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### **A Chilean on Prejudice ("Different Cultural Views")**

Angelo Valderrama recalls an encounter with racial and cultural differences after immigrating to America from Chile and contrasts his experiences with the archival oral history of a Cuban immigrant.

This is Angelo Valderrama for Voices of Race and Change.

I grew up in the small town of Casablanca located 50 minutes northwest of Santiago, the capitol of Chile. In this small town I was able to experience life from a very familiar perspective, in other words, because of the small amount of people who lived in the town in those days. Practically everybody knew each other, or at least everybody knew the family who you belonged to. So if you needed any type of help there was always somebody you could count on.

On the other hand, I never experienced racism against me or saw any racist act against other person. In those days racial remarks were something out of the Chilean culture. I would assume that this was because of the lack of noticeable multi-racial groups in the country. In Chile the majority of the people are a mixture of Caucasians and mestizos, and a small percent are Indian descendents. But don't

take me wrong, although the skin color in the majority of the people was light, and fewer people had a little darker skin, in rare occasions you might hear jokes and remarks about somebody's color, but not in a racist way.

In 1992 I moved to New York City, and lived there for a year and a half. By observing the different cultures, learning their traditions, and also witnessing the integration of all those different ethnic groups in the society, those were all factors that helped me not just to make friends with people from many nationalities, but also to adapt faster to the American society.

I moved to Florida in 1993, I worked hard, saved money for several years, and in 2002 I bought my first house in the area of Coral Springs. I was so happy and proud of myself, because I knew that such an experience was part of another great and important chapter in my life.

The first day after moving I decided to introduce myself to the neighbors, because it is part of my personality, I'm a very friendly individual. So I walked to my next door neighbor's home. As I approached the house, I noticed an old lady standing outside the door smoking a cigarette. Once in front of her I presented myself, but the look in her face said everything that I needed to know. Obviously my presence in front of her made her very uncomfortable, and without letting me finish what I had to say she just walked in to her house, closing the door in my face.

I believed back then that this lady acted that way because she was very racist and that racist incident made me feel very upset. From that point on I decided not to approach other neighbors. I was fine if any person wanted to talk to me, but myself approaching other people and living the same experience, no way.

I lived in the house in Coral Springs for eight years. At the end, I knew many of neighbors but I never made any friends, and that racist lady - I never knew her name but I called "La Loca" which means "the crazy" - never changed her bad attitude towards me. The only day that I saw her smiling at me was when I was moving out of my house.

From Coral Springs I moved to a townhouse twenty minutes north in the city of Wellington where I have been living for a little less than two years. In this place I

have found in my new neighbors the familiar ambience that I haven't experienced since I left my country.

Many years have passed since Ramon Torres moved from his native Cuba to Miami Florida. In the next interview he compares the two cultures, and also speaks about a specific incident he experienced when he moved to a new house.

*(Sound Bite) Ramon Torres compares the two cultures, and also speaks about a specific incident he experienced when moved to a new house.*

This interview is in the Race and Change Oral Histories archives in Special Collections at the African American Research Library and Cultural Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Voices of Race and Change: The Younger Generation is produced by students in Dr. Kitty Oliver's Multimedia Practicum at Florida Atlantic University for the Race and Change initiative multimedia project. This is Angelo Valderrama -until next time.