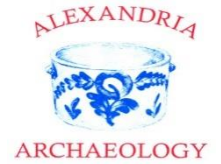




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future*

Title: *Interview with German Mejia*

Date of Interview: *February 24, 2015*

Location of Interview: *Los Tios Restaurant, Alexandria, Virginia*

Interviewer: *Krystyn Moon*

Transcriber: *Sandy Carpenter*

Abstract: German Mejia was born in El Salvador. He first came to the United States in 1980. He worked in restaurants in Houston, Texas, and Washington, D.C., before creating his own restaurant, Los Tios, in Alexandria, Virginia.

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Introductions	
Krystyn Moon:	I am Krystyn Moon and I'm interviewing German Mejia, the owner of Dos Amigos in Del Ray, and it's February 24, 2015. They told me I had to say that.
German Mejia:	Why not? That's fine.
K.M.:	So this is the first interview we're doing for the City [Alexandria, Virginia] project called Immigrant Alexandria, so you are the lucky person. Part of the reason I wanted to interview you is because I know you and you know my family and I know your business, and I thought you would be a great person to sort of start this project.
German Mejia:	Thank you. Thank you.
K.M.:	What I want to do is—you had told me a little bit about being in the United States, but I thought we could start with you talking a little bit about what your life was like in El Salvador. And then what was going on that made you decide to come here.
German Mejia:	Right.
K.M.:	You want to start there?
Growing Up on the Family Farm and School in El Salvador	
German Mejia:	We could start there. I left El Salvador when I was almost fifteen years old. I used to live in a village.
K.M.:	Do you remember what the name was?
German Mejia:	Of course I could remember. I go back every year. Called Los Ranchos. And I'm from La Union.
K.M.:	Oh, La Union. There's a lot of folks from there.
German Mejia:	Most of the peoples is from there. And I used to attend to high school in San Miguel. That's our close town, like ten kilometers, six miles, away from our village.
K.M.:	And were your parents farmers?
German Mejia:	Yes, we grew up on the farm. We worked the farm. And that is what we used to do.
K.M.:	What did they grow?
German Mejia:	Corn, rice.
K.M.:	Corn, of course corn, because you still grow corn.
German Mejia:	And sesame. That's what my father used to do. And that's what we

	learned to do to.
K.M.:	So when the civil war started, is that sort of what made you decide you needed to go?
German Mejia:	Yes, it was 1981, the end of 1980 when I left home.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	Yes, we decided to because school was not a first issue at that time.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	It was maybe one, two days a week, you took classes. You were at school, then something happened, no more school for a week, a month, there was no school. And that's how we decided, I decided to leave.
K.M.:	Did you go by yourself? Or did you go with your brother or—?
German Mejia:	I went by myself, my brother was like fourteen at that time.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	Less than fourteen [years old]. No, I left with a couple of friends.
Leaving El Salvador for the United States	
K.M.:	How did you come? Did you come through Mexico?
German Mejia:	Came from Mexico. Lots of bus, lot of bus.
K.M.:	Did you cross the border?
German Mejia:	First time, I fell in jail in Mexico. I had no visa, and [spent] six months in jail.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	They send me back, I bus again.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	Then a month after I came back.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	And we cross the border by Houston.
K.M.:	Oh, by Houston.
German Mejia:	I was very young. I was not fifteen [years old] when I came to Houston.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	And then I started working, like a busboy in a restaurant in Houston for a couple months. And then I moved to work with somebody who used to work in there; we opened a restaurant.

K.M.:	In Houston?
German Mejia:	In Houston. That was an Italian restaurant. And I learned to cook Italian and I learned to cook Italian food in there. And it was fun for me. I really liked it.
K.M.:	You didn't cook at home in El Salvador, did you?
German Mejia:	No.
K.M.:	Did you learn how to cook when you got to Houston?
German Mejia:	Well, I learned to cook a few things. I murdered some things, but I'm not a good cook.
K.M.:	No. So how long were you in Houston?
German Mejia:	A year, like one year.
K.M.:	And then after that? Migrate up to—?
Working in Washington, D.C.	
German Mejia:	My father was living in Washington [D.C.]
K.M.:	Oh, okay.
German Mejia:	And he wanted to [go] back home and so I came with him to stay a few months, then he [went] back home and I stayed in Washington. That how I came.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	And then I started work in Columbia Road. That was in D.C. in La Plaza Restaurant. It was La Plaza before, same guy as—.
K.M.:	I know what place you're talking about, it like the two-story, right?
German Mejia:	No, no, no, that was before that. And then I went to work [in] Adams Morgan, but that wasn't my first job.
K.M.:	In Adams Morgan?
German Mejia:	In Adams Morgan. Yeah. 18 th [Street] and Columbia Road, in La Plaza and the same guy
K.M.:	Yes, that's what I'm thinking.
German Mejia:	Yeah. That how I came, and I used to work in Georgetown too. I came to this Washington in Georgetown.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	Some days over there, some days over there, that was not easy. That was three, two, three [days]—that's how I used to work it and then I—.

K.M.:	Oh, okay. So did you—?
German Mejia:	I stayed like four years with La Plaza.
K.M.:	Did you live in D.C.?
German Mejia:	Yes I lived in the city, 14 th [Street] and Columbia Road.
K.M.:	Oh, so you lived really close.
German Mejia:	Then I get an apartment, 14 th [Street] and Otis Place [N.W.], right before the bridge in Maryland.
K.M.:	I know what you're talking about, like Anacostia?
German Mejia:	No. That is like 14th and—?
K.M.:	Okay. Northeast.
German Mejia:	And that's how I ended up here.
K.M.:	So, did you have to adjust your status?
German Mejia:	Yes, I work there and they give me my documents in La Plaza.
K.M.:	Did you have to claim to be an assignee, is that it?
German Mejia:	No, no, that was a different type of resident, that was a different type of rule they had at that time. If you working for somebody, they can apply for you.
K.M.:	Oh yeah, sponsor?
German Mejia:	Yeah, now that doesn't exist. But that how I came.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	Four years afterwards, they send me back to El Salvador.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	That was not good to go back home because the, fighting, the war was open everywhere.
K.M.:	Yeah, into other countries, it was bad.
German Mejia:	Everywhere. Yeah. And then that was the rule. To go back and go to the American Embassy over there. For interview. They give you the date over here and then you go [to the] consulate and have the interview with that.
K.M.:	And then you get sponsored to come back to the U.S.?
German Mejia:	Well, the Embassy gave you the document, the visa and everything to come back.

K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	That was 1988, that was more than that. That was a lot of time, it was like seven years. And, um, it was not easy. I didn't want to stay at that time either, but I stayed three months.
K.M.:	In El Salvador?
German Mejia:	Yeah, at that time.
K.M.:	In La Union?
German Mejia:	Yeah. That was all my brothers. We were at home.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	My brothers were little and my mom had a little one too, at that time.
K.M.:	How many brothers and sisters did you have?
German Mejia:	Five brothers and three sisters.
K.M.:	Big family! [Laughs]
German Mejia:	Big farm family. My little one [the youngest one in the family] is like twenty years difference.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	My brother was so happy. And my brother, very nice brother.
K.M.:	Have other brothers come?
German Mejia:	My younger brother came a couple years after I came to Washington, the same way.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	The same way. The problem was—kids had to leave home before sixteen, because the army was catching everyone after [age] sixteen. And nobody wanted to be involved in the fight. Both groups were taking kids to fight. Not under fourteen, not under fifteen, not under sixteen. In that way everybody runs before that time, because you might be a target from the eye of somebody to say well there's another one. That's how most everybody comes at the same age. I lost a lot of friends same as school and then being caught for the army. Very sad, because you lose a lot of friends. Not many people survive about the fight. That was so sad. And my brother came a little after, and then a few years after, my other two brothers came.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	That was—.

K.M.:	And your mom and dad?
German Mejia:	My mom and my dad and others, they still live La Union. My father passed away five years ago. My sisters, my other brother, my mom, not the same place. They move to different place. Same La Union, but close to the city, close to the city. My father sold his farm to friends. We have, they still have our house. We go sometimes. We still have the house, we say we still have the house, but [it's] not ours. My friend, my friend has it.
K.M.:	Do you send money home?
G:	Yes, to my mom. We help with her. But she comes sometimes.
K.M.:	Probably not the winter? [Laughs]
German Mejia:	[Laughs] Really, not the winter, not at this time. Yeah, we have different weather. It is warm over there, seventy, eighty [degrees].
K.M.:	It gets hot. I have a friend from El Salvador; she said her mom only comes in the spring and summer.
German Mejia:	A lot of old peoples come in summer. She like over here, but not more than a month.
K.M.:	So, going back to your work. So, you're working at La Plaza on Columbia Road. And then, when did you start working at Waffles?
German Mejia:	And then after I work with La Plaza, I moved to work with a food company. I used to deliver with the bread trucks. I did that for five years. And then, after five years, I moved back home.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	We moved to El Salvador in 1991. Christmas 1991. Because in 1991 the peace agreement was signed then. A lot of people [came] back.
K.M.:	Right.
German Mejia:	And my daughter at that time, she was five years old, and we moved back [to the U.S.] after eight years over there.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	She was a little bigger. The school wasn't the same. We were feeling like, we were [unclear] something.
K.M.:	Was there still fighting?
German Mejia:	No, that December [1991] was the last month of fight. The fighting stopped that Christmas. Then no fighting. Then they started new rules and new things. That was nice. I saw a lot of changes. Like there was

	disarmed. I mean, people were believing it was going to happen. They [were] cleaning the roads, they were cleaning everything. The city was looking so different. Because of fifteen, sixteen, twelve years of fight, people believe that life is not normal like that. We saw a lot of changes. That was very nice. We saw a lot of friends after that. And then we [came] back.
K.M.:	So, why did you come back?
German Mejia:	Well, my daughter was ten and I [came] back to Texas again that time because I was trying to put a restaurant in Texas.
K.M.:	In Houston?
German Mejia:	In Marilla. I didn't like it. Then I [went] back to Washington. But I had a house in Washington before we left. I rented a house. And I had a house by that time. And I came to Washington. And that's how I came to Waffles [Restaurant in Alexandria, Virginia].
K.M.:	That's how you came to Waffles.
German Mejia:	Yeah, at that time they give me a job in Waffles. And that was my last job until I came here [Los Tios].
K.M.:	Okay, and you were the manager?
German Mejia:	I used to be the server for Waffles for a few years. And then I became the manager. And I enjoy it and that was the last job I did before come over here [to his restaurant].
K.M.:	And, so what made you decide to open your own restaurant?
German Mejia:	I was trying to open restaurant for many years, but the money was the problem.
K.M.:	Money's always a problem. [laughs]
German Mejia:	Always the problem. [laughs]
K.M.:	Okay.
Opening Los Tios	
German Mejia:	And I was trying to buy a restaurant and I was looking at the lease work. By that time it was very expensive. Can't buy it. And one day my brother told me, you know, this guy—I never been in the [Mount Vernon] Avenue, until that day I came. I used to drive down Route 1 [U.S. Route 1], never been in the Avenue. He said this guy told me was selling his restaurant.
K.M.:	So you didn't know about Chirilagua [neighborhood]?

German Mejia:	I didn't know anything about that part [Chirilagua] or this part [Mount Vernon Avenue]. And he say go and look at it. And I came Sunday. I drove over here. I don't know, I saw some peoples and I really liked it. I don't know. And I engaged with that and that's how I came. Um, I really like it. I mean, I really liked the Avenue, how it looked like.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	I came back next Wednesday, and I told the guy what I have. He say that's fine, you give me that and take the restaurant.
K.M.:	So what type of restaurant was it?
German Mejia:	It was a Salvadorian place. Carry out, Salvadorian carry out.
K.M.:	Oh, right, so it was just the bar area?
German Mejia:	Just the bar area.
K.M.:	Right? And then you got to expand it.
German Mejia:	And then that's how I came. I was in shock because one day he call me, like a couple weeks after and he say I'm leaving, the restaurant is yours. I say wait, I have a job. He say no, I don't what you're gonna do, but you pay me for the place later, I'm leaving on Friday.
K.M.:	Where was he going?
German Mejia:	[Shrugs and laughs] He left the place on Friday, we arranged for all the papers later.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	That how I engaged. I was very disappointed because I was thinking, I can't leave my job.
K.M.:	Right.
German Mejia:	I told my wife, maybe you can help me with this. And my daughter. And she say yeah, we will try, because I didn't want to leave from there.
K.M.:	Security, yeah.
German Mejia:	And then one night I was walking the sidewalk in front of Wisconsin [Avenue] and I twist my knees. And I stop at the hospital, get surgery, came back to work. And that's how I quit. I didn't quit, that's how I left. My wife says, that's fine, that's good, because that place is not mine, you have to go in there. That's how I engaged. I tell you, that was the last kick. I had it. And then I came over here. It was not easy; the place wasn't look nice. And the Avenue wasn't look nice. People

	sometimes come and say did you buy this restaurant? I say yes. You crazy. That what the people used to tell me. Some peoples from the Avenue told me. All my friends told me the same. Is nobody come over here, nobody walking the Avenue. I was thinking, like something had to be wrong, something is not good. Then it started to work.
K.M.:	Right.
German Mejia:	Little by little.
K.M.:	Things started to change, right?
German Mejia:	I think you can do a lot of things in this neighborhood. But some people say no, this place doesn't work, it's off. All the block is no good. My feeling was it's good. Why not?
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	But why people can say that? And that's how I came.
K.M.:	Okay. So then, so then when you started Los Tios. So why did you name it Los Tios? Or was it named Los Tios?
German Mejia:	No, no, I name it Los Tios. At one time my brother have a restaurant. I told him put Los Tios, it's very short and very easy to say. And he said no. I want to put El Tio. His place is named El Tio. And then when I came over here. He opened a place like a year before. I say I put Los Tios, I like it. I have a lot of uncles. [Los Tios translates as The Uncles.]
K.M.:	[Laughs] So—.
German Mejia:	Yes, my father's family, there was fifteen [people].
K.M.:	Fifteen boys?
German Mejia:	No, nine ladies and six guys. And my mom had a lot of older brothers. Everything was uncles everywhere.
K.M.:	Yeah, yeah, so Los Tios worked. And then you decided to do both Mexican and Salvadorian food?
German Mejia:	I never did cook Salvadorian before. What happened was—.
K.M.:	Oh, only Italian!
German Mejia:	And Mexican and Spanish, too.
K.M.:	Oh, at Guapo's.
German Mejia:	No, in Adams Morgan. There was a few Cuban dishes. The Salvadorian, that was the menu when the other guy had it.

K.M.:	Oh, okay.
Menu Choices, Including Salvadorian Food	
German Mejia:	And between the burgers and everything, I used his menu. And we rearranged it, as we have it now, all the food was, we make a little rearrangements on the food. Better taste and all that. When I get my permit and I wanted to put my menu, I was feeling like so sad to not put the Salvadorian dishes, like we had been using for like six months. And we were thinking about what do we do? Everybody liked it and we were for five, six months selling pupusas and all the Salvadorian things. And that's how I decided to put a little corner to put the Salvadorian dishes.
K.M.:	Like platos tipicos, right?
German Mejia:	Platos tipicos, yeah, and pupusas, and chicken, and beef, some dishes in there, but that was not something that used to be. [laughs]
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	No. We had a people, we still having somebody who used to work with him, helping out with that. And no other kid ever did cook Salvadorian.
K.M.:	Oh really? What were they cooking, Mexican?
German Mejia:	Mexican [laughs]. That's what I teach them too. And that how we engage with the Salvadorian part.
K.M.:	Yeah. So then choosing to add Salvadorian food, do you find that you get Salvadorans that come to the restaurant too, or is it mostly?
German Mejia:	We have a lot of Salvadoran, but not really the Salvadoran. Everybody come for the Salvadorian menu, they come for the other things. We make the whole menu, is like everybody like it. And like the Salvadorian part is good in there, but I tell you, some people think like, the Salvadorans eat that? Maybe not.
K.M.:	Yeah. Beans and rice?
German Mejia:	Beans and rice [laughs]. No, like we have the fried fish. And like, if you asked the cook who you think would like to eat it? He says the Salvadoran guy, maybe. Not all the people like fried fish. It is good. That way we have it over there. I feel very sorry sometimes, like, thinking like the weekend, taking off something. No, we keep it in there.
K.M.:	So, what's your favorite dish on the menu? Is it a Salvadorian dish?
German Mejia:	I like pupusas, I like the two chicken. Oh, I like everything.

K.M.:	So what is and what do your customers like?
German Mejia:	All those dishes. And otherwise I may erase it from the menu, but they like it all. Yeah, they really like it all.
K.M.:	Yeah. What's the hardest part of being a restaurant owner?
German Mejia:	Um, maybe, I don't know, everything.
K.M.:	Everything?
German Mejia:	You worry about all your employees.
K.M.:	Uh-huh.
German Mejia:	You know that is one of the biggest worries sometimes.
K.M.:	Is it sort of like a family here?
German Mejia:	No, I don't have family.
K.M.:	No, no I meant.
German Mejia:	Yeah, because I have peoples working with me since I open. And that like you worry about not making mistake.
K.M.:	Right.
German Mejia:	You have to see all these guys' faces and behind them wives and kids and all that and you try, I try make the best I can.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	To keep them in, you know, in good shape too.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	It's not just my mistake, it affect everybody. That's one of the hardest parts. You go home sometimes and thinking like you going to make a mistake. What this guy going to say, not to me, to their families.
K.M.:	Right.
German Mejia:	You see them have three, four, five kids. You know. It looks like - people think about the business. If you do the business and you do a good job everybody help you do right. You don't want to make all the mistakes.
K.M.:	Uh-huh.
German Mejia:	Because everybody get a bit. And that is one of the very not easy part, thinking like, what is this guy going to do if I make a mistake? If we don't do it right. Sometimes we make meetings. I ask everybody like, what do you think we're not doing right? What do you think the people

	like better? Or what we can do to get better? And when you have a whole peoples working with you a long time, is easy, you can ask because sometimes they might know more than what you know about it. You know, it's good to ask if people are involved in the good.
K.M.:	You change your menu sometimes too, right? So, like at Christmas time I remember you had special—.
German Mejia:	We do have specials but the menu is still the same.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	But I have specials on the weekends. Weekends—almost every day we have one special. But the weekends we do two or three specials. But the menu have the same things since we started.
K.M.:	Really?
German Mejia:	Same things. We don't – we didn't find anything to change, adding more things but menus—.
K.M.:	Yeah, yeah. So then, what's your favorite part of working in this place, of owning this place?
German Mejia:	I'm really happy about, we have nice customers, nice families. Like you when you come with your kids. I mean I think that the neighborhood is very nice neighborhood.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	I know all the kids now.
K.M.:	They grow up here.
German Mejia:	They was ten, now twenty-one and you get surprised sometimes when they ask you for a drink. In your mind you think this guy. Well, I'm twenty-one. Doesn't look right, but that's what it is.
K.M.:	I know you do lots of things with the community, right? PTA [Parent Teacher Association] and what-not?
German Mejia:	I do with the schools fundraising. With the schools, church, anybody I believe it will help.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	A lot. I do sometimes twice, three times, two times a week.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	But it is fine. The same people we know. You can't say no either.
K.M.:	They all live here.

German Mejia:	Everybody live around. They come, you don't have appointment but they come anyway. But it's very nice you can help.
K.M.:	With the school.
German Mejia:	Yeah. With the school, with the church. Whatever some peoples ask.
K.M.:	PTA?
German Mejia:	PTA, concerts, associations, I mean, a few things. It's good. I don't refuse; if we can do it, we can do it.
K.M.:	Yeah. So, you have a daughter and she lives in Leesburg?
German Mejia:	She lives in Leesburg with me too.
Keeping Connected to El Salvador	
K.M.:	And how do you make sure she stays connected to El Salvador?
German Mejia:	Um, connected to El Salvador? She like talk to my sisters, my brothers over there, my grandma, I mean my mom; my grandma pass away two years ago. And her cousin, they living over here. [inaudible] She go over there sometimes. She like it.
K.M.:	She's working with children, right?
German Mejia:	She's working in a school in Leesburg.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	She teaching Spanish students.
K.M.:	So is she doing ESL [English as a Second Language]?
German Mejia:	No, she's doing kindergarten kids.
K.M.:	Oh, really? Harder.
German Mejia:	Yeah, harder at that age. And she is licensed to teach Spanish because she's bilingual.
K.M.:	Oh yeah.
German Mejia:	She's a hundred percent bilingual and she want to have her own school. [Discussion about changing batteries]
K.M.:	So it's pretty easy, right?
German Mejia:	It is easy.
K.M.:	You just don't think about it.
German Mejia:	Yeah, I don't think about it. You're doing a lot of jobs. Where's Parker [K.M.'s child.]?

K.M.:	Parker's at school. He was here last night, though, when you were not.
German Mejia:	No, I came yesterday, daytime. [inaudible] I was back home early.
K.M.:	Yeah, Rosa was our server, so I asked her to get Parker smaller plates.
German Mejia:	Rosa was here, you know, talking about—Rosa was a server, that work at the old, when the other guy had it before. She's still here from before.
K.M.:	Oh, really? She's—I didn't know how old she was, she has like sons in their twenties.
German Mejia:	She's a grandma. She has a few sons. She has five kids.
K.M.:	Some in North Carolina?
German Mejia:	I don't know.
K.M.:	Replaced the batteries, picking up where we left off. All right, so then, one of the big things when we do this sort of interviews, on page two is sort of how you maintain connections to El Salvador, and you travel back and forth, and your daughter has family. Food is obviously a big thing, but what other sorts of things do you get to participate in that sort of connects you to El Salvador? I guess you don't play soccer because of your knee?
German Mejia:	[laughs] No.
K.M.:	But like soccer is really big.
German Mejia:	Yeah, food, almost everything. Language, and soccer. We watch a lot of soccer. It's easy on TV.
K.M.:	In the bar.
German Mejia:	In the bar, at home too, sometimes.
K.M.:	Do you root for local teams here or you root for El Salvador?
German Mejia:	No, El Salvador team. We don't have much local teams around here.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	We watch that, and music.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	Food. [inaudible]
K.M.:	I mean you run a restaurant, you're always busy; do you ever go to church or other—?
German Mejia:	We do the church, even my wife, my wife work for the church. And my

	daughter too used to work right here at St. Anthony's and she do things, whatever she want.
K.M.:	St Anthony's out on Route 7, right?
German Mejia:	Yeah.
K.M.:	Near Culmore?
German Mejia:	Yeah, and my wife work there too.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	And I come with them.
K.M.:	And you go with them? Do you participate in, there's like a Salvadorian Chamber of Commerce, right?
German Mejia:	Um, not really, not really. We do all the things to help like we have the Salvadorian caucus.
K.M.:	What's that, caucus?
German Mejia:	Caucus. It's a network organization to help kids in El Salvador, to put them, to put kids in the college. In the university, not in college.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	And we donate money every year.
K.M.:	For caucus.
German Mejia:	Yeah.
K.M.:	Is that here, or in—?
German Mejia:	That's in D.C. It's around, and all the business peoples collaborate with that and there is a group of other people doing, uh, looking for the kids that can help.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	They have to be very poor.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	They go and find them. What they do is find them in schools.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	They find, they test—.
K.M.:	Smart kids?
German Mejia:	Yeah. And they can—.
K.M.:	Yeah.

German Mejia:	And that what we do over here. We put half over here, and half over there.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	There is like twenty visa, uh, twenty kids being paid here and twenty kids there, every year.
K.M.:	Oh, that's great!
German Mejia:	Yeah.
K.M.:	So what schools do they usually go to?
German Mejia:	Everywhere. They don't ask; they just have to find really poor [kids].
K.M.:	I think UNC Chapel [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill] has—has had students coming for a similar program, or something like that. A similar project.
German Mejia:	Maybe. We have people looking for them and then once a year before Christmas they give them all the, the approval. That's how we collaborate.
K.M.:	Do you work with other Salvadorian businesses in the area?
German Mejia:	No.
K.M.:	No? Are there many?
German Mejia:	I know many businesses from El Salvador, but I don't think they, I don't think I know them.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	Like I told you, I don't know much peoples in the neighborhood. Even like—if they Salvadorian, I don't know them.
K.M.:	Other than the folks who work here.
German Mejia:	Yeah. And when I finish with work, I try to listen. But I know the whole neighborhood over here.
K.M.:	Yeah. And so you have a farm?
Having a Farm in Northern Virginia	
German Mejia:	I do have a farm. It's a lot of work.
K.M.:	Yeah. So you sort of brought a little bit of El Salvador back here, right?
German Mejia:	Little bit. It's easy here.
K.M.:	It's easy here?

German Mejia:	It's easy.
K.M.:	And you grow the corn, right?
German Mejia:	Sometime. I grow corn, tomatoes, and hot peppers.
K.M.:	Oh, that's right.
German Mejia:	I like growing hot peppers
K.M.:	Not sesame or beans?
German Mejia:	No. [laughs]
K.M.:	Okay. And then do you use the peppers and tomatoes here?
German Mejia:	Yes. I'm a few years using them. In the spring, I bring them.
K.M.:	Okay.
German Mejia:	I use them. Yeah. It's fine.
K.M.:	You bring the corn too, right?
German Mejia:	No, not the corn.
K.M.:	Oh.
German Mejia:	Not the corn. The corn I use for my chickens. Our chickens [laughs]. I got a lot of chickens. They eat it.
K.M.:	How many chickens do you have?
German Mejia:	I don't know. Maybe fifty, sixty. It's a lot.
K.M.:	For eggs? Or for meat?
German Mejia:	For eggs maybe. I give them a lot, I give a lot of eggs away.
K.M.:	They make a lot of eggs. That's a lot of eggs.
German Mejia:	That's a lot of eggs. I might sell them one day, I don't know.
K.M.:	So the last couple of questions are, what do you like best about, here in Del Ray, in terms of your business and what's happened since you opened Los Tios?
German Mejia:	I think Del Ray been better and better since I came. When I came here it almost eleven years ago, it was all different. It was nice, but now it's nicer.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	It's very nice. I think it's one of the best communities around. It's very—I think there's no problems around. I think that we have a nice neighborhood. Very clean.

K.M.:	And then, what are some of the things you miss about El Salvador, that you can't—?
What Do You Miss About El Salvador?	
German Mejia:	Maybe, I don't know, maybe friends.
K.M.:	Your friends.
German Mejia:	Maybe some friends.
K.M.:	Yeah.
German Mejia:	Maybe the river you can jump in every time you want.
K.M.:	You don't want to do that in the Potomac.
German Mejia:	No, we don't do that out here, no. No, it's a lot of things, a lot of things. A lot of things changing already, too. When I go back home, I see all the peoples, especial[ly] old people. Still alive, then I will see them. Yeah, it's very nice.
K.M.:	Did you want to add anything else?
German Mejia:	I just want to say thank you, this is very nice, going to keep working, to do the best we can. Thank you.
K.M.:	All right. I think we're good.