

Interviewee: Armando Valdez
Date: 02.23.2016
Location: Cooper Room, Alamosa, CO
Time: 2:00pm

Armando Valdez's family has resided in Capulin for five generations. They were among the first Hispanic settlers in the region. His ancestors have inhabited northern New Mexico and southern Colorado since the early 1600s, and as he puts it, "I can still put my hand in the ground and feel 400 years of history!"

How long has farming and ranching been in your family?

Your family has deep ties to the region. Can you describe your family's ties to the area?

- How long have your ancestors been in this area?
- Where did they come from before that?
- How far back can you trace your family tree?

Where did you grow up?

What are your fondest memories of your childhood?

How old were you when you started helping out around the ranch?

Did you grow up speaking Spanish or English at home?

- Do you still speak Spanish today?
- Do community members still use Spanish in Capulin?

How important is this heritage to you?

Regarding your ranch, how many acres do you operate?

- What types of animals do you have?
- What types of crops do you grow?

We'd like to learn more about your professional history. What did you study? Why? What inspired you to dedicate yourself to teaching?

- What types of courses do you teach?
- How does your experience working the land influence your teaching?

Drawing from your experience as business professor and rancher, can you explain the importance of financing for ranchers and farmers?

- What does the ranching/farming cycle look like?
- When does a "season" begin?
- And how does financing fit into this cycle?

- At what points in the year might a farmer/rancher need to access financing?
- What financing options would be available to him/her?

As you know, several dozen Hispanic farmers and ranchers submitted paperwork for retribution through the *Garcia v. Vilsack* case. In your opinion, how large an impact did discriminatory lending have on Hispanic farmers and ranchers in this region over the 20th century?

My understanding is that you did not file under the case.

- Is that correct?
- Did you consider filing?
- Were others in your family affected by discriminatory lending practices?

In 2009 the Obama administration nominated you to serve on USDA's Farm Service Agency's State Committee, which you currently chair. Can you tell us about your role with the agency and the work that the USDA does in the region.

Given the history between the USDA and Hispanic farmers and ranchers in the region, your position with the USDA is a breakthrough of sorts. Can you speak to the importance of your position with the USDA given your ethnic background and your family's heritage?

- You've clearly earned your position with the USDA but do you think your nomination, at least in part, is also a sign of institutional progress?

In your time with the USDA, have you and your colleagues worked on initiatives that specifically address fair lending practices?

- If so, can you comment on this work?

What do you think is the next generation's view of farming and ranching in the Valley?

- Do they want to be farmers and ranchers? Why or why not?
- Did you always want to be a farmer?
- Would you like your son to be a farmer? Do you think he will be?

What message would you want to give future farmers from the Hispanic community?