

6-14-1976

From Immigrant to Ethnic: Interview with Paulo Carvalho by Joseph Conforti

Paulo Carvalho

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Recommended Citation

Carvalho, Paulo, "From Immigrant to Ethnic: Interview with Paulo Carvalho by Joseph Conforti" (1976). *From Immigrant to Ethnic*. 3. <https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/immigrant/3>

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Rhode Island College
ETHNIC STUDIES PROJECT

Oral History Interview # 3

with

Paolo Carvalho

June 14, 1976

By Joseph Conforti

Tape 1 Side 1

- 6 Reasons for coming from Azores: was born in Azores, father worked for Portuguese government, many transfers, often back and forth between mainland and islands. Last time he went to mainland was in 1954 and he stayed 12 years. Worked in factory and then served in Army.
- 17 Came to America in 1966. Had 2 sisters already living here. Had to wait 11 years before he could come. When his turn arrived, he had already married and had 2 children. He hesitated because he felt he had a fairly good life in Portugal--good job, car, house, enough money.
- 44 He felt that with less money in Portugal he still enjoyed life more than in America. He had a leisurely work day, could socialize with friends during day, go to beach on lunch hour, go to cafes. In America all he had time for was work and home.
- 56 When he first came he worked for Bulova. Found work very difficult, felt discouraged. Thought of returning and still thinks of it now. He was happy in Portugal even though he has more material things now. More excitement, more sense of community in Portugal.
- 86 Life as youngster was hard. Parents separated when he was young. Went to mainland alone in 1952, went to school. Then back to Azores again for 2 years. Money was scarce. He never had a bicycle as a boy but his children all have 10-speed bikes here.
- 121 He didn't work as a boy, just went to school. Tried unsuccessfully to get into Merchant Marine Academy in Portugal so worked in factory instead.

Paolo Carvalho

- 137 One week before the deadline, he decided to come to America. Thought of it as an adventure and also thought his children would have an easier life here, would be able to get higher education here.
- 153 Family history. Had 2 sisters living here for many years. They urged him to come if only for the sake of his children. He felt content with his life in Portugal--he doesn't think in terms of money but of enjoyment.
- 184 Had lived with in-laws in Portugal so felt freer about his social life. Here he stays home more and misses his friends.
- 200 He returned for a visit in 1974 and his relatives tried to convince him to stay there.
- 217 Wasn't difficult to convince his wife to come to America. She didn't like it here immediately, but has now adjusted.
- 238 When they came they brought their clothes and \$700. Stayed with his sister. His brother-in-law helped him to get a job.
- 304 Disliked job at Bulova. He felt the people there took advantage of him. They were friendly but they were cheating him.
- 383 His life was just going to work and going home. Weekends he would visit with friends and family--mostly all first generation.
- 408 Until 2 years ago he dealt almost exclusively with immigrants. Now he belongs to the Portuguese Cultural Association, but only after many years here.
- 430 He was 30 when he came. Took him a long time to adjust. He felt those born here were completely Americanized but he got along better with other immigrants.
- 465 Worked for a chemical company and also as a teacher aide at Hope High School in the Bilingual program. Worked at 2 jobs for several years in order to save to buy a house. Not much time for recreation and he was bothered by that. He still considered returning to Portugal.
- 520 His children were born in Portugal but came here when very young. They are Americanized and don't want to go back. They don't speak Portuguese but they understand it. They don't understand why he wants to go back. Their friends are of all nationalities.
- 561 His wife worked in a mill when they first arrived and now works as a teacher aide.

Paolo Carvalho

- 572 Has lived in present home 7 years and is now an insurance agent. He would rather make less money and be happy at his job. He would like to be a social worker and help recent immigrants. He tried to help as many kids as possible when he was working in the Bilingual program.
- 647 He has doubts about sending his children to college because he sees many graduates in factories anyway. He wants them to enjoy their jobs.
- 672 He considers his children Americanized and he doesn't think they're proud of being Portuguese. He is very proud to be Portuguese and feels equal to any American. His children don't have any interest in learning about Portuguese language and culture. He would like them to be enrolled in a bilingual program but he won't force them to do so.
- 712 He is a member of the Portuguese Cultural Association. It tries to promote Portuguese culture in the U.S. Was formed about 13 years ago.

Tape 1 Side 2

- 1 Most members of Association are over 40, mostly second generation, mostly "high society", not workers. Workers wouldn't be comfortable. Most are educated, professional people.
- 26 He never belonged to any working-class societies but many of his friends in Portugal were working-class even though he thought of himself as middle class.
- 52 His contacts are broader since he works for insurance company.
- 62 He belongs to a Portuguese volleyball team and to an informal groups of 12 Portuguese couples. They talk about current affairs in Portugal. Most of them are from St. Michael.
- 105 He was happier in Portugal. He thinks his friends feel the same way. He'll probably go back to Portugal but he doesn't know when.