-1981"

Respondent: George Gutierrez
Interviewer: Lucille Aikins

Accession Number: OH 2.31
Date: March 16, 1981

Biographical Data:

Scope and Content: The Gutierrez tape spans the years 1961-1980. Major topics include the CHANCE program at NIU and the Latin American migrant ministry program in DeKalb.

Abstract:
Interview Abstract

TAPE LOCATION

Side One

001 - 167 (7½ minutes)
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
Came to the U.S. in 1961 from Peru as a senior in history at NIU; 1963 - offered 2 jobs in Peru; signed a contract to teach in Kirkland High School; 1965-1969 taught Spanish at NIU; started doctorate work in Education in 1968; 1969 - asked to join the CHANCE program.

168 - 304 (9 minutes)
CHANCE PROGRAM:
Included Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Whites; early years it was primarily Blacks; program grew rapidly; designed to help students cope with college-level courses; started with 58 students; Gutierrez's views on whether these students would have succeeded without the program; community attitude.

305 - 389 (6 minutes)
STUDENT DISTURBANCES:
CHANCE program took part in the riots; Rhoden Smith's role; positive reactions from students toward Smith's attempt at negotiating; violence much less than in other cities; peaceful negotiations helped the community understand the problems being addressed.

390 - 469 (6 minutes)
STUDENT COMPARISONS - BLACK VS. LATINOS:
Not a great difference; both students find education as a means towards success; Latino student suffers more because of the language barrier; depends on amount of time spent in this country; migrant workers population trends.
**Interview Abstract**

**Tape Location** | **Topics Discussed**
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470 - 507 (3 minutes) | MIGRANT MINISTRY:
Began in 1964; formed to find out more about the migrants personally; 1966 had 150 volunteers going to 12 farms; public school cooperation.

Side Two

001 - 364 (20 minutes) | MIGRANT MINISTRY:
Public school cooperation; Title VII; University had no official connection until they began providing student teachers; diminishing population brought about secondary education program; no official connection with the CHANCE program; Cuban refugees arrived during the last ten years; positive contribution to the community; promoted town-gown relations - excellent cooperation; migrants have been successfully integrated into the community; Gutierrez is not aware of any extreme discrimination within the town.

365 - 493 (10 1/2 minutes) | DECREASE IN UNIVERSITY POPULATION, FUTURE OF THE CHANCE PROGRAM:
Depends on University budget; believes it is a vital part of NIU; necessary program for many people; families settling prior to the CHANCE program and the migrant ministry.

494 - 505 (1/4 minute) | GUTIERREZ FAMILY HISTORY
End of Interview
ORAL HISTORY DEED OF GIFT AGREEMENT
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DeKalb, Illinois

I, George Gutierrez of DeKalb, Illinois own and desire to give to the Northern Illinois Regional History Center (Northern Illinois University-Board of Regents) the following described property which was transferred to the Center on March 16, 1981, and which consists of ___ hours of tape time contained on ___ reels of recorded tape.

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__________________________ 3/9/1981
George Gutierrez Date
Donor

The Center, by its authorized agents, hereby accepts the above gift. Approved:

__________________________ 3/9/1981
Janelle Arkins Date
Oral History Interviewer

Approved by:

__________________________ March 24, 1981
Jen A. Stgemeiter Date
Director, Northern Illinois Regional History Center

__________________________ March 24, 1981
Provost, Board of Regents for the use of Northern Illinois University Date
This interview is being conducted in cooperation with the NIU libraries and the NIU Regional History Center. This project on Town and Gown Relations in DeKalb, Illinois, 1955 to 1980, is sponsored by the Illinois Humanities Council. March 9, 1981. I am Lucille Aikins interviewing George Gutierrez. He is an employee of NIU, working with the CHANCE Program, and has an interest in the teaching of English as a second language.

AIKINS: To begin with this evening, George, I would like to hear a little bit about what brought you to this country and what your background is.

GUTIERREZ: I would like to first thank you for being one of the person to be in the interview. I came to the United States as a student from Peru, South America. Perhaps to make my story short, I came to DeKalb as a senior to this university, Northern Illinois University, in 1961. And I came as a history student, you know, to the department here at Northern.

AIKINS: How did you know about Northern Illinois University?

GUTIERREZ: I was told by some previous instructors that were taking courses in Chicago. They knew about Northern and they said to apply to Northern because Northern is a good school. And I applied in the summer of '61 and I was admitted in September of '61. Since then I continued here at Northern. Actually, my coming
to DeKalb would be dated 1961, twenty years now until 1981.

AIKINS: Yes, so you are quite an inhabitant of DeKalb. Do you regard this as your home now?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. We have lived here for many years. In fact, while I moved here, since I was already a graduate student, I already was married and had one baby. Her name is Janet. She was one month old when we moved in.

AIKINS: So this is your family home now, permanently?

GUTIERREZ: Yes it is. I continued school and graduated from the masters program and continued to the doctoral program also. We bought a home...let see, this is the eighth year now living in our own home. We have a home by the high school here in DeKalb.

AIKINS: That is interesting. Then, having completed a bachelors degree and then a masters degree, you were employed by the university?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. After finishing my masters in '63, I went to Peru. I went back to Peru and I was offered two jobs - one in the University Lima-Peru and another one in the north part of Lima to teach history and sociology. At that time, also, I left here in the United States with a promise to teach at the high school here
in DeKalb. In fact it was in Kirkland High School. I was given a contract before I left for Peru this summer. Comparing the difference between the salaries in Peru or here, obviously it was a big difference. Plus my father was here in the United States so I decided to come back to the United States to teach here in the high school. I taught one year at Kirkland High School.

AIKINS: And you were teaching history?

GUTIERREZ: I taught Spanish. I taught five classes in the high school in Spanish.

AIKINS: Oh, how wonderful for them!

GUTIERREZ: I was full time. Yes, full time in Spanish and also I ran the library. I formed the library club. I worked with them through the year. In the same year, which was '64, the university here at Northern also wanted me to come back to Northern and teach Spanish. So I only taught one year at Kirkland and then in '65 or '66 I came back to Northern to teach Spanish. I taught for Northern for about four years in the foreign language and then in '68 I got into the doctoral program here at Northern in education and I continued my work. I think I finished about '70 or '71 all of my coursework for the doctoral program in education. In the same year, which was '70 or '71, or rather '70, it is when, as a graduate student again, the CHANCE Program that had begun in '68
was already working with minority students, so it really was '69 when the CHANCE Program, Mr. Deacon Davis, asked me if I would join the program and work with minority students in the program, especially with the Latinos because at that time there was a number of them and they needed a counselor to work with them together.

AIKINS: Where did those students come from mainly? Were they brought out from the city? Were they students who lived in this area around DeKalb and that area?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. It was a combination. The majority came from the inner cities or the areas of Chicago High Schools, although we had a few from this area. It could be a few from, perhaps, Aurora. But the majority were from Elgin and Chicago, mainly. So it was a really interesting job so I accepted the job, although I was still a graduate student. Then in 1970 the CHANCE Program offered me a full time working with them. So from there I started working, actually I am continuing from the 1970 until now, '81. I am still in the same position working with them.

AIKINS: Yes. Now many people who know a little bit about the CHANCE Program regard that or have the impression that it was pretty largely black students who came from the inner city out here but it also included Latinos and what other groups?

GUTIERREZ: Alright. Some students from the Asian...Asians, I
believe at one time we had some Indians, but not too many, maybe one or two that I remember. And also, we had some whites, that we call some poor whites that come from about the same high schools as the blacks. It is true that the majority in the beginning were blacks. Very few Latinos, perhaps no other group. The group was started, like I mentioned already, in 1968, and I believe that there were only 58 students in the beginning. And then each year increased in the numbers. When I came in '69 and then '70 we have, perhaps in the hundreds, maybe two or three hundred by that time. The program became highly acceptable by the university and by the people here at Northern and perhaps the high schools in the community. Everybody knew it and we use to have really more students than we could take. The number of Latinos also increased and the number of Asians increased. So by assuming you know more about it...but maybe simply I would like to tell you that the CHANCE Program at times is like a acronym. It stands for complete help necessary or needed for a college education.

AIKINS: So it is an interim program designed to help students rise to the level at which they can do the standard college work?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. We take them and, perhaps, with quite a number of deficiencies coming from the high schools, our purpose, especially the first year, is work with them in the areas of the skilled courses which is the speech, reading, English, math and then from there on we move them to the regular courses.
AIKINS: With some of them it is also foreign language background and they need to have...

GUTIERREZ: Yes. We have a course or two divided into sections and what do you call it...ESL, English as a second language. The students who, especially the Spanish and a few Asians, who have very limited English will be placed in those sections.

AIKINS: You mentioned a number a minute ago. It started out with, did you say, 58 students? And how many, do you know, do they have now, approximately?

GUTIERREZ: Well, each year we take about 350. The number has been about the same for the last maybe six years. We have been taking about 300 to 400 students, only in the fall semester. I saw a list the last time. We might have around 700 now, I believe. We are talking about the ones that survive because there are for many reasons that a student will go to another school or perhaps they are not here or they drop out. There are so many forms of dropping out, exchanging or going to another school, and coming back. The last count was over the 700's that are here. It was just a few weeks ago that we get a count. That is considerable number because we also graduate a great number of them. Last year, I remember, we graduated a 134 students.

AIKINS: By graduate, does that mean they have gone through a
CHANCE Program or does that mean they have gradually gone into regular university classes and graduated?

GUTIERREZ: No, no, they graduated with a degree, a bachelors degree. Oh, yes.

AIKINS: So that you watch them all through a special CHANCE Program and then as they are incorporated into the standard courses.

GUTIERREZ: The ones that we talk about graduating are the ones that went through the whole university program.

AIKINS: And they have a degree that is equivalent to anyone elses?

GUTIERREZ: It is the same degree. In fact, like I say, I saw a report just a month ago. We have the numbers who graduated on the college that they graduated from. And a number of them are in the Graduate School. I have one a year or so ago, two years now, he is a MD already, a medical doctor. He came through us. His name is James Arrington. He is one of my first students who came through the program, went to medic school in Chicago, and he is a doctor now, a MD.

AIKINS: I feel like I need, at this point, to ask you in view of this moment in the development of President Reagan’s administration
when he is asking for so many cuts in financing education. I would like to ask if you feel, at this point, that these students who have now gotten degrees would have been able, this, of course, is an opinion, would have been able to have gradually entered the university and succeeded in a degree without this program?

GUTIERREZ: Well, the answer is none of them would be able to do it for several reasons. One reason is that none of them who went through our program are admissible in the regular terms of the university. None of them. That is one thing. Another thing, in order to have a program like ours, it costs to the university. We have a number of people working and it costs also a lot of dedication and a lot of commitment. I believe definitely we have to have a financial support. The university has to see that the program is producing. For the last four years, we have graduated over a 100 each time. That is a tremendous human value.

AIKINS: You cannot measure the dollars and cents.

GUTIERREZ: You cannot measure the hundreds of people who have graduated and are now in Graduate School or working. It is just a tremendous achievement that the university...a tremendous accomplishment that the university has put in the monies in the program.

AIKINS: Now you were here in the beginning of this program. You
were one of the original faculty members for...do you recall community attitude toward this program when these people first were brought here when this program started?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. Do you remember in the '60's, you know, there were all kinds of problems with riot and our program actually took part in some of the riots including some of the breaking the windows in Lowden Hall. And, perhaps, other problems, you know. We were right in the middle. We were like helping to understand the problem in a sense. But they were so overwhelming that it was very hard to control things.

AIKINS: At that time President Rhoten Smith, we all recall a very dramatic thing, he was putting on slacks and a cap and coming out in a casual way and wasn't it on the bridge over the Kishwaukee that he sat there with students and talked with them and carried on a friendly dialogue and attempted to bridge this distance between the upset and the angry students and the university. Do you recall student reaction to that? Do you remember how it affected them?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I remember President Smith, you know, talking to all of us and the students and the faculty indicating full support. I also remember the students accepting, in a sense of being positive, you know, with the promises that they offer and the reactions and everything was very positive. I would say that President Smith had a very clear understanding of the problem. He
was quick to open the facilities and, perhaps, his heart in understanding the problem. Also, from part of the students and from part of us it was clearly a response that it was acceptability, you know, although we see the problems we thought that they could be worked out. The positive response from President Smith really helped to put us together in a good light to continue, hoping on working to make things work.

AIKINS: Well, as I recall, there was considerable anger in the town about some breakage of windows and that kind of thing on Lincoln Highway and that sort of thing. But compared to other universities, much less, so apparently this was very positive and helpful.

GUTIERREZ: I think it was much less because you remember there were a lot of cities being burned down. We only had very mild riots. I think there was more positive response from the cities and also from the university and from all of us involved with the problem. I think that was a very fortunate time for all of us, perhaps, also because of other people involved. We were involved with a purpose to do something beneficial for the students. The response also from the school was positive.

AIKINS: I suppose people might say that if so many of these inner city people had not been brought to the campus that the community might have suffered less. The university, in a sense, was
responsible for bringing them here and that brought in an element that, perhaps, created trouble but the solving of this problem and the working it out on relatively peaceful terms. Do you think that that helped the community to understand what was going on in the country at large because it was not only here but everywhere at that time?

GUTIERREZ: I believe, yes, because even on television we saw all of the drastic measures that all of the groups in different cities, especially the black took that has made other people to understand the problem. Since DeKalb also is looking at the same on television, they saw the problems. The small things that happened here actually helped them also to understand that there is a need to do something. There are groups of people who also needed attention, especially with education. I don't know how much they actually understood but I hope they...and I believe they did. They understood and they peaceable accepted, you know, that I just knew, I would say a new trade, a new philosophy, a new way of interpreting the needs of other peoples. I believe that it is positive, you know, and I would like to give credit also to...in a sense to the city, you know, that they perhaps took whatever happened, whatever loss. I am interpreting it in a positive way to accept the many students who are still coming more and more each year.

AIKINS: Yes. So, in a sense, this CHANCE Program, while it
brought some problems it also brought an opportunity for increased understanding of what was going on in the world.

GUTIERREZ: Definitely, yes.

AIKINS: Did you find a great difference between the black students and the Latino students?

GUTIERREZ: Somehow not a great difference. In the education aspect of life, taking education as an avenue to do something better for your life, both the black and the Latino students find education as a positive way of increasing all the potential, increasing the possibilities and perhaps seeing an open door for success. It has been demonstrated without difference. Both of them are resolved. They both want education as an answer to progress. There are a few differences between how the Latino students are prepared to come to college or how the black students prepare. I believe the Latino student somehow suffers more because of the language, or perhaps, the culture also. Again, it depends on the type of group of Latino. We have about three groups. One group is the Mexican-American, another group is the Puerto Rican, and the third group is Latin-Americans, the ones that come from South America. That is one of the problems. There is not an equal group, you know, a group...you could say that this is a Latino, you know, because there is three different levels or types of groups. Another thing is depending on the amount of time that they have
been in this country. See most of...well, the blacks were born here so there is no culture problem. But with the Latinos, it depends on how many years they have been here. Some of the Mexicans they came...especially I would like to mention about the Mexican-Americans who came to this county here in DeKalb. We have a number of them staying in this county. The children that are staying went to the high school, both in Sycamore and also in DeKalb. We accepted a four, five, six of them that went through the high schools here in DeKalb and out of those six we accepted, I believe, let me see...four of them graduated and two more are still going so they came perhaps with a more limited background than the Latino who comes from Chicago. Alot of them are born in Chicago, you know, so they have a better understanding of the language and the culture. But the migrant who came through here through this county with less English background and perhaps cultural background. Few of them who came through us, we had to first work with them. In many ways helping them to culturate and also to develop the study habits and even to develop ways of seeing the reality of college life in order to succeed.

AIKINS: One thing that I would like to ask as a public school teacher in Sycamore, I use to have several students that would be in my classes only for a few weeks because they would be here to harvest a crop or to plant a crop or something. They would move on and we never saw them again. At the same time, there were families that had settled and had been in Sycamore for a number of years.
Are there waves of migrant workers that still come through or is that migrant population diminished now?

GUTIERREZ: Well, let me see, the last, perhaps, six or eight years the migrant population really decreased. We had small groups coming through. One of the reasons is that they grow a change in there crops. From tomatoes, that they have a great quantity of tomatoes, about ten or twelve farms with tomatoes, because of the problems with the weather, you know, and more because of the problem of the people going and complaining to them about the migrants, they decided to change to corn. So because of that, the majority of the Mexicans coming this way only coming for a short time they are not staying for long or in great numbers because there is not enough jobs so the majority keep moving into Michigan, Ohio, and also Wisconsin.

AIKINS: Where they have that kind of crop.

GUTIERREZ: Right. The fruits or the tomatoes. There are some that stay to work with DeKalb Ag or a few farmers. It usually doesn’t require a great number of them so there was a great change in the population.

AIKINS: Now, the students whose families settled and some of them have been here quite a number of years, I was aware of the fact that those students often were disadvantaged in taking classes in
the public schools because their vocabulary was limited. Their families are accustomed to speaking Spanish at home and because of limited vocabulary often their success in academic work was not as outstanding with a good many of them as children whose families spoke English. And you have had some of those students from DeKalb who have gone through this special program.

GUTIERREZ: Oh, yes. And they graduate. Perhaps, at this point, I would like to mention a few of the farmers that are at the migrant workers that are staying. Maybe even give you a little story about a migrant worker's program, we call them migrant ministry. That begun in 1964.

AIKINS: The Migrant Ministry, M-I-N-I-S-T-R-Y?

GUTIERREZ: Yes, ministry. That begun in 1964. It was a simple desire of some of the local people here to see what is going on in the farms. Also, a lot of educators and perhaps ministers who decided to go to their homes and treat them as a human being, find out who they are, what they are doing here, and what this community could help do for them. There were several reasons. One was the humanitarian reason, going to them. A lot of well intentioned people to decide to communicate with them went with their families to see the migrant farmers. To share with them including their clothing and food and many things. Including counseling with them on helping them with health problems. Because of that the Migrant
Ministries put together a group and at that time they asked me if I would lead a group of people together to this farms. One time, perhaps in '66 I believe, we had about 150 volunteers working together from different churches, you know, going as a group to these farms. There were about twelve farms so about ten or fifteen to each farm. That is about the group we call family night. Within the group we have several things, recreation, competitions and including eating together and showing films and doing all kinds of things. Then it was in 1966 when the migrant schools begun. There was under Title VII. We voted a proposal through the elementary school system of DeKalb and we asked if we would have usage of some of the schools here in the county. In fact there were two, one in Lee on the corner of DeKalb County, a little town southwest of here, and the other one in Kingston. So we split the county in north and south. We had two schools going for the migrants. We picked them in early in June...

[End of side one of tape.]

AIKINS: ...school situation through the summertime when the classrooms were not used for the regular winter classes.

GUTIERREZ: Exactly. In a sense, is a very good gesture from the education district here because they provide us and they let us use the kitchen and they supply us a hot meal. Many good things. A complete summer program with all education, English as a second
language, teaching them English through all the grades. A graded type of program.

AIKINS: Now Title VII. That was subsidized by money from the United States Government. That was federal money.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, state money.

AIKINS: ...and supplemented by the help of the schools themselves. Now they came to you because they knew you as a university person who was acquainted with this type of program. Did the university have any official connection with this?

GUTIERREZ: Not until later on. The university was interested also in providing some kind of leadership and help. In fact, one summer they provided with a student teachers for our classes. And several times they came to work with the kids.

AIKINS: Did the students receive credit for that as part as their training?

GUTIERREZ: They received credit, yes. They received credit, not pay from us, just credit. Obviously, it was a great help for all of us because the numbers were large. The numbers of kids from town we had way over a 100. Even 130 or so. Different levels of grades. We could even take it right from the very beginning the
kids didn't know any English. Going on to, perhaps, fourth or fifth grade level of knowledge in English. So very interesting and a very worthwhile project. We kept on going for years until the population diminished. Then when the population was going down because the families were not staying around here because of the crops and there were no more tomatoes, then the last three years we changed from elementary. We went into what we call secondary. The majority stayed around. There would be teenagers and dropouts so we decided to touch the dropouts. For the last three years through the high school with John Cassidy and myself we have those groups working in the evening. So they still had to go to work during the day. Right after work they come to the school and we have a hot meal for them and then we study until about 8:30. We have been doing that for about the last three years just for the...

AIKINS: Now is that all through the year?

GUTIERREZ: Through the summer. Just through the summer. You see, because their families with children are not coming in great numbers but the workers which include all of the teenagers, you know, are working and they are the ones who come. So the majority of them are dropouts. So we decided to introduce it to them, again, English as a second language, math, and reading. We have a good success working with that.

AIKINS: Now does this program have an official connection with
your CHANCE Program?

GUTIERREZ: No. No connection except that since I am from the university representing, I am willing always to look for students who are ready to graduate and in that case I'm telling them that there is the opportunity that if you graduate to allow you to come through the CHANCE and eventually you could become a college student. So out of that kind of effort is when I find a number of students, you know, that would work with us through this school. In a sense of belief, that it is still a possibility of continuing your education to the highest level. Because of the effort that I personally offer to them, like I said, about six of them responded. We have through the program four of them who graduated already. One is a nurse, one is in business, let's see, one is in biology and the fourth one, I believe also, was in business. In fact, maybe we should put some names because the Balli family, you know, that has the Rosita restaurant in here, Louis Balli when he stayed here about 13 years ago, I think he told me the other day, and obviously the children went through high school. Let me see, four of the children went through the CHANCE Program, through the high school here and then through the CHANCE Program. Blanca graduated from us from the nursing school through the CHANCE Program.

AIKINS: Is she a registered nurse?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. She is a registered nurse. She is married and...
AIKINS: Does she work in this community or did she move elsewhere?

GUTIERREZ: I think she moved to Chicago. She married right after graduation. So in a sense, we will say that the education efforts through the Migrant Ministry had a tremendous impact on the families that have come through.

AIKINS: This is the mutual working together of community and the university sometimes officially sometimes through the help of faculty members who bring this about.

GUTIERREZ: The second family from the same group is the ??? family. Also maybe about 12 or 13 years ago they stayed and the children went to the school. From that family, one is right now at Northern, actually two. One just started and he was also with the police force and the others who decided to go through the CHANCE but they all finished high school and they have the opportunity to come through CHANCE. There are other families, might as well tell you also, that there are a number of Cubans who came as refugees. They lived here in DeKalb and they built up themselves by working and they bought a home and some of the children also came through the high schools here and then through the CHANCE.

AIKINS: Now approximately when did the Cuban people begin coming?

GUTIERREZ: I'm not sure of the year but probably within ten years
ago. In general, when we took our statistics we find not too many years ago, it is just within this five years, we find that there was way over 70 Mexican families, just Mexican families. I know there are large number of, perhaps, at least 15 or 20, of Cuban families who made their homes here in DeKalb and they work here in a sense that they contributing to the awareness of all of us in this community. How do the Latino people live and the language and the customs and, perhaps, even their suffering, you know, because all of them came for refuge in one way or another.

AIKINS: Which is the American tradition. That is the beginning of our country. People have referred to the fact that La Rositas and some of the other ethnic restaurants are an asset to our community that wasn’t here 20-25 years ago and would you say that without the university bringing and drawing these people here it is more than just the migrant worker but the opportunity for people to go on and become educated that is brought that touch of ethnic culture to our community to make people here more aware.

GUTIERREZ: I think like...I’m not the only one from the university actually to help because Linda Sons, she is in mathematics, she has spent many, many years actually working together with me in migrant camps and even there are several. Tony Fusaro is another one that we worked together. There is other families...Dr. Caroll, Marguerite Caroll, I believe is the first name, and there is several others at the university who are connected and would
contribute in the educational aspect of the work. Literally, they gave me alot of ideas and I took ideas from them and we put programs together. The school district contributed a lot because they were willing to let us use everything including when the migrant was in the field to bring them in for just a few weeks. They were willing to go along and provide meals and books and everything. Myself, as an outsider that was coming into the community, I would find that the community was open to me, personally. I am very thankful and was open to the ideas and to the contributions that other groups want to do it, you know. So it was working together. When we worked with those family groups there was just a tremendous outpouring of help in many ways, including money, goods, you know, food, medical assistance, including the nurses from the county. They provided a lot of their time and a lot of their help. So the community actually provided a lot and from the university a lot of us were involved from the faculty. We put in a lot of time working with them.

AIKINS: Those involved from the university faculty were not confined merely to those who were directly hired to the CHANCE Program. They were people throughout the faculty.

GUTIERREZ: Absolutely no. Different departments. Like I said, Linda Sons was in mathematics, Dr. Caroll was in education, and Dr. Fusaro was in political science and it doesn't matter, any department. There is other people that I don't remember but there
is several people who contributed positively to helping them anyway. So as a whole I believe the city and the...maybe say something about the city whenever we have festivities with them or even recreation. I remember going to some of the stores and some of the stores were willing to donate things, merchandise. Also, the university...I believe at one time, several summers, in fact, I tried to get all of the used equipment, you know, including volleyball nets, used footballs, bats, baseballs and everything. They just allowed me to use just the ones that were already used just for recreation for the camps. So that contributed quite a bit. Some of the stores gave me new things so that I could take to the camps for recreation purposes.

AIKINS: It is wonderful to have this account of the generosity of several different areas, the schools, the merchants, community people and the faculty.

GUTIERREZ: In fact, maybe I should add one more about the banks. When we were, in a sense, enticing, some of the families to stay, again, with the education at purpose, I personally told the Mexican families indicating, "Why don't you stay?" It is difficult to be traveling with ten children, you know, about an average of seven in the family. Ten, twelve, some farmers have fifteen in the family. Enticing them and saying, "Why don't you stay around and see a way that you can find jobs and let the kids go through school?" In the beginning of the idea, I approached to the bank, the DeKalb Bank,
and they have houses that were being repossessed by the bank or something. Old houses that were not being sold and they would allow us to rent these houses and place some of the families to begin with. One winter I believe I made an arrangement with a bank for four houses, rather large houses. We put about two families in each house. Although we had to mention also that the state, the unemployment in the state, the state employment office, they asked me to do this and they deposit an amount of money in the DeKalb Bank with an account in my name to help to pay, at least, the first three months of the rent through the federal grant that I obtained. This was from the Department of Labor. By doing that, it was a very positive gesture of the generosity of the town that they were willing to do that. I was very thankful to the bank because they did that. So for three months, I managed the rent. It was understood with the migrants that within the three months they needed to be in jobs. The employment office here played a tremendous, in fact, they gave me an office there with a desk to do all of this work for these three months with them.

AIKINS: And you added that to your regular tasks at the university.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, I did. I worked three months very hard looking for, in fact, a Salvation Army comes in the picture, also. I related to them the needs and they sent trucks of used or rebuilt refrigerators and stoves and mattresses and beds and all kinds of
things. Several times they send them from the Goodwill Industries in Rockford. We furnished those houses with the generosity again because there was not enough money. The only money was to pay about three months of rent. Employment also was very good because within those three months most of the men, literally all of them were employed. So from there on they were able to continue paying their rent. That was the beginning of the migrants settling in this area and the kids going to this school.

AIKINS: I suppose it is impossible to have complete statistics on what has happened but do you know if these people have successfully become integrated into the community?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. I believe yes. I have been in contact with them, I would say, for most of my life and most of the time. If you visited homes, there is a great difference. Most of them who have stayed have built their own home. Like take the two examples of the Ballis. They bought their own home and they have their own business. There is capital there, you know, and growing. In fact, they have two businesses now, the Rosita's one and Eduardo's, which is a new one run by the son. That a big difference as it is related to the way they came in and the way they prospered here. The other families ????. Again, they bought their own homes and I believe all of the children finished the school and they have integrated themselves in different communities and they work. The other family that I remember very well is the Hernandez family in
Sycamore. They again, bought their own home. The young families out of them. There is several of them now. They are all living around there and all of them are having success with their jobs and their children are all going to school. It is a big difference. You can see that those kids are learning and they are almost as equal in opportunity as anybody else in the community. The other family is the Mancha family, again very well adjusted with a permanent job, the children going through school. So I think there are more than I'm afraid I don't remember the names. I cannot remember but my last count was way over 70 families in this area from the effort that we had long ago. I believe it started in '68, perhaps '67 or '68. I produced and perhaps it is a good example of how the American way of life, you know, the giving of another person a chance to succeed in life. All of us here at the university or in the community, I believe, contributed. I don't believe that there is a sense of discrimination against them or, perhaps, their son, but not overtly that we could say that they are suffering. There is progress in there lives. There is more education and perhaps a new generation coming with a greater future than there would have had if they would have stayed in the migrant stream. That is a sense of progress.

AIKINS: Well, the lot of the migrant worker constantly moving has been a painful one in this country. Certainly we are enriched by having a business like Rosita, a pleasant place to go, and a feeling of contact with life that is a little bit different, a
different menu, a different contact. That is wonderful.

GUTIERREZ: I enjoyed it when I visited homes because I see a
difference between a home that was a migrant stream and a home that
you see now that has ownership and the kids well educated and well
adjusted. I feel that it is a tremendous human value as I consider
it as an educator.

AIKINS: As I understand it the university right at this point is
deciding a date in which it has to set limits and not accept more
registration because they are having so many people register.
During the depression of the 1930’s the universities were busy and
it cost much less to go to a university then but the colleges were
filled with people who couldn’t get jobs but somehow they could
borrow enough money or do odd jobs and get enough to go to a
university as through those difficult times when jobs weren’t
available. People have introduced the idea that maybe the
university will shrink in size with the problems of inflation and
it’s getting so expensive to go to school. If the university
should shrink in size, what do you think the impact will be on this
kind of program for...

GUTIERREZ: Well, at present the CHANCE Program is in hard money.
It is in the budget with the university. For what we know, that is
why we are not cutting any. Numbers are about the same.
AIKINS: You mean the university does subsidize that you aren't dependent on federal money?

GUTIERREZ: No, the CHANCE Program is in hard money. Some of the service are in federal money such as Upward Bound and Special Services which come as a second program. But the CHANCE Program the admission and the counseling and the encouraging of the students and the work everyday with the students is all part of the university as a counseling program that follows through. For what we know and the way we are producing students, I believe it is a very vital part of the life of the university. If we need more students, they could be taken right through us or through regular admissions. The values, I would say, and the production of educated human beings, you know, that shouldn't be there I think is the work of the CHANCE Program. We continue with them right through graduation. I think it is highly recognized right now and all of us believe as a university, as a center of educational opportunities that the chance should be there because it is providing us with feeling, the avenue for young people to succeed.

AIKINS: Now there is the point of view that perhaps the American culture over the last number of years has encouraged students to go to college whether or not they were college material or suitable for that and it would be just as well to encourage a good many of them to go elsewhere for job training and do that kind of thing. Do you feel that some of these students really are not college
material?

GUTIERREZ: Well, it is very hard to make that determination. In the first place, the ones who came through the CHANCE Program with limited educational experience after the four years I believe that they are as good as anyone who came with a lot of educational opportunity. So in determining if he is not a college student, I would be afraid to say yes on that assumption because there are very good minds that have came through the CHANCE Program with limited experience and eventually they become equal to the other ones who had better opportunities. So the mind is there. They are potentially could become as good as anybody else. This is why I say the CHANCE Program is vital in the life of the university because it is proven by giving direct consideration on help and encouragement to students. You could discover excellent minds and I think the job of the university is to cultivate those minds. At that point, I will say that they are college material. They are being discovered through the CHANCE Program and their potential is becoming very effective and we could see. It is flourishing. It is producing. I think it is an asset for the society.

AIKINS: You are mentioning the different areas that they have gone into for work after graduation. They seem to be seeking vocations that are very useful in society.

GUTIERREZ: And I would say that in four years a university could
give a bright future for an individual, I will say four years of money and expense is nothing in comparison to that individual that is going to be a very useful person and a very effective human being in society.

AIKINS: And much less cost for a constructive education meant to allow them to be damaged people lost in society and perhaps doing negative things.

GUTIERREZ: I find that in the CHANCE Program my years of work there are potential brilliant minds that really should be cultivated. They are very good minds.

AIKINS: With the Latinos, one of the big problems is the language problem that has some disadvantage for a time.

GUTIERREZ: Yes, for a time as you say. Both the Latinos minds could be cultivated, the black minds could be cultivated, and I believe that they are and they are very good students later on when they go to graduate school. They will become almost anything that they want to be because the potential is there in both groups. I don't think there is no difference because the minds awakening and they could be cultivated as any other mind. I have convinced myself by helping them work with them and I know that they can do excellent work.
AIKINS: Have you become acquainted with any Mexican-American families that had settled here before this program?

GUTIERREZ: Yes. There is a family in Kirkland. There is two families there. One is Gonzalez, I believe. The other one is...well, I forgot, but they told me they were here many more years before the migrants. Not too many in DeKalb. I don't think there was any. I was the oldest one who came to DeKalb as a Latino family. There were very few. The only ones were connected to the university but not any other family in the community without connection to the university. Perhaps, I am one of the old timers here too.

AIKINS: Possibly so. I can't remember. I was aware of mainly the migrant workers as far back as 1960 but there were a few families in Sycamore at that time. I know there were that had homes and were permanent residents. I just wonder what the...if there is anyway in the world one could compare what there children have been able to accomplish who went through before the opportunity of the CHANCE Program and so on that would be a hit or miss thing because there were not many.

GUTIERREZ: From those families that you mentioned that graduated from there, in fact, they live in Kirkland, two of them came to the CHANCE Program. I will be interviewing one of them, the mother, in fact, of those two fellows that came. So in one of those tapes
will appear their names because I was in contact with them. Oh, yeah, I remember now the last name is Goea, Larry Goea.

AIKINS: So hearing from them will round out...

GUTIERREZ: We will have a sample of their lives and their accomplishments in the community.

AIKINS: Well, this has been a very interesting interview from the point of view of hearing both what the university has done, what individuals on the university faculty have done, the contribution of the public schools, the community, individual businessmen, individual businesses in town, and numbers of people who have cared about this program. Thank you very much for talking to us this evening.

GUTIERREZ: I am very thankful also for being part of this recording of history. Perhaps I will just say a little bit about my family. Like I say, I came here to DeKalb in 1961 and we had one daughter, one month old. Now she is through high school and, in fact, she is a sophomore now at NIU. We have a son who is a junior in the junior high, Huntly Middle School, and my wife also works for the university for many years and I believe she also is contributing. I'm very happy to say that I have contributed also to the university after being an alumnus of the university and I believe also I contributed also to the town and being supportive to
many changes, especially with the coming of the migrants and the blacks did I take part of being one of the minorities and being positive in the education of processes of this city or in this county.

AIKINS: Thank you for this interview and for your contributions to our community.

[End of tape.]