

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

<p>[0:02] Rodrigo Valencia</p>	<p>Well, my name is Rodrigo Valencia and I'm here, ready to give an interview to this pair of ladies who are currently from Furman University. About my life, uh, the labor system, uh, I started to work textiles in Colombia very young, uh, around nineteen sixty</p>
<p>[0:30]</p>	<p>three, uh, I moved to the United States, uh, because of a job offer that I had. And it caught my attention and I came to stay for three years, and I stayed forty-eight. But, the truth is that I liked it, that was my life, all my life in textiles, and it seems that it is a tradition because, because my dad and part of my family</p>
<p>[1:00]</p>	<p>also worked in textiles. So it seems that it goes from generation to generation, right? From the United States, sorry, from Colombia I came to work in a company called Cadillac Textiles. In, ah, Providence, Rhode Island. From there, I worked six, seven years, but I got bored because the cold weather was too much. So, uh</p>
<p>[1:30]</p>	<p>My ex-in-laws had already moved to South Carolina and, therefore [the pause] the wife said that that "Let's go to Carolina, My family is there etc, etc." And I, said, "Okay." The children were very small. Two biological children of mine were born in the north. And the children "No, let's go to where our grandma is." Well [inaudible]. At first, in nineteen seventy eight</p>
<p>[2:00]</p>	<p>uh, Greenville County, all of Greenville County, this was here, there was nothing here. Here there was nothing but work. There was no place to have fun, there was absolutely nothing. Then at the beginning, like I wanted to go back, but the family "no, daddy, let's stay here, no, let's not go back." Then I started to adapt</p>
<p>[2:30]</p>	<p>to adapt [pause]. Initially, I started working in a plant called Beatty Plant, and several Colombians worked here. As a machine operator, that is, what we call a weaver. Uh, I worked there for fifteen years. [pause]. Fifteen years later, there was a small altercation with a person in that plant and</p>
<p>[3:00]</p>	<p>[pause] I lost my job. I went to work at another plant that I did not like. I worked two months and, after two months they called me again from the Beatty Plant, but I said no. No, I'm not going back there. I do not want to go back to work there. [pause] The thing remained like that and, it took about two, maybe two months, maybe,</p>

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[3:30]	They called me from a plant of the same company called, they was called because they closed it too, called Furman Plant. That plant had modern machinery. It had computerized machinery and, when they called me, I said but, they called me from this plant and there they do not hire Hispanics, because there was not a single Hispanic working there.
[4:00]	Then I went to the interview, and the manager told me, he said "I know all of your history." [Pause] Because this mill belonged to the same company, because they were neighbors. "But I want to benefit from your expertise. You have a very good record as a good worker." [Pause] "And, I do not need you, I anticipate that I do not need it, but I want you to come and work here. "That caught my attention: how come they do not need me, but they want me to go to work with them?
[4:30]	Then as I was very bored in that plant because I did not like that plant, very dirty, then I said, alright. I went to work there. When I entered the room, where I was going to work, I saw people who looked like nurses, and I asked someone, I said, "And that man, what is he doing here?" "He is the mechanic
[5:00]	of electronic machines. Mechanic? I said, but he looks like a, he looks like a nurse. And what kind of mechanics? Then I started learning about the work system. Excellent. Excellent administration. The relationship with the workers, excellent. Being the first Hispanic that arrived there, or, that at that moment was there, or that was going to work there
[5:30]	I said, but [pause] What is this all about? I was surprised. And I started working, but helping here, replacing someone on vacation, replacing a person, a mechanic, because I was already a mechanic, I was no longer a machine operator, I was a mechanic. They began to teach me electronic mechanics. They sent me to a training to a special place,
[6:00]	[pause] to do a course on that machinery. After two months I needed to go to Colombia urgently, to solve a problem there, and I told the supervisor "I'm very sorry but, I've been here barely two months and ask you for a permit for three or four weeks, not sure.." He says "Go." [Pause] I left for Colombia
[6:30]	and I returned in a month. When I came back, the supervisor said, "Look, I have good news for you." And I said, "wow, but, even though I left for a month, you have good news for me? right?" "He says," Yes, uh, that gentleman who you said looked like a nurse is going to retire. So, this gentleman is going to train you for those machines. And you take the work from him." "OK." There I worked for ten years, then they updated the plant

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[7:00]	a little more. They brought more modern machinery. And there I stayed for ten years. Unfortunately after ten years, they closed. Because starting that year, let me think, uh Ronald Reagan was president, I'm not sure, but I think this was in the eighties, nineteen eighty, eighty-two. Ronald Reagan started his tenure with this country,
[7:30]	[pause] in great poverty, he followed the presidency of Jimmy Carter. [pause] with unemployment above eleven percent. And, in the first two years, uh, Ronald Reagan was one of the most discredited presidents in the history of this country. But he was told, "You are going to ruin this country more than the way it is now." And he would laugh. He began to eliminate whatever did not serve
[8:00]	to the United States. Among them, textiles. He said, [pause] the average price of a yard of fabric produced in the United States is three dollars, and we can buy it for a dollar. Then we do not need to produce textiles. We need to produce items that truly create profit, not what gives us losses.
[8:30]	What are we going to do with the workers? Meetings of textile workers with him, and he, "I do not want textiles." Then the textile industry began to decline to decline, to decline. And [inaudible] all of us who worked in these plants were left without jobs. There are still some, some plants out there, small, but, there are even Colombians still working in textiles, but, mm, a very small percentage. So, that was the reason why the textile industry was ending, was ending.
[9:00]	They closed the Beatty, the Furman Plant, where I worked and, I had supervisors there, and it really hurt when that plant closed, because, practically, the supervisors relied on my opinions. For example, in the case of Mrs. Aura Tabares, I remember once that she came from the Beatty Plant where she worked, and went to the Furman Plant
[9:30]	for a spare part that they needed for a machine that was not working. And she arrived at about nine in the morning and I saw her come in, I was working at that moment. "What is Aura doing here?" When [inaudible] she came back and said, "See, I need this spare part, and I asked the supervisor, that we needed this spare part, and if he would loan it to us." And the supervisor said: "I do not know anything about that, [inaudible] the spare part, look for Valencia, he is the one who knows about all of that"
[10:00]	

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[10:30]	And, and I was a mechanic, ... of machinery and electronics, and then, a very user-friendly machinery, one would not need to get dirty or nothing ... And ... there were supervisors who liked me a lot. When they closed the plant, a supervisor, named Richard Steinhouse, moved to the Furman Plant, [pause] and, the plant began to shot down slowly
[11:00]	until they finished all the raw material they had. When they finished all the raw material, because, in any case, they could not close it immediately, but give a sixty-day notice to the workers. Then I stayed until the end, and this Richard Steinhouse went and said "Rodrigo, go back to the Beatty Plant" and I told him I did not want to go there, I had worked there already, and I knew all its history,
[11:30]	it had been told to me. "Go work there." And I, no I won't. And I had already gotten work, in another plant. I told them, "When I finish at the Furman Plant, I'll come here. And they told me, "Come now." This man convinced me, and I went back to the Furman Plant. Do you know what he told me? "I have a worker that I am going to fire because he is very lazy, he does not work and that is why I wanted to bring you, for you to replace him.
[12:00]	And there I worked for three years, and after three years, they shut it down too. That was the end of my contract, but I was already tired of that too. [pause] I was already tired, eh, when they closed the, the, uh, well I, I knew because I talked with many people and I knew that plant would also close. I remember once that
[12:30]	there was a rumor at a pic-nic table outside, the rumor there was [inaudible] "This plant is going to close too." Ah! No way, that's not, this plant won't close, this plant won't close ... Then I go to Colombia on vacation. I was in Cartagena when the wife told me "I'm going to tell you something, but, Alexandra, my daughter, she called me and told me not to tell you, so she would not ruin your holidays."
[13:00]	I said "What?" "They closed the Beatty Plant too." I said, "[pause] yes? [claps] Thank God." That's what I wanted. Why? I had the, I already knew that they were going to close it, but there is, I am a person that I like to investigate a lot, I really like to investigate, I, when I retired I started to investigate what were the systems of ... .. of retirement,
	what plans should one have to retire, what were the systems, how did one ... try to ... collect more [inaudible], earn more money in retirement, everything. I love investigating [inaudible] So when they closed it I knew that when a plant

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[13:30]	was shut down and workers were laid off collectively, the government, Ronald Reagan, precisely, Ronald Reagan, put out a law
[14:00]	that mandated that when a textile plant was closed, I speak of textiles, but I do not know if there are other businesses that were included in that law. Then the government provided training for two years to the workers who were laid off, so they learned another trade, and so one was paid to study, and the government paid for your training.
[14:30]	Then I said "OK, now I'm going to," It was a great opportunity that they gave me, for me to kill two birds with the same stone as ... as we say. I retired, I was of retirement age, [pause] and I said, "Now I will start studying." That is, I began to receive retirement money, and I began to receive the money they paid me to study.
[15:00]	This was my situation for two and a half years: I collected unemployment money for six months and then I received money to study for two years. I completed courses, I went to study, I saw that there was English as a second language so I went to study to learn more English, then I started to change, I completed courses in plumbing, electricity, and English
[15:38]	I got a license to drive large trucks, I was not interested in any of those things, but it was my way to take full advantage of what was being offered to me. I completed, I completed a course on how to teach driving, and I got a lot out of it because that's what I'm doing now. Textiles as I am telling you, I consider them 99% dead in the United States, then practically all of us who worked in textiles,
[15:41]	most of us who came to this city or this country to work textiles, we are already retired.
SK:	And tell me, in what companies did you work in Colombia, and what was your ...?
[16:00] RV:	In Colombia I worked ... I ... I ... I was a very unstable person in my work. I was not a person to work for anyone for more than five years in Colombia, and I started working from a very young age
[16:30]	In Colombia I finished military service and, and I worked here and there. I had worked in a very famous company in Colombia, the first textile company in Colombia, which was Coltejer, and that's when I went to [cough] went out to pay military service. In Colombia there is a law that whoever is in a job, and

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofía Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[17:00]	<p>has to do military service, when he returns, they have to give him the job back. They cannot take your job away. Then I came back and I kept working, but no, I retired.</p>
[17:30]	<p>And I went from one city to another, Bogota, Cali, Barranquilla, well everywhere. I settled for 39 months in Barranquilla working with some Jews, with a company called Celta, Celta Limitada, which also closed. Suddenly, my dad dies in Medellín, then I felt the responsibility of returning home.</p>
[18:00]	<p>Because even though I was not the oldest, and the elders were married, then as the oldest single, then I felt a need to return to Medellín. Then I started working in Fabricato, a very famous company in Colombia, very big, which has also slowed down a lot because textiles ... Asians practically finished with textiles in the rest of the world Because it is ... they</p>
[18:30]	<p>produce by quantities, they sell by quantities and at very favorable prices, then that not only happens in the United States but in ... in other countries. Then I started working in Fabricato, but it turns out that when I was working in Barranquilla, that is, I practically start telling you my story from the beginning, I am now going back to when I was in Colombia:</p>
[19:00]	<p>I had a problem with a boss, I was a supervisor, I was a supervisor at that time, I started as a weaver, and, but at the time this happened, I was a supervisor. And I had a problem with him. Then the big boss, the superintendent, separated us. He called us to a meeting and said "Horacio, after today you are not Rodrigo's boss anymore. Rodrigo's boss will be me. That is, [inaudible].</p>
[19:30]	<p>Then there was a little enmity there. And, one day, around 6 months later, more or less, he told me, "Rodrigo, I need to talk to you." And I said, "Um, I wonder what he needs to talk to me about?" And I said, "what is it about? And he said," No no no no. Let's take time. "[Pause]" I will tell you when and at what time. We can meet right here at the plant, but ... "</p>
[20:00]	<p>It turns out that he had, there was a recruitment for the United States, and they needed 20 workers, between mechanics and weavers. And he said, "Help me get these people, and you are among them." I said, "myself to the United States? No way! I have a very good life here in Colombia. No, I won't go there, but I'll help you. "So, I helped him get some of the 20 people who came here, hired to work in textiles here. Because the workforce here was very scarce in textiles.</p>

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[20:30]	<p>At that time, eh, it was so scarce, that I remember that one went from working on a plant, and there were people waiting outside in the parking lot, offering you more money, so that you could go and work with them. That was the way it was, dreadful. And the amount of work available was [pause] impressive. [pause] I refused to come, but they came. Then, two or three of them began to insist, that I should come, that I should come, that I should come.</p>
[21:00]	<p>They said the owner of the company would send me a contract any time I wanted. And I, "no, no, no." I had already moved from Barranquilla to Medellin, and I was already working in Fabricato. [inaudible] where I worked for five years. Well, they convinced me! And one day I said yes. They sent me the work contract and they called me from the United States Consulate to tell me that there was a work contract for me, and that I should come and sign it, and I said, "No, I do not want to leave. No, I live very well here in Colombia."</p>
[21:21]	<p>One day [inaudible] I went. Thank God that when I got there they told me: "Sign the contract, fine, but you have to wait for a priority date, eh, more or less four or five months." I said, "OK, thank God, I do not want to leave now. "When they called me, everything being ready: [inaudible] the paperwork, tests and other things, [pause] [inaudible] I felt sad," No, I do not want to go, I do not want go." Until I decided. And I went, I signed, I took all the papers</p>
[21:23] SK	<p>and I said to myself, "OK, I'm leaving for only three years. I will not stay any longer than that. "And I've been forty-nine years! [pause] Then I came to work for a company called "Lyon Fabrics," whose boss sent me the work contract.</p>
[21:30] RV	<p>In Rhode Island, or where?</p>
[22:00]	<p>In Rhode Island. Well, I went to work there and then</p> <p>After I worked there, I went to another company called, called "Cadillac Textiles." There I worked [pause] for six years [pause] and when my ex-in-laws moved here, the story I told you before began. Then, I came. Well practically, up to this point, that's my story, right?</p>
[22:00]	<p>Having known the textile industry in Colombia, and having continued here, continued here with the same profession. With the textile plants closings, I left when they would close, and the textile mills were disappearing, not only for</p>

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofía Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[22:27] SK	<p>me, but for lots of people. As I say, there are some traces left, small plants where I believe Colombians continue working.</p>
[22:37] RV	<p>And, Don Rodrigo, ah, how would you compare the working conditions in Medellín, if you remember, compared to the working conditions here?</p>
[23:00]	<p>The, working conditions in Colombia, and the ones here, more or less are similar. What is not similar is the the the money. And, that is why, not only in Colombia but in other countries, they long for the American dream because they earn more money.</p>
[23:30]	<p>Now, how are the workers treated in Colombia, and ah, and the United States? No, it's really very similar. There is a lot of respect for the worker, for the human being, eh, there are many rules, in Colombia there are many rules for the treatment of workers. The only thing different in Colombia is that in Colombia there are many, many benefits. A lot of benefits for the workers. There is nothing here. Virtually nothing.</p>
[24:00]	<p>Because here they pay you a full salary. So, okay, we're going to pay you so much but that's where you get what we call in Colombia "unemployment benefits." That's where you get what we call in Colombia "semi-annual premium." From what you earn here, you are responsible for paying what we call in Colombia "holiday bonuses," which, besides from being paid for holidays, they give [inaudible] special, for example, to go on vacation. It is as if to say "Here, I'm giving you extra money to go partying." In here (the US), there's nothing. There are companies that have, say, a [pause] a Christmas bonus?</p>
[24:30]	<p>Never, never, they gave us a Christmas bonus. I was never given a Christmas bonus here. In any company. A retirement plan? There are companies that today offer, for example 401K. There are companies that have them, others do not. Holidays? It is not like in Colombia, where you are entitled to fifteen work days per year. Not here. Here there are companies that give you</p> <p>a week's vacation, they pay you a week's vacation, every one to five years. For example, I worked twenty-five years with the, with, the, with this textile company, and when I left, I had three, two weeks of vacation. No more.</p>



TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

[25:00]	[inaudible] That is, the social benefits here are very limited. So, in that sense, it's like the difference is a lot. But nevertheless,
[25:30]	honestly, here you live better. A textile worker here, referring to the textile industry only, a textile worker here [pause] lives better here than in Colombia. That is indisputable. But, actually the textile industry here in the United States, in general, since there were textiles here everywhere, eh, it gave many job opportunities to a lot of people,
[25:37] SK	a whole lot. They were, many of us were many the beneficiaries of the textile industry.
[25:44] RV	So, to remember some dates, then, on what date did you arrive in Rhode Island, in the United States?
[25:54] SK	I arrived on November 28 of nineteen sixty-nine. In full winter. To endure cold. [Inaudible]
[25:56] RV	How was the adaptation to cold?
[26:00]	Horrible. Horrible. The first [sic] snowfall
[26:26] SK	I suffered it on December 27, and we had to be indoors alone, a partner and I, we both had gotten a small apartment for two while we settled. [pause] For two days you could not go outside. As we did not have a car, and the cars could not be driven, one, two or three friends who had a car could not get out. All shut in. [Inaudible]
[26:28] RV	And then in Greenville, when did you arrive?
[26:30]	I arrived in Greenville in nineteen seventy-eight.
	Around September. I had an accident in the north, at work, and I broke my back. Then, [pause] I could not work for a year, but the insurance covered my weekly salary. But I was afraid to have back surgery at the time. Then the

TITLE OF VIDEO: Rodrigo Valencia

DATE OF VIDEO: July 31, 2018

TRANSLATED BY: Brianna Edens, Shania Gaspard, Sofia Kearns

DATE OF TRANSLATION: September-October 2018

<p>[27:00]</p>	<p>insurance, [pause] called me and said: "Either this operation is done or else." Because you cannot stay like that for ever.</p>
<p>[27:30] SK</p>	<p>Then I made an agreement with them, and they gave me compensation, and that's when I came here (in SC), and I bought this house, in nineteen seventy-eight, for thirty-two thousand dollars. And I was one of the first Hispanics in this town, if I was not the first one. [inaudible]</p>
<p>[28:00] RV:</p>	<p>And, did you work overtime, overtime? [pause]</p>
<p>[28:30]</p>	<p>I always worked overtime but I was not a person of, uh, to work everything they offered me. No, not me, because I had family. So I did work overtime, yes, of course, always worked overtime. Only the last two years that I worked, I said, "no no no no more overtime." Richard, Richard Steve Howard told me, "Rodrigo, what happened to you? You were such a good employee in the Furman Plant,</p>
<p>[28:35]</p>	<p>You would do anything they would ask you to do [pause], and now you do not want to. "I say," No, it's that I do not need anymore. [pause] I accepted your invitation to come to work here, but no, you did not put that condition on me." But I did collaborate several times, I helped him, even Aura Tabares, who was a supervisor, I collaborated several times. But, to be obsessed with the overtime? No, no way. No. I worked eh, the normal 40 hours, the regular schedule, I would say mandatory, right?</p> <p>That's the history of textiles in the United States, my story, of having arrived from Colombia here.</p>