

Ed Gonzalez

7/27/2016

Ed (E): You know the Stockholm Syndrome? So I think that that's what's set in here. You had a kidnapping and then the Stockholm Syndrome where the world has interpreted this as a positive.

Samuel (S): Do you think the world has interpreted this as a positive?

E: The world, I believe, significantly tries to look at the positive things that happen in Cuba. The medical advances, some of which were valid. Education and so forth. Without digging down deep into what the significance of all that is, I think that by and large it's considered to be positive. You know, all the pictures of Che Guevara and the goddamn t-shirts and... so anyhow that's my political stance.

S: So, can we start with what your parents did in Cuba?

E: Sure. So my father was Cuban, my mother was American.

S: Where did they meet?

E: My father went to Harvard and MIT, and my mother was a nurse from Mass General. So that would be back in the '20s. 1927 he graduated from Harvard and '28 from MIT. They married in '34. 1934. And my father was at that time working for United Fruit in Banes, that's Holguin province. So they... she moved down there and raised a family. There are four of us. Two older sisters- Boston, Coral Gables- and a brother who lives right down the road. Here I'm talking about. And then we moved to Jaronu, central Jaronu, which is the American Sugar Refining Company. My father was the chief engineer. So Jaronu in Cunagua. So those are American Sugar Refining Company properties and he passed away at the tender age of 52 in 1956. So, at that point, we moved to Havana where I was already in boarding school.

S: Where were you in school?

E: At Candler College.

S: Are you Methodist?

E: You know Candler College?

S: Yeah I just finished a grant with Drew University.

E: Right right. Actually Episcopalian. But one step back, my mother home schooled us. In the country in Cuba the education was pretty sparse.

S: In Banes?

E: In Banes and in Jaronu also. You know the Calvert System? I don't know if you're acquainted with that. Calvert is out of Maryland, out of Baltimore. It's a home

schooling system. It was... expats throughout the world use that system. But that was through 8th grade only. So after 8th grade you would go to boarding school, which I did in Havana. And as my sisters had done. In fact, they had gone on to then go to boarding school up here in the states.

S: Did they go to Buena Vista?

E: They did. Buena Vista. Which by the way, I was there several years ago and Candler College was still a school. I don't know what the name of it was. But Buena Vista was in shambles. Did you see that?

S: I did not see that.

E: It was quite a few years ago when I saw that. It might have been in the late '90s actually. So I haven't seen them in recent times.

S: Do you know why your parents chose Candler?

E: It was semi-Americanized. Semi. So for that reason, and my sisters at Buena Vista. And I would say that and my mother was Protestant. So there would've been that tie-in. Well my father was Catholic but sort of a non-practicing.

S: How did your father get the job with United Fruit Company? Was it the Boston connections?

E: No. I mean I think he was highly educated. MIT and Harvard. Which, incidentally, is interesting. A number of the sugar mill operators down there were educated up here. Cornell...

S: Why do you think that was? Was that just comfort and English?

E: I think it was the level of education.

S: And were there a number of other Cuban employees as well?

E: Well let's see. And I don't remember United Fruit. I mean I was two years old, three years old when we moved from there. But there would've been more Americans in United Fruit than there were in Jaronu which was... there everybody else was pretty much Cuban.

S: Got it. Did you ever visit Banes after...?

E: Not really. I haven't been back really. I've been back to Jaronu several times.

S: What type of houses did you live in there?

E: In Jaronu, actually you can Google Earth the house.

S: Really? Ok I want to do that. This is a new project for me.

E: In fact, when you Google the map, the house that shows up is our home. The town of Jaronu was a magnificent town. It was modeled after a Swiss town back in the... and it was made or constructed in 1920. 1919, '20 or '21, somewhere in there. It was a pristine town of three blocks wide by six blocks long. It was cement homes. I think I have a little picture here...

S: Who built it? Do you know?

E: American Sugar Refinery Company. American Sugar was an American public company. Just the other day I noticed where a number of my photographs are missing for some reason... This is going to be sort of the style. Sorry about the delay. I'm like President Ford. I can't do two things at once. Well somehow I lost that picture... Oh no, here it is. This will give you an idea of sort of the type of architecture. That's a little church.

S: What type of church was it? Catholic?

E: Catholic.

S: Wow. That's beautiful.

E: Which is interesting... And the town is in fairly decent shape. Not the town I shouldn't say... the church. And the house that I took this from was the administrator's house, which is the big house.

S: Was he an American?

E: No. He was a Cuban. But interestingly, his son went to Cornell. So this house was here and it was a very hierarchical thing. That house there and our house here and you consider my dad to be number two. And the houses that are right around here were in decent shape, including our home. And that was the type of construction that everything was. What do you call that? Stucco. And it was just a beautiful little town. But it's downtrodden at this point.

S: So then in '56 your father passed away?

E: He passed away and then our tie to the town was actually his position. So we moved. My mother decided to move to Havana.

S: Was there any thought that you guys would move back to the United States?

E: No... I think my mom was sort of lost. She didn't know what to do. She had become... she had become Cubanized, albeit basically she didn't speak good Spanish. She spoke terrible Spanish. In fact, she came back up here eventually. She went to Hopkins to get her degree because she was a nurse but she got her degree... But that was when she got to speaking... she took Spanish up there in school. So I mean it was the gradualism of life I suppose. She decided to stay down there cause that's what she knew. And that was when I shifted from Candler to Ruston.

S: Why?

E: It was a day school.

S: Ok.

E: So I went to Ruston.

S: Was Candler also a day school?

E: It was also. Yeah.

S: How was the curriculum different between the two?

E: So, you're no doubt acquainted with Ruston and what they represented. I mean, a grade school for everybody together and after that you split off into comercio, high school, bachillerato and at Candler you didn't have high school and the grade school portion was in Spanish. Which, contrasted with Ruston, was all English.

S: Oh really? All right. In Ruston it was English in the morning and Spanish in the evening or am I getting that wrong?

E: So I was only at Ruston for a little under two years and I was already in bachillerato so the grade school portion of it I wasn't exposed to or acquainted with because I hadn't participated. But just thinking about the class photographs and so forth, it seemed to be that it was all English.

S: Did you then...

E: I mean I never had heard English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon.

S: That's interesting because most of the people who I've spoken to are Americans who went there and they were saying it was split. It would be interesting if they had two sets and I'm sure they did have two sets of curriculum for the high school that was designed to send people to U.S. universities versus the universities...

E: No no in the grade school, I think it was all the same. Up until 8th grade. But then after that you went to bachillerato and so forth.

S: What year did you graduate high school?

E: I didn't graduate. I left in 1958.

S: What year would you have graduated?

E: '59.

S: You left in 1958?

E: I did.

S: How? Did your whole family leave?

E: No. So in 1958 when Castro was in the mountains, by and large, he was favored. People favored Castro over Batista.

S: Do you remember being in favor of Castro at that time?

E: Let me continue. I was 16 at the time and you're probably acquainted with the activism of university students in Latin America in general. University students. But in this particular case, in Cuba, it was... even came down into high school. So in high school we were on strike for a few days. Pro-Castro.

S: At Ruston you were?

E: At Ruston. I was handing out... you know I had a car and I had an American license so I did drive, and I was handing out pamphlets, which was extremely dangerous. To me it was a lark but if you were caught with more than one pamphlet it was dire consequences and here I had about 500 of them in the backseat of the car. So I came close to being caught. I was chased and when that came out, I was out of there, you know, the next day. My mother sent me up to the states. So I left in March of '58.

S: How did you get involved with...?

E: Just a 16 year old kid having a good time. You know, Castro in the mountains, pro-Castro, down with Batista, out with Batista. It was nothing formal or anything like that. It was just a lark.

S: Do you think that because your mother was American, did you have a certain security that other people didn't?

E: No, not really.

S: So it was basically the same? If you were anti-Batista, you were anti-Batista?

E: Yeah. I mean certainly if you got caught you were.

S: Yeah. Where did you guys live in Havana?

E: 8 y 19. In Vedado.

S: And where did you go to school when you got to the United States?

E: I went to the Episcopalian Schools in Virginia. I went to Saint Stephens. I graduated from Christchurch school.

S: Did you come back in '59 at all?

E: No. Never went back until '98. It was interesting. It was 40 years almost to the day.

S: You didn't go back at all after the revolution?

E: No. There really wasn't any reason to.

S: Did... your mother left at that point?

E: She left as soon as Castro started showing his colors, she packed up and left.

S: When was that?

E: 1960. '59 to '60.

S: Did she visit you in Virginia at all?

E: Oh yes she would come up in the summer.

S: Are you the youngest?

E: No, my brother is younger and he was still down in Cuba.

S: Where did he go to school?

E: He went to Cathedral.

S: Cathedral. Observing it from afar, what were your reactions and how did you interpret events that were happening?

E: When?

S: End of '58 through '60.

E: Well first it was... I was pleased that Batista had been dislodged.

S: Because of your fliers.

E: Everybody was. Very few people were knowledgeable about Castro, at least to my knowledge. By and large, the population was in favor of his 'rebellion' we'll call it. Even more so, wanting Batista to be out because he was the dictator that he was. So there was... it was a positive move when in fact he was dislodged and Castro came in. So... but I was up here and I didn't go down straight away and then after that Castro started showing his true colors pretty quickly.

S: What was it? Because for different people it was different events. For some people it was the executions, for some people it was the agrarian reform, the nationalizations...

E: The executions were... that didn't bother me. When he started nationalizing... at that point then, as he showed that he was first leftist and then communist, that was the turning point. And then we had Ricky Sanchez, who was in my class... he was at Ruston. He was in the Bay of Pigs.

S: Okay so it became personal.

E: It was interesting. For me, I made the transition to the states very easily. I spoke English very... I spoke English at home. And I came up into the Virginia area so the Cuba thing, or the Cuba connection sort of dwindled and I got into a new way of life.

S: How do you identify yourself? Like when you think about your own nationality?

E: U.S.

S: You do think of yourself as an American.

E: I do. Yeah.

S: Have you your whole life?

E: Yes. Yeah.

S: Why do you think the revolution happened? Or not the revolution... why and certainly this sense of betrayal is one I hear over and over again, especially with people who had something invested in Cuba. I feel like the people who were there for five minutes working for U.S. corporations cared a little bit less but... What do you think caused people to want to support this radical change?

E: Well it goes back to what I said a few seconds ago. It goes back to people being more dissatisfied with Batista and his brand of governance.

S: So it was the political situation.

E: And also you can't ignore the fact that there was some level of difference in that there were a lot of have-nots, the people in the country, particularly in the sugar business, the cane cutters and so forth. They had a hard lot. So there was some fuel there for a revolution. And then what happened is, you know, Castro came in and essentially what he did was change the spigot from the U.S. to the Russians.

S: Could you tell me a little bit more about the difference? Especially as someone who lived in the cane regions... I mean its something I'm trying to get my head around, between the people who worked in management or the engineers and stuff and the cane cutters. What I've been hearing or at least reading about are these sort of Americanized towns... does that make sense? Or is your experience only with...

E: So to my recollection, the only town that I knew was Jaronu and Cunagua, and those were hamlets you might say, towns 3 blocks by 6 blocks, and then all of the surrounding areas... but they were vibrant. There was an economy there. We had a few cars. People could aspire to have an automobile. When I went back there recently, the preferred mode of transportation was walking.

S: Were the cane cutters living in that town as well?

E: No.

S: So who lives in that town? Just so I know.

E: The town was more the mill operators and then the support services.

S: Did you have any interaction with cane cutters?

E: Not with cane cutters. No.

S: Did they live near the town or near the fields?

E: In little hamlets or little towns out and around. I can't really picture exactly. I just know there was a hut here, hut there, five or six huts together. A meager existence.

S: Why did you start going back in '98?

E: That's a good... '98 it was just because I hadn't gone back for that long period. And interestingly I went down with a religious group. And it so happened, they had their organization and so forth. It was a Jewish group. I did have, or do have a couple of friends down there who are in development. Economists, very high positions. So I went down to visit with them. One guy in particular.

S: How did you meet these guys?

E: I met him in Washington. There was a group there called The Cuba Project. A gal named Gillian Gunn, a Canadian woman under the auspices of the Ford Foundation.

S: Yeah. I think I'm going to interview her.

E: Can you find her?

S: Yeah I'm pretty sure she's the sister of somebody I've interviewed who... Did she go to Ruston?

E: No. She was a Canadian. She was... she had an interest in Cuba not unlike yours. Except that in her case she had this project called The Cuba Project that was funded by the Ford Foundation.

S: I would like my project funded by them. That would be nice.

E: It was housed at Georgetown. What she did was bring people together, you could say sort of mid-level U.S. government, and then different people from Cuba, from the government down there. So you'd have under secretaries of our government, that type of thing. And then you'd have economists and different people come up from Cuba for that type of interchange. I met this one fellow, I met several people there but I met this one fellow and we formed a friendship. So he's been up here... he's been up here and lectured at Columbia. He's a very well known economist. And so I was visiting down there that one time. Subsequently, ten years later, more at this point, I decided to go back down again. It's just sort of a thing to do. I get a kick out of going down there. And its sort of an interesting phenomenon, I get myself all worked up to go down, and then I go down and after about two days I start getting

pissed off at the whole place. I mean it really gets to me because I think of it as being one of the greater tragedies of humanity in my terms. What I see down there. Because I think of it as having retrogressed. They do have some decent things. I mean, the medicine undoubtedly. But even their education now is receding. People don't want to study. I don't know if you've found this or been exposed to this concept but a lot of young people aren't going to school now because they don't have anything to do with it. Very little hope. So they are dispirited people in some respects. So, this is a personal side of things, I really get fed up with it. But then two months later, I'll go back down again for kicks.

S: Where do you stay when you go down?

E: It depends where I am. In Havana, typically at the National or the Parque Central. And in the interior, I mean I've stayed at the house I just showed you. I've stayed there. In fact, one time I was going to stay at my old home and it was being arranged but then it fell through at the last minute. So just different hotels.

S: Do your siblings go down as well?

E: My brother has. My sister in Coral Gables wouldn't go. She says, "What the hell do I have to go down there for? I have Cuba right here in Miami." And my other sister who is the oldest of all but I think she's just talking about it. Probably will wind up not going.

S: So tell me about your life after Cuba.

E: So I went to schools in Virginia. Then I went to Washington and Lee University. You would know that. You're from... So I went to W & L. Was in the military in Europe and then went to graduate school at Wharton. That's how I ended up in this area. Then I went through CPG, I ran Scott Paper. I was there for some years. A family. I have one son who was married. No longer married. And after Scott Paper I formed a little company where I produced plantains, you know, platanos. So I got into the snack food industry. So I sold that off but I'm still in that industry. I run a company now that is sort of a larger small company up in Easton that produces snack food. Do you know what Pirate Booty is?

S: No.

E: No. Cool. Anyhow... I'm sure I have some here.

S: When did your mother and brother leave?

E: They left in 1960.

S: Were they able to get things out?

E: No. She left all of her furniture down there. Everything was left down there. We lived in a condominium so there was no loss of property, so to speak. We did have

some land down there, which was forfeited. So basically we left everything down there.

S: When did you realize you weren't going to go back for a while?

E: Probably after the Bay of Pigs.

S: Yeah. When that failed?

E: Yeah.

S: Did you know about that happening beforehand at all?

E: A little bit.

S: Because of some friends and stuff.

E: Yeah. More rumors. This fellow that I mentioned, Ricky, he participated in it but I wasn't in contact with him. I was up here. I wasn't down in Miami.

S: Did you ever live in Miami?

E: No.

S: Do you visit Miami?

E: I do yeah.

S: When the revolution, or when Castro took over, or when Batista fell, what did you hope for?

E: My hope was that it would normalize and have free elections and democracy.

S: Where do you think the anti-Americanness came from with the revolution?

E: I don't know how to answer that.

S: Did you ever sense an underbelly of some resentment toward U.S. companies or U.S. individuals in Cuba before '59?

E: Not really. No. You have to remember that in a country of six million, a million left, and those million you might say were educated, were... there was a positive interaction with the American culture you could say. And so, a very significant portion was part of the American style. And the... certainly there were some that had sentiments against not only Americans but against I guess even the Cubans who were more wealthy. So it occurs to me as I'm saying this that it wasn't only against anti-American but it was anti-establishment.

S: So it was about class.

E: Exactly. Yes.

S: So what did Cubans think about Americans? What did Americans think about Cubans? You come from an interesting position as having a foot in both worlds in some ways. Or maybe that makes it more difficult to answer that question.

E: I think there was an easy interaction between them. It goes back to what you just said a second ago. It was class. You might say that there was probably some level of the Cubans who thought of themselves as being better.

S: The elite Cubans.

E: The Havana Yacht Club only accepted Cuban people. As opposed to the Biltmore was the other one. That's where we were members.

S: You were members at the Biltmore?

E: Right.

S: That was your mother?

E: It was my father. We remained members as a family after... because we were members, we used to vacation in Havana and so...

S: Did you have a home there?

E: No. At the place where we eventually moved to.

S: What was your social network like? Was it Cuban, American, mix?

E: It interesting. I sort of went back and forth between the Americans and the Cubans. I was in bachillerato but I moved pretty freely with the Americans also. The high school gang you might call it.

S: Who were your friends?

E: You mean names? Ricky Sanchez, Rolando Rodriguez, Bobby Henderson- he was Cuban. His father must've been some American background. Vicky Samson, Tony Thomas, Terry Thomas... Names don't pop up.

S: How close are you with the Ruston Alum folks? Do you ever do those reunions?

E: I've done a couple of them. After you called me, I talked with Chris Baker just to qualify you.

S: He's been incredible for this project.

E: He was a friend. He had... he's the same age as myself I think. I was class of '59 bachillerato. He was in high school.

S: Why did you choose the bachillerato program?

E: Because I was at Candler and Candler didn't really have a high school per se.

S: Had it gone according to plan and had the University of Havana still been open would you have gone there or would you have gone to a university in the United States?

E: Likely up here.

S: Likely up here. Did your mother work after your father passed away?

E: She did.

S: What did she do?

E: She was a teacher.

S: Where at?

E: At Columbus School. Actually it's right at 8 and 19. In Vedado.

S: Was it an American school?

E: Semi.

S: Did she teach in English?

E: You know I really don't remember what she was teaching to tell you the truth. I think she was teaching like 4th or one of the grade levels.

S: Got it. Tell me about your father's family in Cuba.

E: There are six of them. So his father was in the sugar business and there were six boys as you can see up there. And so going from the oldest, Maximiliano, he had been a civil servant in Havana. Interestingly, everyone was educated. Max has taught himself, I think it was five languages. Plus the next one who was in the diplomatic corps, which is how my father ended up coming to the states in the first place. He went to a school down in Charleston, to boarding school, because Jose Manuel was the Consul in Charleston and eventually ended up going to Boston as the Consul up there. Something like that. That's how my father ended up in Boston. Roberto was a... he was a professor in Cien Fuegos. Pasqual ran a sugar mill in Central Washington, in Via Clara, Santa Clara.

S: Was it an American owned sugar mill?

E: No. I can't remember what the ownership of it was. Orelia was a doctor and had a clinic in Tampa. He passed away early. And then my father, Eduardo. He was the youngest.

S: Where did your dad go to high school?

E: He went in Cuba. I don't know. In the states he went to Porter Military Academy.

S: Where is that?

E: In Charleston. Today that's Porter Gall Country Day School.

S: Where did he grow up in Cuba?

E: So he was born in Cruces and he grew up in Cien Fuegos.

S: Did you know your grandfather on his side, on your father's side?

E: No I think they died... I was alive when they were alive but I was a little baby.

S: Tell me about your mother's side of the family.

E: So my mother was from Pittsburgh and I really know very little about that side. She essentially broke off with her family when she got married and visited...

S: Do you know why?

E: Well a combination of distance and she had moved off and was doing her own thing so to speak. They were Eastern European. I think Czechoslovakian. I need to get that DNA test. I'm curious about that. And so she had left home when she went off to nursing school and then stayed up in Boston and pretty much had broken ties with the family so I really don't know anything about them.

S: Did you ever visit the United States when you were growing up?

E: We used to come up here for vacations yeah.

S: Where?

E: Typically down in Miami. We would come up to Miami and would come up to North Carolina also.

S: Where in North Carolina?

E: It was in the Ashville area. I would go to camp there. I can't remember what the camp's name was.

S: Was that a common thing for Cuban...

E: No. Americans down there would do that yeah. So we were American. My father went to school up here and we spoke English at home so we had that exposure and practice of coming up for vacations up here. Up here and then down in Havana also.

S: Did you guys have relationships... I mean there are a lot of very famous people, especially in that first government after Batista who mixed marriages between Americans and Cubans. Did your family associate a lot with other families that were mixed between North Americans and Cubans?

E: Not really. No.

S: So it wasn't like its own community in any way?

E: I'm sorry.

S: So that wasn't a unifying community in any way?

E: I don't fully understand.

S: So Lopez Fresquet and Felipe Pazos I believe as well, both of them had married American wives. I'm blanking on another guy. Three people in the cabinet after '59 had American wives and they seemed to have relationships with each other somewhat tied to that.

E: So. No that... no.

S: What do you think the role of Americans in Cuba was generally? How did they see themselves in Cuba? As just being there? I've heard different theories on it. A lot of people from the American colony there they say they were just working there for their companies and that was their full purpose. I've heard some people say they were developing the island. They thought they were improving the island in some way.

E: So I would say that in our instance it would've been more that my father was working. Not really thinking... we thought we were privileged to be down there and in the circumstances we were. Not something as altruistic or as big as helping to improve the island. Where did you grow up?

S: I grew up in Jersey.

E: So did you feel as though you were improving Jersey or were you just there?

S: No. No. I was just living there.

E: Yeah. That's interesting that contemporaries of mine would've felt that way. If that's what you're... If you're quoting my contemporaries... maybe their parents, some of them might've thought some of these bigger ideas and were trying to improve...

S: It wasn't people in the corporate world.

E: I'm sorry.

S: Not people in the corporate world but people tied to missionaries.

E: Well that's going to be different. Yeah.

S: But there were some people in the corporate world who said they were providing jobs for Cubans. We were...

E: Well that's true. That is true. Providing Coca Colas for them.

S: Absolutely. Who funded Candler University. Candler College. I think the brother of Candler, Isa Candler, was the founder of Coca Cola so the Methodists have those ties very deep.

E: You know more about it than I do.

S: I'm trying to figure out the connections. I'm still piecing it all together.

E: I did go to school with someone who was out of that family.

S: What's that?

E: At W & L I went to school with someone from Atlanta who was part of the, I think the Candler family as I recall. I'm vague about it.

S: Just coming back to Candler, because you're the first person I've met actually who went there, were there U.S. nationals in your classes?

E: Not really. It was Cuban.

S: All Cuban. How about your teachers?

E: Cuban also. I don't know if maybe over in Buena Vista it was a little bit different possibly. I do remember Madame Lenoë who was French. She was over at Buena Vista. I'm thinking that if I have Alzheimer's, its not too developed because I'm remembering some things.

S: Well that's always good. If nothing else, this interview had cured Alzheimer's or disproven it. Those are most of my questions but is there something else that I'm missing here? What haven't I asked?

E: You're doing history so you've sort of burrowed into the history of my experiences. That's an interesting project. So this is going to be your dissertation? What angle does it have? Is it strictly history?

S: Yeah it's trying to understand what it means for an influential community of outsiders to be in a foreign place, in a foreign country. How would you explain the influence of Americans in Cuba? Would you say that they were an influential group there?

E: Sure. I mean it was industry.

S: Yeah. I mean, you look at the economic stuff, you look at some of it...

E: Actually it would be more on the economic side than the cultural side because that was a developed country, a society that existed, you might say irrespective of the Americans that were there. You had... from your opera to the symphony to the ballet to all their art. So it was a full society that existed there. The American influence was more the economic influence.

S: Right. Do you think that influenced the island in terms... Or in what terms did that influence the island?

E: I mean, societal development? How do you explain that for south Floridians? Or how to you explain that for wherever you are? I don't think there were any... I mean the influences were economic and the development and jobs and that side of it. In terms of other things, the country was developing on its own. You might think, well did movie theaters and movies influence it? Well yes, everything we watched, well not everything but significantly from the United States.

S: What about television?

E: Television was... that was pretty much domestic. And radio as well. I mean to the degree that we were in the country and my father used to listen to some American programs but that was unusual you might say.

S: Did your father have American citizenship?

E: No.

S: Did you have Cuban citizenship?

E: Yeah. I travel with a Cuban passport when I go in.

S: Do you? Still?

E: No I got it several years ago just so that I didn't have to keep on getting visas. So I go in there with a Cuban passport and come back in here with an American passport.

S: It's like you disappeared from both of them. A magic trick. What about the tourism stuff? The gambling stuff? Were you aware of that? The moral decay that people talk about.

E: I bristle when I hear it by the way. In my mind, it's overstated. You would think that the mafia controlled Cuba and while they did have influence in the gambling and some hotels, in my mind, and maybe its just that I don't know that much about it, but I bristle when I think, when I hear people, I feel as though they think we're the brown skinned people from Cuba that were controlled by the mafia. So the amount of that, it disturbs me because in my mind it wasn't true. Certainly there was some influence, but it was overstated I believe. So you've gotten both reactions to that from people?

S: Yeah. I mean, it's interesting because I'm interviewing people who were in high school, right? So, its people who, some of them hadn't gone through puberty yet. So it's imagining that you don't see the prostitution, you don't see the gambling. So that's what a lot of people said. I've had other people whose parents went down there explicitly to invest in gambling stuff. But that would be the case because...

E: I didn't know anybody whose parents were into gambling.

S: Right. I do think it's overstated though.

E: And the prostitution, that's aside from that. I mean that was an institution down there. Irrespective... that had nothing to do with the gambling and all of this other stuff. Prostitution was something that, you know, when you were 13 you went out and you got laid. That's just the way it was.

S: Yeah. And what the levers of that are. I've read some books that I feel overstate it but I think some of them do a decent job like... but then how Americans viewed Cuba and came to look at it as this city of vice, or Havana especially. I find it interesting because, or especially the gambling stuff, that was brought in by U.S. mob figures and then it's blaming it all on the local population when a lot of it is brought in by these people like Meyer Lansky. I found that pretty interesting but it's hard for me to imagine it.

E: So I mean, as I think I said earlier, I was a high school kid. So you know, I didn't... gambling was something that happened. But I always thought, a lot of my friends here talk about their parents going down there, and I'm talking about people that are affluent, and they're going down there for vacations and what have you and as opposed to going down there because it was full of sin. It was a destination like Cancun.

S: I think it was much more complicated than like Vegas and I think that is something that gets lost on people.

E: I think so yeah.

S: I've also heard people say, you know, talk about the tourism and then talk directly about when those soldiers peed on Jose Martine in Parque Central in the late '40s.

E: I don't know the story.

S: Oh. Some soliders, U.S. Navy men I think, they were ship docked and they got drunk and thought it would be funny to climb up the statue of Jose Martine in Parque Central and urinate on it and they did that and it was a huge scandal. In the late '40s.

E: Yeah I was 8 years old. I lived in Jaronu.

S: Yeah. Far away. In some books it comes as a moment of like these U.S. people don't take us seriously. It's interesting talking to different people.

E: How many people have you interviewed?

S: About 20, 25.

E: What's your goal?

S: I'd like to get over 50.

E: You gonna spend two weeks, two months in Miami?

S: Yeah I should be doing two a day at that point. I will be in the CHC during the day going through archives. I mean, that's the beauty of this project, you know, you guys, not only is everybody here but people are really willing to talk. I think people want to...

E: Your interviews, no doubt you'll interview Modesto Maidique.

S: He went to Ruston? Who should I interview?

E: Yeah. Modesto Maidique.

S: So I have a catalogue here of about 1,000 something names so if you give me somebody in particular I'll definitely do it. Yeah. Modesto. Graduated in '58.

E: He was president of FIU. He went to MIT. So lets see, Ricky Sanchez. Actually Ricky Sanchez. Ricardo. He was the one who was in the Bay of Pigs so you might get an interesting perspective from him. Ricardo Sanchez.

S: There's a lot of Sanchez's. None of his contact information is here.

E: He would've been class of '59.

S: I'll talk to Mr. Baker about that.

E: And then Eddie Martinez. (answers phone call) Hello? Hello? That sounded like a butt call.

S: If there's anybody else you think of.

E: I thought Eddie Martinez would be interesting. You got that?

S: Yeah.

E: Bobby Henderson I think is dead. Guillermo Martinez. He was a... I think he was editor of Miami Herald. Guillermo.

S: Really? He went to Ruston as well? Guillermo Martinez of Ocina?

E: Yes.

S: Do you visit these people when you're in Miami?

E: No. I've fallen out of it. I see them at the reunion.

S: Do you want their contact information?

E: No I've got it all.

S: I'll definitely get on this. Awesome. Well I can't thank you enough.

E: I'm glad that you came and I just realized you haven't had your coffee.

S: I had coffee before I came so I'm doing okay.

E: You can have a sip. Look at this thing here.