

LATINO FOCUS: Enrique Chanez of La Montaña 3

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T.L.: SO TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND. WHERE WERE YOU BORN, RAISED AND HOW DID YOU END UP IN OREGON?

E.C. I was born in Mexico City. I was brought to this country at the age of 6. On a family vacation in 2005 my family began to realize the potential living the American dream and we sought a business opportunity. After years of watching my parents wake up for work from 3am and working until 4 pm, we agreed that we might have a better life opportunity in the United States.

T.L.: WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AS A LATINO?

E.C. Growing up as a Latino in southern California came with a mixed blend of confusion, life changing experiences, and many opportunities that would not have been available to us in Mexico.

T.L.: WERE YOU EVER EXPOSED TO GANG ACTIVITY AND HOW DID YOU ESCAPE IT?

E.C. Oh yes, absolutely. Growing up in Southern California, surrounded by poverty, doesn't leave many options. I was constantly

confronted in my neighborhood to join gangs and it became a daily challenge to many of my friends and me. Some were weaker than others but you had to make a choice. As for me, my family and home structure was so solid that gangs were never an option for me.

T.L.: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION.



Enrique with his wife Viridiana.

E.C. I started my education here in this country. As my parents tried to distance me from all the negative activities going on in our neighborhood, from about the time I was in 2nd grade till my freshmen year of high school, I would spend my summers in school in Mexico. Being young I never realized how much keeping my Mexican roots intact would

help me in the future. High school was when I realized I had the potential of becoming something in life and breaking some of the beliefs people had about the youth in my neighborhood. I was able to finish high school and ultimately go to college.

T.L.: I HEARD YOU PLAYED HOCKEY IN COLLEGE. NOT TO BE STEREOTYPICAL, BUT HOW DOES A MEXICAN AMERICAN FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PICK UP HOCKEY?

E.C. Yeah, hockey is truly what separated me all of the negative actions around me. As many know, hockey is a pretty expensive sport to play, so I had to find a way around that. I joined a non-profit organization for low income families called Disney Goals. In return for free equipment and ice time we did community service around our neighborhood (volunteering for Special Olympics, tree planting, serving the homeless and many

other services we provided to many others) www.goals.org. With my hockey skills and services I had done I was able to play some college hockey for Cal State University Long Beach, through scholarship programs. In a funny way, hockey might have saved my life. It certainly provided me with opportunities I would never have had otherwise.

T.L.: HOW HAS TUALATIN TREATED YOU?

E.C. Tualatin has treated me extremely well. I've been able to express some of my beliefs and thoughts to the many great, local people I have met and people are listening. While I am new to the area, I feel a strong connection to the people who frequent the store.

T.L.: YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TOOK OVER THE STORE EARLIER THIS YEAR. HOW HAS IT BEEN? HAS THE COMMUNITY WELCOMED YOU?

E.C. My wife and I took over this store in January 2nd of 2014. It hasn't been as easy by any stretch, but as one can imagine, I thrive when challenged. So often when people see change they fear it, but the changes that we have made to our store have been in the best interest of our customers and they seem to really appreciate what we've done. For example, I've been able to put a bakery in the store as opposed to having my bread delivered. We've expanded our meat counter and stock fresher meats than the previous owner. We have expanded the restaurant to include breakfast because many of our Latino clientele has expressed the need for it in Tualatin. I take pride in being at the location during all parts of the day to observe, listen and cater to everyone's needs. That has always been important to me and I think my customers appreciate that.

T.L.: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE BUSINESS CLIMATE IN TUALATIN?

E.C. The business climate has been great. The city of Tualatin has been more than willing to provide resources and direction at any time of need. I have found other business around me, both Latino and non-Latino, are extremely cooperative and supportive as well.

T.L.: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL OTHER LATINOS IN OUR COMMUNITY?

E.C. I would advise them to take advantage of all the resources around you. Our Library, our local schools, sports teams are all available and offer great opportunities to our youth as well as adults. Commitment comes with a reward. Challenges will always be around us so it is best to face them directly. I don't believe in excuses; they are simply of a way to cheat yourself from your true potential.



Enrique is proud of the new on-site bakery so he can make the best Pan Dulce in town.



Some customers enjoying a late lunch at the restaurant that is within the store.



His baby, La Montaña 3!