

### Abstract

The interview with Nelson Cabezas, a Chilean-American, is about his work history. His occupation as a tailor defines who he is. His pursuit to expand his tailoring education is what brought him to the United States. Even though he was unable to acquire an education in design he made due by working labor intensive jobs such as catering and delivery services. At the same time he was able to practice his craft as a tailor by working part time on the side until he was able to work for U.S. Navy as a tailor. An interesting aspect of this interview is the relationship of Nelson to the interviewer. He is my stepfather. This posed some challenges for the questions I had prepared beforehand because I wanted to explore topics Nelson has never covered with me before and I was unsure on how to respond to information that I already knew beforehand. Therefore, the abrupt transitions from topic to topic are not the result of my disinterest, but are the result of my desire to know information I never knew before.

[00:04] David: So Nelson tell me a little about your family, the neighborhood you grew up in, your brothers and sisters...

[00:15] Nelson: Well I growing up in a neighborhood, it's a middle class or working class, what you call it here.

[00:25]David: What city?<sup>1</sup>

[00:26]Nelson: Santiago<sup>2</sup> and uh Santiago was divided by *comunas*. Is a... like here is a ward I think it is.

[00:42]David: Wards or districts, ok.

[00:44]Nelson: Something like that. Oh my *comuna* was *Estación Central*.<sup>3</sup> It's a Union Station.<sup>4</sup> It's a very famous zone because we are the give more soccer players to the Chilean team.

[1:11]David: I guess the most professional soccer players...

[1:15]Nelson: No, not the most professional but the most players in the national team.<sup>5</sup> There a league calling *Pila de Ganso*.<sup>6</sup> And uh it's a very good division. It's not professional players so many teams go to and play it there.

[1:49]David: Did you play soccer?

[1:51] Nelson: Ah. I played but I never really was a good player. Always I love to play. I never had the talent to play. Like to any other children or boys in Chile because it's the most popular

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson's initial response to my question was too broad so I had to interject immediately so that the reader will know exactly what city he is referring to.

<sup>2</sup> Santiago or *Santiago de Chile* is the capital of Chile. It is located within the Santiago Province of the Santiago Metropolitan Region which is 1 of the 6 Administrative Regions of Chile.

<sup>3</sup> *Estación Central* is one of the communes within the Santiago Province. It is named after *Estación Alameda* which is the main railway station of the region. Source: "Central Station of Santiago (Alameda Station)," Municipalidad Laestación, <http://www.estacioncentral.cl/turismo2009.html> (accessed May 14, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Nelson uses the example of Union Station because he settled in the Washington D.C. metro area. He uses a landmark from Washington D.C. to describe another landmark that defined his neighborhood.

<sup>5</sup> I could not confirm this claim. However, I think Nelson emphasized that his neighborhood was famous for growing talent for the national team suggests a special type of soccer player. Nelson is proud that players go on to play on the national level. I wondered why he emphasized national team players over professional players. After some research I guess Chile's role as host of the 1962 World Cup had much to do with it. Chile came in third place in that competition.

<sup>6</sup> I could not confirm that there was a soccer league. However, from a quick internet search I found out that *Pila de Ganso* is a neighborhood or *barrio* within *Estación Central*. The *barrio* is named *Pila de Ganso* because of a fountain located near the Alameda Station. The fountain is made out of bronze and depicts a naked child hugging or strangling a goose. I could not find any information that knew about the origins of the fountain. However, a tourism website mentioned the fountain may have been a prize from the War of the Pacific in which Chile won against an alliance between Bolivia and Peru. The conflict was a dispute over resources in the Atacama Desert. Source: "Pila de Ganso," Municipalidad Laestación, <http://www.estacioncentral.cl/turismo2009.html> (accessed May 14, 2014).

sport. Actually it's the only popular one. We call it *fútbol*.<sup>7</sup> I think only it's the most important one. So everybody wanna be a soccer player.

[2:37]David: Did you want to be a professional soccer player?

[2:40]Nelson: Hmm. Not really I never thinking... always yeah when you're watching t.v. or things like that. The child's dream. [Inaudible] pretending you are a professional running around. Just doing stupid things like what professionals are doing. But really dreaming I'm gonna be a professional player. No.

[3:06]David: Did you have friends or family that played soccer?

[3:08]Nelson: Um. I has one nephew. I have...uh... well almost all my family played soccer. And... uh... my younger brother and his son, my nephew.<sup>8</sup> They're very good players. And my older brother Pedro. He was a good player too. Actually when he coming here he played for the Diplomats. Was in the 70s was coming to Cosmos. Try to make more popular the soccer here. There was a lot of teams. The DC team was called the Diplomats. That was the name for the team in DC. My brother played for that team. But it was not a professional team. In the 70s it was a professional team. But they just keep it like a regular team.<sup>9</sup>

[4:32]David: Semi-professional...

[4:33]Nelson: Yeah it was just like what we play here at Soccerplex.<sup>10</sup> Not real professional but good skill.

[4:45]David: Who influenced you to play soccer? What made you like soccer? Was it because it was a family sport? Did your father teach you?

[4:57]Nelson: Well one thing is. My father was a really good player. He had the talent. He has only one arm. One hand. He was afraid to play professionally. They called him to play professional but he was afraid to because of his hand.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I do not know why Nelson had to explain something that is common knowledge but I have a feeling he explained what soccer was in Spanish because he thought the interview was for a general audience. This may have influenced his answers further along in the interview.

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<sup>9</sup> From 1968 to 1984 the North American Soccer League was the first professional soccer league in the United States. The league was short lived but was able to attract some of the best international soccer players. The most popular team of the time was the New York Cosmos because of its star player Pelé who is regarded as the best soccer player ever in the history of the sport. The Washington Diplomats was the short lived professional soccer team based in Washington D.C. It lasted from 1974-1980. Nelson's older brother most likely played for the amateur club that existed after the team went defunct professionally. Source: "A Review of the Golden Era," North American Soccer League, [http://www.nasl.com/page/slug/a-review-of-the-golden-era#.U3UxG\\_IdW-Z](http://www.nasl.com/page/slug/a-review-of-the-golden-era#.U3UxG_IdW-Z) (accessed May 15, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Nelson is referring to the Maryland Soccerplex, a recreational facility located in Germantown, Maryland.

[5:28]David: How did he lose his hand?

[5:30]Nelson: He was in an accident when he was six years old.

[5:35]David: Six years old? Wow...I'm sorry to hear that.<sup>12</sup>

[5:39]Nelson: Oh. It's ok. Because he, we growing up thinking like that. And another thing. It's good and it's bad. We see the life in a different way in our family. Because my father was left handed. And he cut his left hand. So he had to start over again with his right hand. So at the point we grew up and say no matter what down you going you have to get up and continue to live your life.<sup>13</sup>

[6:32]David: Was it challenging for him to find a job?

[6:35]Nelson: Oh yes. He do it. He's an amazing person because I never seen a person tie his shoes with one hand. [Chuckles]. In Christmas time he working in a company that made packets and he did it with one hand. [Laughing] With my two hands I still put it in a bag. But he did it his way and tie it up with the ribbon and everything. And that was his talent.

[7:30]David: So, tell me a little bit about your mother.<sup>14</sup>

[7:31]Nelson: Well my mother, until my father getting sick, she was a stay at home, take care of the children, housewife. And um well to me she was an amazing person too. She always be in a happy mood and she teached us to...it's not bad to have problems. Everything has a solution. She always have a great attitude. She pretended to take something in her hand and she would put into your plate. With empty hand. She would pretend like she was putting salt on her plate. We would ask, what is that? And she say, "it's just love." So things like that. And always she find. Always she cook for us once a week. We are 8 brothers and sisters.<sup>15</sup> We're a big family. Most of the time she cook something what I like it to each one. We all have different tastes and choices. We eat whatever she give to us. But we have a preference for something. She always cooks something for everybody but one of them like it, it's the favorite one. And she worked very hard and when my father got sick. He was two years in the hospital.

[9:59]David: When?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Five minutes into the interview and Nelson had not mentioned many details about his family. This was my chance to focus on his father so I had to ask about the hand in order to move the topic away from soccer to family.

<sup>12</sup> It was difficult to sound concerned and surprised by the severity of the accident but I have heard the story many times before so it was not a surprise. On the recording I sounded like I did not care.

<sup>13</sup> Nelson used his father's accident as a life lesson about perseverance.

<sup>14</sup> This question was a bit abrupt but I really wanted Nelson to talk about his mother. I think I should have transitioned better by commenting on how his father had an amazing talent before moving on to another subject.

<sup>15</sup> I was surprised that Nelson did not mention any of their names or talk about any brother or sister individually.

<sup>16</sup> I had to ask when because Nelson had barely mentioned any dates from his childhood. I honestly didn't know if this was in the 60s, 70s, or today. A better question I should have asked was what was his father sick from?

[10:00]Nelson: Oooh. That one is...ahh. I can say around to 1968? 1965? I remember that I was very little. And because they don't admit children at the hospital. And I hid under the dresses, women's dresses. Between the legs of the women so that I could sneak inside the hospital.

[10:42]David: Was it a tough time for your mother? What did she do for work?

[10:44]Nelson: Oh yes. It was very tough for her. My father had a small business. He was a taxi driver. That was the only income we had. My mother had to take over the business. And of course she never learned how to drive because my father was a macho man. Women weren't supposed to drive at that time. So my mother never learned how to drive.

[11:20]David: But your father still drove even with one hand?

[11:22]Nelson: Oh yeah. And stick shift. [Laughter]

[11:32]David: How did your family survive if your mother couldn't drive the taxi?

[11:37]Nelson: Well we still had the other business.

[11:40]David: What kind of business?

[11:41]Nelson: Was a candy shop and a exchange movies. I mean exchange magazines. That's a... people going there. It's like to rental a magazine but you had to bring one to be allowed to get another one. An exchange. I give a little more money and to exchange.

[12:13]David: Was there enough income to support the entire family or did your brothers and sisters have to work too.

[12:17]Nelson: We don't really have a regular work but everyone had to help in the house and in the shop. We do little things but everybody had to do something.

[12:37]David: Did you go to school during this time?

[12:41]Nelson: Always. Always. In Chile it is mandatory to do the elementary school. I mean the elementary side. Which one is a... you had to complete the eighth grade. That is mandatory and a parent can be go to jail or the government can take the children and put them in foster houses. The children have to finish the school. The eighth grade. Then we have the high school. It's from nine to twelve. That one is not mandatory. Chile has a very high education. 93 percent of the students graduate from high school.<sup>17</sup>

[13:39]David: Did you graduate high school?

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<sup>17</sup> Since 2003 Chile passed an educational bill that guaranteed twelve years of education (Elementary, Middle, and High School) to all persons under the age of 21. Source: "Education," Embassy of Chile, <http://www.chile-usa.org/education.html> (accessed May 15, 2014).

[13:40]Nelson: I graduated. I study in [inaudible] Technical School. Not sure what you call it here. But you get some skill. And you get some profession. I get it a tailor. At the same time I do it my high school. I do them both at the same time. When I graduated from high school. I graduated from tailor too.

[14:10]David: Basically, right after high school you had a skill to have a job.

[14:20]Nelson: Yeah. And um they have to. You have to do the practice. And after the practice. It is nine month practice. I was lucky I get a paid one. Many other people just had to...it's like the internship. When you work there but they don't pay you. Over there the practice. If you finish technical school...uh... you can work for free. They give the...at the end of nine months. They give you a letter and you complete the nine months of practice. And after that you have to do the memories. That is combination from the time you were in school and the nine months you practice what you learned there. And...uh... and you present it that. And according to what you present then you give a small verbal test. I say interview. And then you graduate. I mean. You get the diploma from the professional. In my case I got the tailor one. But when you finish the school you also graduate from the high school so you get the certificate that you graduated high school and then you get the diploma for the tailor.

[16:00]David: In my research I found out that military service is mandatory in Chile.

[16:14]Nelson: I was in the military. I was in for three years but it was voluntary to go there. Also, I was very younger. That's the reason they kicked me out. I was younger than anyone. I wasn't even fifteen years old when I joined the navy. I was fourteen. I joined the Navy in January and my birthday was in May.

[16:50]David: How did you manage to be in the navy and go to school at the same time?

[16:52]Nelson: When I was in the Navy, I just was in. They called it *grumette*. It's an apprentice to be a sailor. That's for one year, you graduate and then you go to. You're supposed to go to the ship. That year they cancelled that program. I had to go to school again. When I finished the school I just navigated six months. Then they put me back to school again. So I said ok. I'm not coming to go to school. I wanted to be on a ship to go to the ocean. Things like that. That was the reason that it was not for me. So I quit. So when I quit. I give the test for...uh... what do you call it? When you not going to the school but you take the test and give the grades. GP..?

[18:23]David: Maybe similar to a G.E.D.?

[18:30]Nelson: G.E.D. I give the GED for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I passed so I started the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school. So I make it the three years there of high school with the tailoring. At the same time my older brother was a tailor so I worked with him and I studied at the school so I had a lot of practice there. And I got the scissors. The school gives the first person, the best one. The best person in the class they give the Iron. That's the top that everybody wanted. The second one was

the scissors. I received the scissors. Actually, I think I'm supposed to have to get both because the guy who got the first one, he cheated all the time. He's a master. I always say to him, I salute to you. You are the best. He is the best cheating person I have ever seen in my life. He cheated in front of the teacher. [Laughter] In front of them! So in front of them. And how they do it. But they did it so good. They called him the genius because he looked like genius. But actually he was always cheating.<sup>18</sup>

[23:30]David: After you received your tailoring degree did you find work right away?

[23:37]Nelson: Yeah. I start working right away. I've never been out of a job. I started at a tailor shop. A very high tailor shop. High-tech. The tailor shop had some customers like presidents, ministers, ex-ministers. So it had very high people. [Inaudible] very picky, the guy was very picky on how to do it. That's where I did my practice. After that I worked for a factory. In Santiago. About an hour from where I lived.

[24:42]David: What did you do in the factory?

[24:25]Nelson: In the factory I was an assistant supervisor. Most of the job I had to mark the clothes so the people can sew, distribution the job, to move around until it's done. That was my job. I did that for a year and then the factory started doing women's clothes which one my supervisor... he don't know how to. He was very strong in men's clothes but he didn't want to do the women's clothes. So I was still the assistant supervisor but be in charge of the women's clothes. And I did that for a year. And then when I found out how much money the designer made. I upset myself because I always fixed the clothes for him. I always had to fix what he was doing. Always it was completely wrong. And because I was in charge from the...that area, before they cut it, fix it, and sew it so we can finish without problem. So a year after that I found out how much he made, I went to go talk to the guy. Actually two years after and the guy refused to increase my salary. I asked them to increase my salary and they refused to do it because the designer he had did everything wrong and I always had to fix it. I am tired of that and I think I deserved um...more salary. And they said no because he studied design in Spain. I said, "So what. I studied here in Chile and I know much more than what he knows." Then from there they still said no. They refused to increase my salary. I said, "Ok, if you want that." Just make the clothes whatever it is. So I started to get problems with things like that, with the production and I always said the designer [inaudible]. So then I quit.

[28:31]David: What did you do after?

[28:32]Nelson: After that one of the clients, when he know it that I quit, he called me to do the clothes for him. So I did that one. It was not many business, it was a lot to make money. But also at the same time when everything happened my brother asked me to come here. He came to the

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<sup>18</sup> For another 2 minutes or so Nelson started talking about cheating on tests and talked about how he had to cheat in one class because there was no other way to please his teacher. I omitted this section because I determined it had little relevance to the rest of the interview.

United States in '81. And he asked me before, that was the fourth time. I found out later that my mother asked me later to bring me here.

[30:00]David: Why do you think your mother wanted you to come to the United States?

[30:02]Nelson: Because I had too much problems. And I married the wrong person.<sup>19</sup> So I had those kind of problems.<sup>20</sup> But at the same time I had this thing about being discriminated for studying in Chile. Well, I'll go out and when I come back and shut his mouth. Look at that, an international diploma.

[30:50]David: You wanted to prove to your old boss.

[30:51]Nelson: No, I didn't want to prove. Well, shut his mouth and say, "It's not the diploma. It's how much you know."

[31:05]David: So it doesn't matter where you got your diploma but what matters is what your talents are.

[31:08]Nelson: I think of going to Argentina or Brazil. Get something in 3-6 months and return to shut his mouth. But it never happened.<sup>21</sup>

[31:28]David: So one of the reasons why you wanted to leave Chile was to pursue another education?

[31:30]Nelson: Yeah to get some diploma in design which one I never did because there is nothing around here. There are no colleges around here. No college or university. Not one of them provided classes for clothing design. They have for designer but for the construction things. Interior Designer. Things like that but no tailoring or clothing designer.

[32:18]David: So what did you do if you couldn't find the design school you wanted?

[32:25]Nelson: I was just working in the South African embassy. I worked there for eight years. I did a couple things. I started cleaning. For a year and a half I was a cleaner. Then I moved up to become a messenger, like a delivery guy or driver. But at the same time I had to work a part time job. I started to work at a tailor shop.

[34:05]David: So for the first two years you were still able to do some tailoring.

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<sup>19</sup> Valerie Yow suggests that when the narrator reluctantly reveals details I should ask why. However, I was too nervous to do so because as my stepfather he has barely mentioned his previous family and children. This was uncharted territory so I felt just as uncomfortable as he did. Source: Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005), 262.

<sup>20</sup> Nelson appeared a little hesitant to answer. He did it vaguely so I did not pursue any questions about his marriage. I did not want to make him more uncomfortable. Valerie Yow suggests that I should not pursue or stop the questioning when the interviewee seems uncomfortable. Source: Yow, 109.

<sup>21</sup> It seemed that a diploma from outside the country held more weight than any degree Nelson could have received within the country.

[34:10]Nelson: Oh yeah. I never ended to tailoring because...I also did catering a lot. I never wanted a career in catering because it was too heavy a job. I always considered it a part time. You get one or two per week.<sup>22</sup>

[34:55]David: How did you get involved in catering? Did your brother do this on the side?

[34:58]Nelson: Yeah and when in the embassy most of the immigrant people do the catering. So they get me into that. So with that we doing. I was with this company for fifteen years which one I always wanted because it was extra money. It was heavy and hard but we needed the money.

[35:40]David: I was wondering why the South African embassy? Why not the Chilean embassy? Did you find other *chilenos* there?

[34:45]Nelson: Yeah there was a lot of Chilean people working in the South African embassy. When Chile has some problems at the South Africans. Actually it was the first country to make free market, free trade with Chile. There were a lot of connections between Chileans and South Africans. So one would bring one and another one. At the same time South Africa had the apartheid. Also, they tried to get some people that know nothing about Africa because between to the diplomats they speak only *Afrikani*<sup>23</sup> only. Uh... so I think they wanted it for privacy and they tried to get somebody who wasn't *Afrikani* speaking. At that time there were about 20 people working there. Then I worked for eight years until I became a permanent resident. After that lady closed the shop. The owner of the tailor shop. She was my sponsor for permanent residency. I was here for already five years when I started my permanent residence. And two years after I get it in '92.

[39:14]David: Did you ever become an American citizen?

[39:15]Nelson: Yeah. Yes I did. Not so long ago. Five years ago?<sup>24</sup> And I think I made a mistake don't do it before. Things happen. I never thought I needed it before but the immigration lawyer, law changed so much because there was so much controversy about what they say and what they want. Because what the government says is not what they want. Let me finish that one first. They changed the law so much that one of these days getting a permanent residence is going to be just like being illegal, so I just get the citizenship. At the same time Chile accepted the two citizenship. So after that I took the citizenship here. As I said before what I don't like from the government...how to play with the immigrants, especially with the illegals because it's an instrument in the political things and they play too much with them. Um...always you see on the t.v. they show illegal immigrants coming from the South, but they never show illegal immigrants

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<sup>22</sup> He worked for Ridgewells Catering. It is still operates today.

<sup>23</sup> Nelson meant to say Afrikaans which is a language spoken in South Africa.

<sup>24</sup> This would mean that Nelson became a United States citizen roughly 20 years after arriving in the United States. Interestingly enough, immigrants that stay in their adopted country for long periods of time are more likely to become citizens. Source: Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 146.

coming from the North when the same amount of people come from the North. Most European people come from the North.

[41:40]David: Do you think there is discrimination with Latino immigrants?

[41:42]Nelson: Nah. It's not discrimination but it's more...uh...it's a different kind of immigration. The fruits and veggies, when it's time to pick them up. How is it a coincidence that many patrol are sick? And many other patrol are on vacation. But every year it happens the same thing at the time when they have to pick up the food. So that is manipulating the political thing.

[42:50]David: So you're saying that the U.S. government is not honest about illegal immigration.<sup>25</sup>

[42:52]Nelson: No. No. And also they attack to the immigrants but they need it. Immigrant people coming and work for less money. And people from here they don't want to work for that money. And then that affects us again because the farmers or the rich people don't want to lose the money. So what do we have to pay? If we pay for an orange, a dollar an orange you're going to pay maybe three dollars for an orange. And at the same time to survive, the cost of living is going to be too high. They will be completely ruin the country. So they need the illegal people. They need the immigrants but also they attack them. It's like their the problem. When actually they are not the problem. But how much they will be making.

[45:00]David: When you came to the United States, were you politically active in Chile and did your political philosophy change when you came to the United States?

[45:11]Nelson: No. I growing up here my political thing because in Chile there was a dictator at the time. When I was a teenager there was a dictator.<sup>26</sup> So there was no political. Everyone was against Pinochet. And that's it. There were no choices. Because everything he do it he was wrong or the other part he's ok. Like here you can play the political thing. No it's not that game in Chile from 1973 to '85. It's not that game.<sup>27</sup> So the political thing I get it from here.<sup>28</sup>

[46:28]David: So how did it develop in the United States? Like how...like what made you more politically active when you came to the United States?

[46:45]Nelson: I started thinking more political when I think this country needs another strong third party that can make the balance. I see many times they are divided by votes for some law

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<sup>25</sup> Nelson was referring to a conspiracy about how the U.S. government treats illegal immigrants. I do not know the details of what the United States policy is towards illegal migrant farm workers. My follow up question had to be politically neutral so that I do not add more significance to the conspiracy.

<sup>26</sup> Augusto Pinochet was a general in the Chilean army that led a coup against the democratically elected Socialist Salvador Allende. Pinochet was President of Chile from 1973 to 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Nelson did not develop any kind of political philosophy because he lived under a dictatorship in Chile. The political atmosphere of Chile did not allow freedom of political conscience.

<sup>28</sup>I believe Nelson developed a political conscience in the United States because the atmosphere allowed more freedom of political speech.

and you say all the democrats vote against when all the Republicans approve. So it's no between one of them can be agreed with that. How can 200 and 200 be thinking the same way? It can be we represent our community so then all the community thinking in that way? I don't think so.

[48:05]David: So even though you came from a country that had a military dictatorship then when you came to the United States you still felt you had little political choice?

[48:20]Nelson: Yeah because...uh... the most I read in political history, it doesn't change. For the last 300 years, it always be the same thing, same game, same game.

[50:41]David: In Chile you were not politically active, but were you able to vote in Chile or in the United States did you ever vote?

[50:45]Nelson: I voted here for the first time four years ago. I vote in Chile, actually I was just eighteen years old. And but everybody knew it was a joke. Everybody had to vote because it was mandatory to vote. If you don't vote, you go to jail. So my father said you have to go because of the law. So I vote but I didn't really want to vote because it was a fake thing. We vote for the Constitution. Actually, they needed to fix it at that time, but at the same time if you approved the Constitution you approved for Pinochet to stay for five more years. But really the Constitution was good to change, it's what the country needed, but that little part approved that he stayed five more years when nobody wanted that.

[53:10]David: Because there is less freedom in Chile...did you leave Chile based on that decision? Did you come to the United States because it was more free?<sup>29</sup>

[53:20]Nelson: No, no, no, no...I come here just try to study and go back to Chile, to do some international diploma. That's the reason I came. But it was completely different because as an immigrant here it's very hard. And in this day, it's worse. I laugh when the news talking about people trying to come here. Most of the people try to leave, they try to make some money and come back whenever they come from because the situation was too bad here. I never was illegal here. As an immigrant here I contacted so many people here and many people was illegal. I don't know how bad it was going to be in those countries, but they are very strong people for all the situation they have to carry. When I see either one the immigrant or the children of the immigrant graduate from college I am so happy because it's very hard because salaries are lower. Working more hard to raise a family it's very hard because in many cases they have to work two or three jobs. So to raise a good family to have to live very tough.

[56:05]David: Do you think in the '80s, it was easier for immigrants to live in the United States?

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<sup>29</sup> I think I sounded a bit too patriotic with this question. I did not intend to elevate the status of freedom in the United States. I should have shaped the question differently so that it would appear that I did not have a favorable bias towards the United States.

No it was more easier before. Because before they find a job. It was not illegal to hire an illegal person. And now it is illegal. So people are still waiting. Even when I worked in the White house, in the Congress...Catering, that's what I did. Sometimes you say and you have too many obstacles you have to jump. First, the language is very hard to get the language. In many places we study something but when you get here you don't know what they teach in the school. Then to get a more easy life you have to get the way it's living here. You have to adapt to here. If you want to be happy because if you don't adapt...[inaudible] because many people living here, working here, spend the money here, but always talking in a foreign language, in foreign money, always watching whatever country's news. They are completely updated to their own country, but they don't participate in the situation here. Many people don't care. So I don't think so you'll find it happening because it's the place where we live. Actually, right now I have lived more in this country than what I have lived in Chile. I have more years here. When there's an obstacle, you jump and keep going. And I find happiness. So you work hard, get education, solve the language problem, but the most important is to think where you are. That is what worked for me, to think where I am. Until the year 2000 I still thinking going back to Chile for good. I think I can still go there and get a job. Actually I was wrong. I go to Chile and when I came back I changed my mind. I said ok, I'll stay here. My idea is I will stay here until I retire.

[1:00:34]David: When you went back to Chile in 2000 was it for a trip or something?

[1:00:38]Nelson: Yeah but when I was there what happened is I go to the supermarket that day with my sister. We were checking around, only younger people working. So in the night at dinner it came to my mind and I say what I saw. My sister say well that's the way it is right now. If you are younger you have a job, if you are single...yeah...you still have job, if you're married...well you start to get some problems, if you're married with children you have more problems, if you're 50, I mean if you're 40 and family forget it, it's very hard to get job. And I just turned 40...with family! [Laughter] So I said ok when I come back here I'll finish here my...[Laughter]. I come back here, I am always adapted here because I like it here. I like the people even if I do not approve what the government is doing. I think they can do more for the people. But what really hurt to me is how they play with the people here. The people are so good here. And the people believe it. They always believe what the government say. They know it's a lie, but they still believe. It's like how can they elect a President who lies to the country and then they reelect to him. I don't know how that happened.

[1:03:15]David: Does it bother you that it is similar to the military dictatorship, a government that wasn't for the people?<sup>30</sup>

[1:03:32]Nelson: That's another thing the government with Pinochet, he always lied to the people. I don't know the name in English they call it an emergency state. A state of emergency.

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<sup>30</sup> In retrospect this was a flawed question. The political and social climate of the United States today is entirely different from the political climate in Chile during the dictatorship. However, I did ask this question just so that I can see if Nelson would make any comparisons between the two governments and time periods.

It's a *tocque de queda*,<sup>31</sup> it's restrictions for the children under 18. Curfew? Curfew. They have it in Chile so what the government do it. The intelligence service hired criminal people and send them to put bombs in any place. So they say that some criminal tried to blow up a telephone pole but actually it was the government. But at the same time the government take it like there is an increased terrorist attack. So they put...what do they call it? The Curfew? They updated the curfew for six months and they keep it and keep it and keep it. They keep those restrictions when actually after the government Pinochet is gone all the truth started to come out

[1:05:25]David: After Pinochet resigned from power did you think about returning to Chile?

[1:05:35]Nelson: No because I was ok here. I worked in what I liked. Only a few times I feeling discrimination.

[1:06:00]David: What kind of discrimination?

[1:06:02]Nelson: Um...language...um...try to insult to the people in other countries so they don't get the job [inaudible] so things like that, only a few.

[1:06:35]David: But you still like the people here.

[1:06:37]Nelson: I still like the people, I just don't like the system. But the people, a majority, I can say that 90 percent of the people is good. There are only a few idiots. I can say that 90 percent of the people is ok. Now each year, when I first just coming here you can see the difference when I worked in catering. Companies give just like Christmas parties, you see 200 people in one party, but you see ten groups: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, things like that. You see all the people separate. Right now, today you see most people is integrated. Completely all of them.

[1:08:03]David: Did you do that? Did you stick to your own ethnic group?

[1:08:05]Nelson: No, I enjoy with everybody because I always like to learning. So the only way to know what they are thinking, what can I make it better is be involved with everybody. I always be very friendly with everybody. That don't bother me. I don't go to that table because it's only Spanish.

[1:09:15]David: When you came to the United States did you find comfort in the Latino community? Do you think it was a safer risk to come to the United States because you had your brother here already and because there were a lot of *chilenos* living in the D.C. area?

[1:09:37]Nelson: Well actually there was not a lot of *chilenos*. And we are still not a lot of *chilenos*. We are a few. Even when I talked to the lawyer when I get my residence to accept the case. They ask a lot of questions and they say which country you are? I say I am from Chile and

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<sup>31</sup> This was the curfew imposed by the military dictatorship. Anyone out at night without explicit permission by the government would have been arrested.

they say that's good. I see on her face. And she tell me that's good. Not only did she say but it was in her expression. Because there is a limited number which the United States give residence and Chileans never complete the number.<sup>32</sup>

[1:10:38]David: So you had a better chance because not too many Chileans were coming to the country.

[1:10:40]Nelson: And the limit, we are lower all the time. And it still lower.

[1:10:54]David: Have you encouraged other family members to come to the United States? Either to visit, to live, to work?

[1:10:58]Nelson: To visit. Yes. And to come to work? No. No because for what I come through, it's not so good. Even when I say I jumped everything to get there. Take a lot of jobs. You have to be very strong because you going up and going down and going up again. Very hard. And my family in Chile are doing well. All of them are doing well. So coming here and do what I've done. It's not for them. Except for two sisters, all the rest graduated from the university now or college. And all my nephews of age have graduated from university or are in the university right now. So I have one nephew, he is an architect right now so he is not going to come here and do what I did.

[1:13:00]David: So your family doesn't have to come over because things are better in Chile.

[1:13:03]Nelson: Oh yeah they don't have to and they don't want to. To visit, yes. They don't want to come to work here.

[1:13:20]David: Do you still plan on returning to Chile when you retire?

[1:13:26]Nelson: I wish to yeah. I wish to because life gets so expensive here and the retirement money is not high enough. So in Chile with the money I get it here I can live better than what I live here. At the same time in Chile it's still lower so with the money we get here we can do better there. It's not only because we are from a foreign country, it's something from people from the United States. They start to do it because they want to live well, they want to continue the life the one they have. The money they receive from the retirement is not enough so they moving out. I think 5-6 million people live outside because the money is better in other countries.

[1:15:36]David: Thinking about your entire experience, would you say it was the best decision for you to come to the United States?

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<sup>32</sup> Nelson is referring to an immigration quota. The U.S. government allows a certain number of immigrants into the United States. Countries with low immigration traffic into the United States had a better chance to be allowed in.

[1:15:53]Nelson: It was not the best decision but it was a good decision because I changed my way of living, I've been more conservative in things. I give more valuable to myself because the way the movie makes the United States, it was completely different to the reality. So whatever you get in other countries about the United States, when you get here you get disappointed. Because it's not like that. It's not like coming here and the money is all over the street. It's not like that. That's the way the movies show. People in two minutes have a lot of money.<sup>33</sup> It's not true. So that is one is change in that position let's say it give you more valuable to yourself. The education is different. Here they give you the instrument to learn. In Chile they teach you to learn. It's a completely system. It's the same purpose but here you do it by yourself. Over there the teacher was next to you all the time. That one is with my father, he told us to do our stuff with ink. So if we make it wrong, we have to start over until we make it right. Our machine was our brain. And actually I was the first one to use calculator in the house. I think it was a good decision in safety because it's more safe here. I like the respect each other. The most I love it here is the stadium because you see so many games in Chile, they put the fans on each side of the stadium. And here everybody is together. You can be Redskin or you can be Dallas and sit next to each other but by the end of the game you shake the hands and congratulate the other. It's just a game. In Chile they fighting. That's why I don't like it that.<sup>34</sup>

[1:20:30]David: This tolerance in the United States and this bringing together of culture...Does it make you proud to be an American?

[1:20:38]Nelson: Oh yeah. I adopted the country, it adopted me. We adopted each other. It hurt when they talk bad for no reason about us, when they say *este gringo de mierda*.<sup>35</sup> If you don't like it. Go. And I stay here. I say many times if you don't like it, go. And the way it is if you don't accept the way it is. You can't put your style of life here. If you are not adapted here. Go. Because I consider it, well we call it *gringo*. I consider I am *gringo*.<sup>36</sup> I was not born in this country so a child said to me one time, he said "I am an American" and I said, "Me too." How old you are? He said 8 years old. I am 22. I live it in this country 16. So who has lived more years here. It was me. [Chuckles]...So I like it here, I don't just live here. I make my mind to know where I live.[illegible]... to read the history of the United States either one I consider I know more than many people here because they just live here. They're interested into what is going on. And that one it hurts when they insult the country. And the political people here and hurt the country.

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<sup>33</sup> I always thought that when foreigners find out about life in the United States is not what it seems was cliché. I was surprised Nelson would mention this.

<sup>34</sup> Fan rivalry between competitive soccer teams can get violent in South America. When I went to Chile in 2009 I wanted to watch a soccer match at the local stadium but I was not allowed to because my grandmother and cousins warned me that it was too dangerous.

<sup>35</sup> A *gringo* is a white person from America. What Nelson says here is: Piece of shit American. He hates it when other immigrants call Americans that.

<sup>36</sup> This surprised me. Nelson changed the definition of *gringo* and used it to define any American, even himself.

[1:24:26]David: Since you are a very experienced immigrant and American citizen in the country. What lesson, what could you teach to immigrants coming to this country?

[1:24:30]Nelson: Never give up. Always be honest, always be honest with the people. Don't just take advance.<sup>37</sup> Respect to the country because the country will respect you. The most be honest because the people here are very honest. That's the key, be honest and work hard. The Latinos work hard. Immigrants work hard. Unfortunately, the children of the immigrants aren't working as hard as the parents because the system here slowed down and they want to make more money. We going back to the illegal immigration and the government who whatever they want.<sup>38</sup> That's it.

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<sup>37</sup> He meant advantage.

<sup>38</sup> I did not entirely understand what Nelson meant here but I believe he is referring to how he believes the U.S. government is dishonest in the immigration debate.