

Zoila Machado Interviewed by Alexandra Machado
July 27, 2019
New York

Alexandra Machado: Hello my name is Alexandra Machado and I'm here with...

Zoila Machado: Zoila Machado.

AM: And we're going to be conducting an interview about a couple of questions that me and my class have come up with about politics and your opinions on certain issues and share any stories that you want to share. But before we start, are you comfortable with me donating this recording to an archive of undergraduate oral histories being created at Guttman Community College?

ZM: Yes, that's fine.

AM: I'm going to record the interview and I'm going to share some parts with my class and have this oral history archived by Guttman Community College. Is that okay?

ZM: Yes.

AM: Okay. We're going to start the interview. So, do you consider yourself a political person? Why or why not?

ZM: No, I do not consider myself a political person because besides going to vote and looking at the news on TV about what the government or the president or the vice president is doing, I don't do anything else in relation to politics.

AM: Okay and what is your first significant political memory and how did it impact you? Like the first thing that you remember, like growing up or anything that was recent that might have impacted you?

ZM: Here from this country or from another country? From the country, I came from? Could it be from my country?

AM: You can share anything.

ZM: I came to the United States because of a political reason. There was a Civil War in El Salvador and that's why I left. So, I think that's the thing that has impacted my life the most.

AM: Okay. Do you feel connected to any political figure? And why?

ZM: I don't feel connected to any political figure.

AM: Why don't you feel connected?

ZM: Because like I said before I do not follow politics to the extreme that I would feel connected to somebody in politics.

AM: So this question your kind of already answered, but maybe you can elaborate. How did different political decisions impact your life growing up? So you said that you came here because there was a Civil War in your country?

ZM: Well, there was a civil war and lots of people were dying. At the time that my parents decided to bring me to the United States, innocent people were dying. It was two sides, the government, and the other side was the right and left side as they called it. They were killing each other. Each party told us that they were the ones that should control the country. So That's what happened

AM: What age did you come here?

ZM: Fifteen.

AM: What is different about politics today than when you were younger if you can remember anything?

RM: Yes, as I said back then people were killing each other, There was a Civil War going on. Right now there is no Civil War going on but there is some crime going on and some people compare that with all the gangs we have in my country. They are trying to control the country and they compare that to what was happening in the year that I left the country. It's a little bit similar but now at this time we have a new president and the president is helping the country a lot. He's trying to control the gangs. So it's different now I would say, even though the crime is still happening but the new president is trying to control those gangs.

AM: But what about here? When you came here, were things different in America than they are in El Salvador?

ZM: Well, yes right now we have a new president. Back then when I came there was another president in charge.

AM: Do you remember what president was in charge?

ZM: It was president... He gave amnesty to all the immigrants and he gave them Green cards. Everybody became legal with him; it was Ronald Reagan. He was the president and I think that he was the president that gave a lot of green cards to a lot of immigrants. So, he was helping the immigrants and right now President Trump is not helping the immigrants too much, in my belief. So that's different.

AM: And what do you think about the current political moment right now in the United States?

ZM: Right now, it's bad for the immigrant immigrants, especially for the people who don't have papers, it's very bad. Right now, there were saying the president is going to send people to knock on everybody's door. All those people who don't have papers, they are going to be affected and probably everybody is going to be affected if they remove all of these people by force. The economy is going to be affected if this happens

AM: How do you watch, read, or learn about politics?

ZM: Through the TV, through Facebook, through the phone. If something happens, I get an alert on my phone, or I can get the news from the TV or the phone. I don't read too many newspapers.

AM: What do you think about the role of money should be in politics? You know how a lot of people running for office get funded, and some corporations fund too much money. How do you feel about how money works in politics?

ZM: Money plays an important part in who the president is going to be because the big companies want somebody in the presidency, for example, someone that is going to go along with whatever business they have, they will approve laws that will protect them, that will not make them pay a lot of taxes. These big companies, since they have the money, they will give it to this candidate for them to be protected by them if they become president. What I would like the money to be used for is for other things. I think all of these candidates, they have to win by the people's decision, not the huge companies who fund them. I think money should be used for other purposes than just finding a presidents' campaign.

AM: What, if anything, would you say is working about our system of government? Like even though there is a lot of negatives, what do you think is one of the things that you actually think is working? If you think something is working. If you don't think anything is working, then you can say nothing is working.

ZM: Well, I would say the economy is not that bad. People are working more, for example, immigrants, are working more because they're preparing themselves if something happens to them. I work in a college and we have fewer students now because more students are working. So, the economy is a little bit better, but maybe it will be temporary because we don't know what will happen to all of these people.

AM: Are you following the lead up to the 2020 election?

ZM: I'm not following yet. I have seen some debates on TV, but if you ask me names, I'm not sure of the names right now. Maybe later I'll be sure.

AM: Do you think it is important to participate in the elections? Why or why not?

ZM: I mean, I think it is very important to vote if you can. Some people say I'm a citizen, but I don't think my vote counts and I don't think that's true. Everybody's vote count. I think that's the most important thing like if you ask me if you're involved in this, my only involvement is through that. But I think it's important, I do my duty.

AM: So, do you plan to vote next year?

ZM: Yes, I plan to vote every time I have to.

AM: Do you think formerly incarcerated, so people who were in jail should be allowed to vote and why? And also, do you think non-citizens should be allowed to work?

ZM: That is a hard question about the people in jail because those people are in jail because they committed a crime, but I think everybody should be allowed to vote. I think everybody should count even if they are in jail, even the people who are not citizens because we all live in this country. So yes, I think everybody should vote.

AM: Do you share the same political views with your family or your friends?

ZM: Yes, I can say yes because most of my family and most of my friends have almost the same life. We travel sometimes, we go out sometimes we own houses, lots of houses, and then when we talk about politics, we kind of agree with our views. I mean sometimes there's one person that doesn't agree with us but that is normal. Not everybody can agree on certain things, but overall, we all share the same opinions on politics.

AM: How has the Trump election impacted your relationship with politics? How has this changed your feelings about the way the government works?

ZM: It did not change my views, but I was so surprised when Trump was elected, I think a lot of people, like many of my family and friends, could not believe that he was elected president. So maybe sometimes we are sure of things, and then something like that happens and we are like what happened? We thought it was an illegal election but in the end, they showed that it was legal. We didn't think that many people were going to vote for Trump We thought that the minorities were not going to vote for Trump but, it happened. It shows that he has lots of followers and we thought we didn't.

AM: Why do you think he has lots of followers?

ZM: We talked about the importance of money in politics and in elections. Maybe he uses his money. I don't know why. I can't explain why a normal person who lives in the United States can be a Trump follower, I cannot understand. Maybe the big companies, follow him because even though they are millionaires they don't want to pay taxes. So, it makes sense that the big companies follow him because he will help them with legislation and laws for them to have their business running.

AM: What has the Trump administration done better or worse than the Obama administration?

ZM: Trump is the president of the United States, but the way he talks, the way he treat some people, I think he is not a serious president. When we talk to people from other countries, just to name a country Canada, they are all making fun of us because of the type of President we have. I think that's one of the differences between him and Obama. Obama was a very serious person and he treated people with respect and Trump does not treat many people with respect. Good things that Obama did, the Obamacare that is a good example. I know some people that use that program and they have insurance

AM: And Trump wanted to take it away.

ZM: And Trump wanted to take it away, but Obamacare is still working. The DACA program, Obama supported that program a lot. Trump doesn't want that program and I think that's a very important program because some of these kids came to the United States very young. Some of these kids don't even speak other languages besides English, so they consider this their house, but Trump wants to take that away. Most of the things that Trump has done is against immigrants. I mean Obama, they said he sent many immigrants back into their country, but he did not treat them with disrespect as Trump is doing with the kids. He has all these kids in camps that look like jails.

AM: Why do you think Trump hate immigrants so much?

ZM: I don't know why because his wife is an immigrant and I think Trump was an immigrant, but his wife was. Maybe he's afraid that we are going to be the majority maybe he doesn't want that. He wants to keep us as a minority. I agree with Trump when he's trying to control the gangs, all the immigrant gangs. I don't why he doesn't like immigrants that much.

AM: Outside of voting what political actions have you participated in? If you haven't participated in any sort of action what would it take for you to participate in some sort of action?

ZM: I mean; besides voting, Remember I work at a community college and we take our classes to the... When we ask the government for more free classes, for more English classes? We go to Wall Street, we go to Albany and we protest, and we take our students. I think that's one way to get involved in political things.

AM: If you could be president for one day what would you propose?

ZM: Free education, that's one thing. I would propose that because for every country education should be free. That is one thing that I will propose free education, and free insurance, free health insurance. I think if a country has those things the country will be a good country to live in.

AM: But do you think education should be free to all? Like what about the people who are millionaires? Do you think they should pay for their kid's education or their own education?

ZM: No, I think education should be free for everybody. At least I will say an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree. Should be free. However, if you want to be a doctor or something then maybe there should be from your own expenses.

AM: Well that is the end of our interview. Is there anything that I should have asked but I didn't ask?

ZM: No, I think you asked plenty of questions. I hope I did well.

AM: You did perfectly fine. I forgot to ask this in the beginning. Do you mind taking a picture for the archive?

ZM: I don't mind. If you need to take it.

AM: Okay, that concludes our interview session.

ZM: Thank you. Bye.

AM: Bye