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Interview no. 1749

Jesse Muñoz Rev.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Rev. Jesse Muñoz

Interviewer: N/A

Project: Farah Strike

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: N/A

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1749

Transcriber: Andrea Santos

Summary of Interview:

Jesse Munoz was an El Paso priest from Our Lady of the Light Church. He was born in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, in 1940 during the depression years. When he turned eleven him and his family moved to El Paso, Texas in hopes of a better life and education. At the age of fourteen he took a bus to New York and worked there for over a year. He then had enough money to go to Spain and pay for an education and many years later he came back to El Paso, Texas.

At the time Rev. Munoz came back to El Paso, everyone in the community was suffering from poverty due to the low wages they received from their jobs. Specially those working for Farah. Rev. Munoz mentioned that most people from Ciudad Juarez also came to El Paso looking for jobs, which they get with a Green Card and they then don't have to worry about taxes of anything that would concern a US citizen. In fact, most of the Farah workers are "mojados" that have a green card and don't belong to the Union, because their wage is actually good for the life they live in Mexico and by the time the Farah strike started they would even bother to join or help they fellow coworkers.

As Rev. Munoz mentions, the Farah strike was mostly about human dignity and respect for the worker. The wage issue was blown out of proportion, but it wasn't that; it was human dignity. Farah would mistreat their workers and out of nowhere would take away people jobs and leave the workers and their families in total poverty, basically they would be killed financially.

By the time the Farah strike began Rev. Munoz and other churches and priests started to join the strike because most of the Farah workers thoughts that if the priests where helping them, then it was actually all right for them to also help and walk out and fight for their rights. Rev. Munoz mentioned that his church helped in many ways, such as, with food, shelter, and legal advice. Rev. Munoz thinks that it was the church help that made the workers withstand the heat

and win the battle with Farah. They also had helped from people all over the country who were rooting for them and who helped them raise more than 5 million dollars. At times it was not that easy, because in a second it could all become very violent and people would start to fight with one another, but Rev. Munoz always tried to keep the people very peaceful and over all keep the strike as smooth as possible.

By the end of the strike the church had been criticized for helping with the strike. Rev. Muñoz always thought it was the right thing to do to help his community and to make a change, which they actually achieved. As well as to enforce human dignity in the workplace and a decent wage to be able to provide for your family.

Length of interview 45:17

Length of Transcript n/a