

4 Alvarez Students
Mashapaug Pond Oral History Interview

April 8 2013
2:20pm
Alvarez High School
375 Adelaide Avenue
Providence, RI

Timestamps are from Irene's iPhone recording titled "Alvarez Students Interview RAW" on tab "2013 interview 2" on Brown iTunes U site

Interviewees: Elaine Vang, Carolina Rosa, Leeshonel Ayala, and Jeremiah Black
Interviewers: Irene Rojas-Carroll and Keally Cieslik

Keally Cieslik: ...been working on this with her - I'm supposed to keep wearing this even though I feel like a goof. But um, we've been working with her and doing interviews of different people who have connections to the Mashapaug Pond. And this sort of area and this neighborhood in Providence. So what we're hoping to hear from you is just a little bit about who you are, your lives, your connections to the neighborhood and the pond. But what we really want to hear is stories and experiences that you've had. And your thoughts and opinions on this area.

Irene Rojas-Carroll: Mhm, yeah. And I was hoping for you tell if you have some things specific to say about your school experience. I'm really interested in hearing about your life as a student.

Cieslik: [whispering about the recorder] What is going on...

Rojas-Carroll: Let's not worry about it because I have the iPhone going and that was fine.

Cieslik: Okay. Maybe I'll just...

Rojas-Carroll: Okay.

Cieslik: Take it out and then I won't have to know that it sounds bad.

Rojas-Carroll: That's fine. Okay, so I'll start off. Um. Today is April 8, 2013 and we're at Alvarez High

School at 375 Adelaide Avenue in Providence, interviewing four Alvarez students. And can you all introduce yourselves, maybe with name, year, age? Do you want to start?

Elaine Vang: My name is Elaine Vang and I'm a senior here at Alvarez High School. I am eighteen years old. [1:44]

Carolina Rosa: My name is Carolina Rosa, I'm here at Alvarez, I'm a sophomore, yeah! [other sophomore student joins in cheering and laughing] I'm fifteen years old. What else? Oh that's it.

Leeshonel Ayala: My name is Leeshonel. I'm a senior and I'm also eighteen years old.

Jeremiah Black: I'm Jeremiah, I'm a sophomore and I'm sixteen.

Cieslik: Thanks. And yeah, we're Keally and Irene. [Dave Evans slides consent forms under the door, students pick up papers] Um, so, oh right, we should fill out these forms. Maybe we'll do that at the end?

Rosa: Says your names.

Cieslik: You can just, you can, yeah. We can just sign them at the end because that way you can actually, you know, consent to what we've actually interviewed. So, maybe you can just, this is just a question for us to get to know you more. Just tell us maybe your favorite class at school, or some activities that you're involved in in your neighborhood or in high school here. Just something about yourself.

Vang: Um, my favorite class here, I guess I can say gym. [people laugh] Because my other classes are mostly just AP classes and there's nothing exciting about AP classes. And what do I do around here... Well, I'm part of Justice Talks here at Alvarez High School, and I work at Burger King in front of JSEC.

Rojas-Carroll: What is Justice Talks?

Vang: Justice Talks is just like, kind of like a motivational class, where you just talk about your feelings and what you do and then every class we just read poems and then we just talk about the poem and what we think about the poem. [3:27]

Rosa: Oh okay. Actually I have three favorite classes. My favoritest one is Chemistry because we just

come up with the most stupidest random thing ever. We all think we can rap in that class. It's the funniest thing ever. Um. Also my third period, that's weird too, weird conversation comes up. And this might not be my favorite but it's actually, I learn a lot of new stuff, it's my AP Government class, I like that. Here I do RIUDL, Rhode Island Urban Debate League, we actually had one on Saturday. It's the most like, they're nice, but when you debate them they might not seem that nice, but they're really nice. It's aggressive during debates. Not easy people. There's like random people dancing, the weirdest stuff, it's just funny. Yeah. [laughs]

Ayala: I actually have a few favorite classes. I like AP English because in the summer I really had nothing to do, so I was inspired like by different authors like Walt Disney and I made up, I'm like starting a book and I hope to publish it in the future and make it into a movie, so. And I also like music. I hope to one day be in music performing - performance. And I actually auditioned at Berklee and other different colleges like RIC and URI and it was actually nice. It helped me basically progress in what I want to do and help me become a better singer, so. I'm a part of the Senior Committee, where we have to put together different events to raise money and I stay after school almost, like I try to stay after school every Monday just to practice singing. I don't know. I just like a lot of stuff. I also have a lot of AP classes like Elaine, so.

Black: Um. My favorite subject in the school - chemistry, actually. Before I used to play football but now season's over, so after school I go to a program called Eco Youth and all we do is--

Cieslik: [smiles and looks excited]

Black: You know it? [everyone laughs] What we do is we talk about the environment and the air pollution in the environment. It's really educating and we have an - an asthma awareness month program and we're going to do a buzz poll teaching people about asthma and how it's related to Rhode Island. It's really good, nice.

Rojas-Carroll: Awesome. I heard that there aren't any outside sports here at Alvarez. **[6:13]**

Black: Yeah. [students agree] We go to another school.

Rojas-Carroll: You go to another school?

Black: [agrees]

Rojas-Carroll: Oh okay.

Ayala: They don't have sports here. A lot of people ask that question. I found out that we don't have sports here because we're a small school. So I guess basically we go to Mount Pleasant and we basically try out those that are interesting and different activities like, and sports like baseball, football, basketball, and you know, we have to go to Mount Pleasant.

Rosa: Also don't forget that we're on a dump.

Ayala: [interjecting] Oh yeah, true. Yeah.

Rosa: They put a bunch of chemicals on top of here. But like I talked to my friends like we'd love a football field. I know my friends are dying for a cheerleading team that they can actually - a team they can root for. Me, um, the only thing I'm looking forward to is basketball, soccer, and volleyball. That's the only thing I'm looking forward to. Or a playground. I'd like that. I'd like a playground.

Ayala: [interjecting] They're actually - they're trying - yeah. That is true. They're trying to make a field too, on the side of the school. So by the time us seniors, we're kind of like upset. Because, you know, freshmen, they're gonna be able to see this and we're like, "Oh we're graduating, we're not gonna see it, we're not gonna experience it." But you know, hopefully, we're still living in Rhode Island, so we could just like drive by, whatever.

Rosa: Do you know where they have that sign about, "Don't walk in"? In front?

Ayala: Oh yeah, "no pasar."

Rosa: They - oh "no pasar" yeah. [they laugh] They um, they wanna, Mr. Evans showed me, they want to make a football field there.

Ayala: Mhm.

Rosa: Where the old firehouse used to be, they're trying to make a - think about making a baseball field there.

Cieslik: Is that the old firehouse from the Gorham site - is that?

Rosa: Yeah.

Cieslik: Do you remember - that burned down kind of recently. Do you remember that?

Rosa: Um, Mr. Evans told me somebody just burnt it down for the heck of it. [laughs][7:52]

Ayala?: The firehouse? I don't know.

Cieslik: So you mentioned that the school's on a dump.

Rosa: Oh yeah.

Cieslik: Like - can you give more history or background about that?

Rosa: Um, I think it was first Gorham that had it. They did like metal, like iron spoons, and there used to be like a train track nearby. So for them to make the metal and stuff they had to use a lot of chemicals. And to get rid of it they had to put it either Mashapaug Pond - is that right? Or like in the soil. Then after that another company bought it, and I think they were doing the same thing. And then years after that, I guess Providence finally said you need to take care of all the chemicals you put in now. So they're paying up.

Rojas-Carroll: How many other people knew this? Did you all know this?

Ayala: When we--

Rosa: About Mashapaug?

Ayala: Yeah.

Vang: Yeah, 'cause, well I just recently knew about it because I recently moved here. So, well, our AP Environment students, we know about it because Holly and Amelia - they come in like, um, a couple times a month and then we learn about our waters that we have here, how we get the water, and then how Mashapaug Pond is contaminated. Yeah.

Ayala: Actually, when you start coming here, they make sure that they inform you about the Mashapaug Pond and that, um. Actually like... they gave us a lot of contamination going on. Like they

just poured all the chemicals into the Mashapaug Pond. Which is kinda like, you know. I don't wanna say ignorant, well yeah, I would say ignorant, but [laughs] yeah it was ridiculous.

Rosa: And you can see like sometimes in the summer, trucks testing the soil and everything.

Black: Yeah, but in the summer, I have a program called Environmental College Program, so we went there one day and we saw the senator and the representative and the [inaudible]. We tried to touch the water in the lake, and they said it was too toxic so we couldn't touch the water.

Cieslik: You went there in the summertime?

Black: Yeah, a program--

Cieslik: I actually was a teacher at the Community Environmental College a few years ago. I love that place. When you were there, was it really green? Like was there a lot of algae? **[10:08]**

Black: There were some stupid - disgusting stuff on top of water. So it was like.

Rosa?: And was it green?

Black: Some part of it was green, but you can't really see. It's like gray, it's like gray, something like that.

[students go "eww"]

Cieslik: Do - with Amelia and Holly have you learned about that? The algal blooms, at all? That green stuff?

Vang: The algal blooms - like the green stuff on top of the pond? Well, I don't really think we talked...

Ayala: Do they look like lily pads or is it algae?

Cieslik: It's like little tiny round green dots.

Ayala: Probably for a little bit. I think so.

Rosa: I feel I heard it before, but I can't remember right now.

Ayala: I think we used to get, like, you know, swim in there, and then we found out that they used to make ice out of that lake. I'm like, oh my gosh, that ice must have been yellow then because that was some dirty water.

Cieslik: [laughs]

Rosa: You don't know who peed in there.

[everyone laughs]

Vang: And people used to eat the fish that they would fish out of the pond.

Rosa: Eww!

Vang: And now when you think about it, it's like nasty. Because you - some people here, in Providence, they don't know that Mashapaug Pond is contaminated and Mashapaug Pond goes into Roger Williams Park so the fish that you park - that you fish out of Roger Williams is contaminated too. [Rosa is making an amazed face][11:23]

Ayala: Oh my gosh! I've seen people fishing from that park. The people, like my mom, she says that they should just like, it's okay to catch it but like...

Rosa: Don't eat it.

Ayala: Don't eat it, yeah, she'll be like just unhook it and toss it back, that's what you're supposed to do, but people, I think they eat from it. Like it's nasty, I mean, go to the Oakland beach, I don't know.

[people laugh]

Rosa: There's like a small chance I could have ate [inaudible] a really small chance. I didn't know what she said that actually connects to Roger Williams Park. I know somebody who fishes there like all the time. So there's that possibility.

Ayala?: Nice.

Black: But if you look at the connection of the rivers you can - see you cannot eat any fish from Rhode Island because a lot of the toxic waters, they connect to each other. So like most of the bodies of water connect to the first [?] body of water. It's hard to eat a fish that you see because most of the waters are toxic.

Cieslik: So it sounds like you guys, you live either near Roger Williams, or maybe closer to this high school, but could you tell us a little bit more about where you live and what your neighborhood is like and maybe how people in your neighborhood connect to the pond, or other waterways in your area?

Ayala: I just live right near Algonquin, so it's like right there.

Rosa: Me too! [they laugh]

Ayala: So I live right next to Algonquin, right next to that street where there's a fork, but anyways, so... Isn't the Mashapaug Pond like if you keep going down, that's the lake I guess. So it looks so pretty and everything but you would never think that it was, you know, you know, looks can be deceiving. So you would never think it would be contaminated or anything. You'd be like, oh my gosh, that's a beautiful lake, but I didn't know that it's filled toxic waste and la da da... I think Holly and who's - what's the other one's name?

Vang: Amelia.

Ayala: Amelia, yeah. She came - Amelia came on my street and she was passing out flyers. I guess it was a duck-boat ride. [13:30] I guess it's to make people more aware of Mashapaug Pond and like, what's going on with it. So yeah. I just think that maybe it would - I don't know if my neighbors know a lot about it, but if she's - they're really trying their, I know Amelia, and Holly, and [inaudible] are really trying their hardest to make it known to the community.

Rosa: I literally live 3 blocks away, like no, we're joking around. Like right on Reservoir. And then to like - like I don't know because Mr. Evans that's all he was spreading the word around throughout the whole year, about that it's contagious and we did a subject on it. And I told my mom - around my environment - around where I live everybody knows so it's good, it's just like when you hear Mashapaug Pond you think "ew." That's basically it.

Vang: I live right there on Lenox [sp?]. And in my AP class we're doing - we're making a video on why -

how and why the Mashapaug Pond is contaminated. But I think one of the main goals why we're making that video is to inform the neighbors or the community about how the Pond is contaminated.
[14:47]

Black: I live around Olneyville Square but we don't really have ponds around there. Or we have like a lot of ponds but... it's like ghetto, they smoke a lot. And I hate smokes and so I'll go to a park and I'll start smelling like smokes and I'll just go inside because it's like I have something or a reaction to it when I smell smoke. And I live in apartments and it do the same thing. In the summer my mom will open the window and I'm like, "Mom, they're smoking outside!" and I'll close the window.

[people laugh]

Rosa: Oh my god!

Black: I just hate the scent.

Rosa: Do you ever cough when you hear somebody smoke?

Black: Yeah I'll do that.

Rosa: Yeah it's like I'll do the most guilty stuff, I'll cough, I'll make, I'll be like "Cancer sticks!"

Ayala: One time it was Saturday, well when we had this student accepted day, well me and my sister and my dad went to eat at Dunkin' Donuts. And it was like this guy - I opened the door to walk out the restaurant and I just walked right into where he puffed the smoke. It's like it was meant for me to walk right into it. I was like, "Oh my gosh" and then I just was like coughing [fake coughing noises]. I just can't stand when people smoke, especially when they blow it right in your face. Obviously it was an accident because I know he didn't see me coming, but. It was like "whoosh" and I was just like oh my gosh.

Cieslik: So that kind - do you have a question, - just saying the frustration with cigarette smoking, [16:16] because it's sort of like one form of - it's interesting because it's a form - it's kind of a form of pollution of the environment or an area. And obviously, you know, cigarettes are addictive and it's really complicated. Not everyone just smokes. Like sometimes people just want to quit and they can't and there's all kinds of complicated things. But still, you don't feel good, you don't like it. So I was wondering if we connect to the pond, how does that make you feel to think about the fact that

the ground here is contaminated or that they chose to build on a contaminated site.

Ayala: Wasn't it the cheapest land to like... Or they just decided to build the school on here. I don't know if it was because it was the cheapest, or...

Vang: Yeah. One of the reasons why the old school's here is because the contaminated lands are cheaper. So that's why they choose to build schools here.

Ayala: I think they was also running out of time too. So they just was like pick a land, or put the school right there, we're running out of time. I wasn't sure.

Rosa: I wouldn't necessarily call it cheaper, because then they would have to do like a bunch of tests and treatment of the soil, they had to do a bunch of things before they could even put the first layer of cement on it, so I wouldn't call it cheap.

Ayala: The thing that kind of ticks me off, though, is like, I understand, not like I got a better perception of how they - you know, the toxins were on the land and stuff, but the fact that I didn't like was how they was covering it up constantly. [17:46] It's basically like, you can't bandage up a wound. Obviously a wound is deep, like I could understand a scar or whatever, but you gotta go straight to the source. So I think they're doing better than they were before. Yeah.

Rojas-Carroll: Do you think the school is doing a good enough job of telling you all and telling the community about the issues?

Ayala: Yeah.

Black: I think one of the reasons the school was still here is that every - a month they come in and check the air and they don't find anything, so. It's like it's safe for the children to be in it and it's safe to be around. It's not - even though it's toxic ground, you don't really find anything that's supposed to be toxic, something like that.

Rojas-Carroll: Have you seen them coming in and doing that?

[students respond affirmatively together - "mm, yeah"]

Black: Yeah, I saw them before.

Ayala: Yeah, like the fire trucks.

Black: They'll see they find nothing, so.

Rojas-Carroll: Yeah, how does that go, you said the fire trucks?

Ayala: They check the air quality, like Jeremiah said. And we used to wonder what - like we'd be looking out the school windows, and then we'll be like "Oh my goodness, the fire trucks are here, da da da!" And I guess there was one guy - remember, Elaine? The guy who came in with the meter--
[19:00]

Vang: Yeah.

Ayala: And he took a Sharpie marker and a pen towards it to test the toxin or just the air of it, the smell of it.

Vang: Something like that.

Ayala: Yeah, so it was like the ratings was really high because it was really intense from the Sharpie marker. There was one time we - you're a freshman, you're a freshman, right?

Rosa: No, I'm a sophomore.

Ayala: Oh. So I think it was last year, there was one time I think - yeah, it was last year, I believe. That I guess something was wrong with the air, people was starting to not feel good, and I was starting to feel a little sick, like my throat was kinda acting up, and I decided to go home. And I guess I found out it had to do with the air quality, so they made sure they had to clear that out. I think they locked in it [?] or something, so they kind of sucked, but they got straight to it, and I guess they got rid of it. Yeah. I guess now they're really on it, but there's a lot of people, or at least a handful of people saying that they wasn't feeling too good.

Rosa: Oh yeah, I remember that.

Ayala: Yeah.

Rosa: Also, I seen this year and last year when you go outside, little white trucks you see parked around the fences, like all around, and they usually checking and looking around, for that stuff, for the land and the air and chemicals.

Ayala: Government spies, know what I'm saying?

[people laugh]

Rosa: They're watching us! [20:22]

Cieslik: I was wondering, so, we talk kind of like, there's obviously a lot of frustration and critique and I think that's really good to be critical of what's going on at your school, like where the land is, I think that's really good. But I was also wondering if - and also to be critical of the pond, like recognizing that it's contaminated. But I was wondering if you have any good or happy stories or memories, or like, take you back - spending time by the pond, or near the pond.

Ayala: Well I actually moved near Algonquin in 2007, so I, you know basically all my childhood years was like '95, and you know. And so 2006, because I moved here in 2007. I don't really think - all the - the only memory I have with the pond is that I got to see what it looked like and I thought it was pretty, but then I started finding out what was wrong with it, so yeah.

Rosa: Me, um. Mr. Evans last year, he took us out and he gave us like a microscope - lenses for us to see. And I was like, I just loved the scenery of this. It was sunset, too, so it was so many amazing. Like there was butterflies and birds, it was - it was beautiful.

Vang: Well, I don't have any memories, because I just moved here about a year ago. So I don't know. So yeah. But I guess like Leeshonel said, you just see how beautiful it is, and you can actually see part of the pond behind the school here if you go out there and look.

Rosa: Oh yeah.

Vang: And there's this white thing, or whatever color it is out there, and there's ducks , and there will be turtles that would be on there, and you would just see how beautiful it is. [22:10]

Black: Well, I don't really live around here, so I only been there like once in the summer. And I only saw it in the summer, we didn't see butterflies or anything, but I was [inaudible] the dirty water.

[people laugh] Too disgusting [laughs].

Ayala: Oh there was time in the beginning of the school year when they brought that bus here or something, like everybody got to walk in and it was like a room where they played a film.

Vang: Oh yeah.

Ayala: Yeah. But it was like - what do you call it? Not a montage - what's the difference between a montage - like it was just pictures but you could hear the voice and everything.

[people: "yeah"]

Ayala: Montage. I thought it was, it was helpful. It did a lot of like people to be informed about Mashapaug Pond more and like you know it was really nice.

Rojas-Carroll: What were they saying?

Ayala: Like they was just talking about I guess like, the bus they used to bring kids for a special program or activity and they used basically talked about Mashapaug pond and the McGorham Factory and how the McGorham factory affected Mashapaug Pond and like, just stuff that happened inside the factor and yeah, I think that's it.

Cieslik: Do other people know, yeah, have, I mean I know, do other people have stories about Gorham the manufacturing facility or do you, you explained a little bit in and you explained a little bit, but do other people have any stories or knowledge about Gorham?

Rosa: There's actually stuff from Gorham in RISD like old back in the days, spoons and stuff I seen it when I went Ms. Bilms. They have this spoon and stuff. And I remember that everybody that came with me said that they shoulda, that RISD and Gorham shoulda given us money for that. **[24:02]** Cause I'm like, we wasted our land, where all the chemicals so we can have something beautiful to look at, it's our money. And we want it now.

[group laughs]

Ayala: They did like, yeah um we had a poster in here. I'm not sure if the school still has it it's like was during my sophomore year. I seen a poster that was saying how the McGorham Factory whatever like

the metals the teapots and everything. So when we went to RISD we got to see like a set of silverware and then we just started talking about I guess the McGorham Factory and that's here, this year they showed a video here in the cafeteria so it was kinda you know, it was awesome you know like how the guy he took that metal piece did you see it when he just kept hitting it, it looked like a Reese's cup but then he was still hitting it and I thought he was done but he was still molding it to something else, so it took like, more than a year, more than a week. Yeah.

Rojas-Carroll: Do other people feel the same way about RISD and Gorham and the money for Alvarez and the site here?

Ayala: Most likely.

Rosa: Yeah my friends did.

Rojas-Carroll: Do you two? What do you two feel about that? About their story?

Black: Well, I don't know but I don't really know. Like, I think we the Alvarez school, because we're here because where there's human beings, since we're here, and we're helping to get better we should get paid to do that. Because we're helping the pond and the people around it too. So. I think that the Alvarez facility should get paid for doing that.

Vang: I agree with what they say, but I feel like whoever is in charge of it now, I think Textron, I think they should have took responsibility for it earlier, [26:01] instead of waiting like a couple years. and then, taking responsibility for it. Because, now that the school is here, the school doesn't have as much opportunities as other schools and I feel like it's not really fair how we just , we don't really have any sports and how we can't do anything outside because we don't have anywhere to do activities and I just feel like Textron should have took responsibility for it earlier and took care of it before they opened this place for school buildings or other stuff.

Ayala: And what would have been nice too, like with the field, like instead of jogging around the parking lot, and the gym, like I don't mind that, but if you think about it, if we had a field it would have been better. Like you see kids from different schools they get to jog in their fields, play soccer, football, you know do all sorts of fun stuff. Like some people I guess like, for me personally, I don't really want to walk outside, and I'd rather stay inside and play activities, but if we could play outside, I mean get fresh air and it's more better for us to get fresh air outside. Yeah.

Rosa: Also, they can take that money and expand the school because me, I wouldn't mind taking like a home ec class or a cooking class or like it will be good and then like the guys can have like I don't know if they can make this a class, I know me, I'll join the class like the video game class, how to *win* video games 'cause I would love to play like Black Ops on an xbox, I would love that. That would be the day.

Rojas-Carroll: How do you think all this affects the school spirit? [27:41]

[???:] It's a bit of a downer because we used - we have a cheerleading team, but it's more - I guess you could say it's a school spirit team, 'cause they raise the school spirit but they really don't... It's kinda messed up that they don't have a team to support. All they can do right now is basically spread school spirit in the building and just, you know, make people more happier. But you know more people will be like, we have cheerleading time, but we have no sports team, so that's probably like one of the only main things that is missing from the school is sports teams. There's a lot of kids that stay after school just to play basketball and you know sometimes it's kinda messed up when you see that they're willing to stay after school, but we have no team for them to play on. So.

Cieslik: Could I propose something really crazy? That we sit on this side and you guys sit on that side. because what I'm realizing if this faces this way, it doesn't pick up as much, but let's just switch, I know we're almost done.

Rojas-Carroll: Do you know what time you have to be going?

Cieslik: Cool, I don't know if this will make a difference, but might as well try to get good audio.

Rojas-Carroll: What were we saying?

[???:] School spirit.

Rojas-Carroll: Oh yeah, school spirit. So I interviewed Mr. Evans before and he was saying that you all have spirit rallies, but that you all can't wear colors like red and blue because people might think that they're gang colors. [29:57] Is that true?

Ayala: Well, I haven't really heard about that, I guess just you know, it's not just in the schools it's like I guess you can say anywhere in the country, anywhere in the world. People try to be careful what colors they wear so you know they don't, I guess, probably pose a threat. I'm not, I really haven't

heard about that. Yeah. That's not really mentioned. I guess people just wear - just throw on a shirt and head out the door. I guess it just depends on the person they see you as. I guess if they know you're like a straight A student, you're not involved with certain people, they're like "Oh you're fine."

Rojas-Carroll: I meant for like color rallies? Like you have a color for every year. No but that's really interesting to know too.

Rosa: Well I know we wear burgundy.

[???:] Yeah.

[???:] Yeah.

Rosa: Burgundy, white, khaki, black, [30:10] but that's like we wear that for like for Super Friday, that week when we have that crazy thing going on.

Rojas-Carroll: What's that?

Rosa: It's like Spirit Week when we do funny stuff.

Ayala: Like games, activities.

Rosa: Basketball, if you pay enough money, you can throw a pie at a teacher that you don't like. For me it's my gym teacher, one of my gym teachers. He threw a hockey puck in my face. So, yeah.

Vang: What?

Rosa: Yeah. He told me to move, but the puck curve toward my side. There's like a lot of food, dancing...

Vang: Music.

Rosa: Dunk contest, um, there's a DJ, I think during the week you can dress like someone, I remember the last one you gotta wear like a halloween costume, like your favorite sport...

Ayala: Oh that's Spirit Week.

Rosa: Yeah. What else?

Ayala: They used to have Retro Day.

Rosa: I did Nerd Day. I was the funniest nerd. Um hillbilly, I did um, you know Pippi Longstocking you know with the braid going around, I did that. It was funny. Yeah. I think that's it. [31:26]

Rojas-Carroll: What is your favorite memory of being at Alvarez, being an Alvarez student? Hanging out with your friends, or something that happened in class? [31:50]

Ayala: I guess just being here. Some people look down on the school, they'll be like, you know sometimes it gets a little embarrassing when you try and give somebody directions to come here. They'll be like, 'oh um what school do you go to?' 'oh I go to jorge alvarez' and then they'll be like, 'oh where is that?' 'you know the school off Reservoir?' 'nooo...' 'okay, do you know where the old stop and shop building is and they closed it down?' 'noooo.....' 'the school behind popeye's?' 'yaaaah!!!!'

and everybody is just like oh my gosh like that's just what we always have to say, *the school behind popeyes*. and I'm not gonna lie it would be better if we had a sign out there, not saying that I don't like popeyes, cause you know, the chicken is good, but anyways.

[group laughs]

Rosa: it would be good if we could get some popeyes cause their food isn't that great. so they should at least. Like they say nutrition is good. gotta get good nutrition.

Ayala: I'd probably be terrible, be exercising, and then jogging down there to get some gain thirty pounds or something. But anyways like, um, I'm just glad to be here because like I said, people look down on this school. I guess they have that kind of perception of the school not being probably being one of those schools that you know somebody gets kicked out, *send em to Alvarez*. But there's actually a lot of great students here that I've met and who are really trying their hardest to like reach their goals. So, you know they would just be like, say a joke, like, oh if somebody got expelled from this school they just get sent right back, like, you know but. I just think what we're really trying to do as like a school and we just try to show the community what we're doing to you know, get the community more closer. Show them that our academics are really high. Our senior class, right Elaine,

we're the first class to have AP stats, statistics, and you know, the school is really doing a great job. Improving. yeah.

Rojas-Carroll: what do you think?

Black: I think um, and this is really good, but the thing I like about Alvarez is like that even though most of the kids don't really want to learn, like you being there, to motivate them that education is important and it can lead you to good things in life. I've been one of those, I've been motivating my friends to study and tell them about education. Just last week I was picked to be like, to go to a leadership conference at Brown university. and I think it's a good thing to be there for your friends even though they don't wanna learn. Tell them the importance of education. I think that's the best memory I have from Alvarez high school.

Vang: my favorite memory here, I guess like Leshanelle said, just being a part of the school. Because I've only been here for like , since the half of my junior and then here. and I guess just being part of the school because like when you're a senior you feel like you're more a part of the school because you have more opportunities to do stuff. And we get to plan out everything that we want and we get to like, it's just exciting. Yeah, so just being part of the school.

Rosa: In my two years I think I have more experiences than all of you guys. I have ups I have down. I went through everything in these two years. Um, my ups being with my friends and getting greater friends than I did before, and still molding myself as a person. And it's just like it's amazing. It's like, I don't like [inaudible] but it's like it's fun. And the downs, I just try to think of the ups cause like the downs are worse.

[36:35 -Tascam recording]

Rojas-Carroll: I have another question. Well, I just saw this poster up here and it says restorative questions. restore broken relationships, and rebuild community. And this reminds me of restorative justice. Do you all know what that is, or? What is this poster about? Since you all go here you know more about it than I do.

Ayala: Well, not really in this room, I actually, now this has been transformed into a room where you know I guess for personal reasons, but I'm gonna be honest, I never really *looked* at that poster cause I haven't really been in here. But just judging why, I guess it's just to you know just different ways of how you can handle the situation. Like in Brother A's office he'll have like inspiring quotes, like just

on how to deal with situations. Like for example, think before you speak, if this happens, did you think about it this way, you know just if you're situation is confusing, then you know, it's not a good thing cause there's gotta be some kinda understanding within the problem.

Rojas-Carroll: Who's that first person that you mentioned?

Ayala: Brother A is um, a what do you , uh, he's not a vice principal. He's basically like, what do you call that, ?

Black: Administrator

Ayala: yeah administrator like he walks around the building and he'll um, he helps the students like if they have problem or whatever, they can go see him. he basically helps like the vice principles the principles you know i guess they get together and they talk about certain things and um, he's basically like there to me. like to me here's there just to like he helps kids like like he makes kids feel comfortable to open up because he listens. and then he'll give really good advice after. and if they have a problem they can bring the person they have a problem with or whatever into that room and they discuss it and as soon as you know it, they'll leave feeling all happy like they're friends again. So yeah, he's a positive influence in this building.

Black: For the restorative questions, on Wednesday we have like socratic seminars. we read an article about this and we talked about the restorative questions, like what happened, what were you thinking, so it's like, we, they ask you questions and you have to reply but like it's like a conversation between the tables and the students and our socratic seminar is really good because we get to share our thoughts and we think about articles that we read. and we want the one we read was restorative questions and how it applies to us and how it's good and like a conflict, it applies to other people that hate each other and have like a conflict it's easier to resolve the problem using the restorative questions.

Rosa: it was actually, there were two guidance counselor, no, not guidance counselors, people you can talk to? upstairs on the second floor?

Ayala: oh the woman in the cafeteria?

Rosa: Oh there's one called Ms. Rodriguez. They're just people you can talk to, school psychologists I think they are. So, not Ms. Rodriguez, but I think the other one.

Vang: Ms. Stefanai?

Rosa: I think so. She came up with it and then I guess she talked to Ms. Aliet, who is like

Black: [inaudible]

Rosa: yeah and she coordinates what's gonna happen in advisory, so I guess they talked to each other and then that happened and then she made like, *increase the peace*. Um, I did the opposite of that, like I increased the peace, but not that way.

Ayala: yeah like monday no dirty look day tuesday stop a rumor don't spread the gossip wednesday forgive someone when they are annoying thursday try out restorative questions which you just talked about and friday surprise a person with a random act of kindness. like to me personally it's a great way to start the peace but I'd rather do that like everyday so all together, you know

Rosa: yeah so me and friends did not use those that week right. on wednesday when they said forgive someone when they're annoying we were all being annoying and we would be like, *i forgive you! i honestly forgive you for being so annoying that you can't control yourself for how annoying you are*. And especially like, me, on Friday when you surprise somebody with random acts of kindness I'll like randomly hug my friends - they'll kick me they'll hurt me but I'll hug them. I tried to get Mendelson to hug me. I asked Revers and everybody for a hug. and I'm like come here and if you don't do this you're going against increasing the peace. is that what you want to show to your students? Decrease the peace? Come on get the love get the love. increase the peace. Just and like the restorative questions, they didn't really work well for me so I like just didn't do them...

Vang: that's funny

Black: I don't really think that this really applies to Alvarez because like at Alvarez there isn't really bullies and stuff because we're like mostly friends. I haven't really experienced it so I cannot say there isn't but we're like all friends. we don't have fights and all this stuff. not often. that I know of, but even though it applies to us, but no often.

Cieslik: so um, well, so I have one last question and then you guys can just have any space you want to tell any other stories. Is that okay? So I was wondering if you could just tell, it's been really great, to hear all your stories and experiences at Alvarez, um if you could tell a little bit about your family

background and where your families come from, I know you just moved here, where did you live before? and I know you said...

[beeping noise]

42:45 - Tascam recording

Loudspeaker: Attention Alvarez high school this is Mr. Mendelson with your afternoon announcements.

Cieslik: oh this is kind of fun

Loudspeaker: as we close day 131 of the school year, and today's daily average attendance, and today's daily average attendance was 85% uh, those mt. pleasanants who missed their bus, another bus will be returning here to alvarez high school at 3 35 sharp to please be out in front of the building for your bus ride to mt. pleasant this afternoon. also we want to thank all teachers for their cooperation today in limiting the passes. we saw a tremendous reduction in the amt of students in the hallway, so thank you again. Um, we have a message from Ms. Leech. SHE'll be holding auditions to sing the national anthem at graduation on Thursday april 25 at 3 30 in the music room and she is looking for other faculty and staff members to help with the auditions. any graduating senior is eligible to audition, uh she knows...

Rojas-Carroll: are these full announcements?

Cieslik: are they really long?

Loudspeaker: ... memo in teachers' mailboxes after april vacation, but she just wants to let everyone know the 25th of april 3 30 there will be auditions for the national anthem. um in addition, teachers just a friendly reminder that your third quarter grades are due to be posted on the online grading system by this thursday. and last but not least we have an ILT meeting today in the conference room. And we have one shout out to a handful of students Raphael Torres, Erik Kiev, Anthony Townsend and Josan LesCaba deserve recognition for volunteering this past saturday evening at the Rhodes on the Pawtucket for the Cambodian Society of Rhode Island new year so again we thank you students for ah volunteering your hours. So that's all we have for announcements today thank you and have a good day.

[voices in the background]

Ayala: there's gonna be like an annoying sound

Black: when it's done.

Ayala: yeah there's gonna be like a beeeeeeeep

Rosa: beeeep

Cieslik: oh I'll just capture it.

[45:00] - Tascam recording

[pause]

Rojas-Carroll: are you gonna audition for the national anthem?

Ayala: yeah

Cieslik: weaahh, that's so cool. I can't deal with the audio, it's so tough today.

Rosa: it's gonna get even noisier...

Cieslik: in a minute cause school is out? ... okay so maybe we should just keep going?

Rojas-Carroll: yeah

Cieslik: or stop? I'd really like to hear

chime noises

students make noises

laughs

Rojas-Carroll: okay, it means you all have to go to class soon?

Black: school s over.

Cieslik: did you miss your , you're okay? you didn't miss something?

Ayala: No, I Just left stuff in the class.

Rojas-Carroll: anyone gonna miss a bus, you have to go?

Rosa: I walk, I'm that close.

Cieslik: okay, well, if you have time, it would be great if you would stay and just tell us quickly, I don't know about your family background,

Rojas-Carroll: Anything else that you want to say?

Cieslik: and then yeah we can , we'll sign these forms, or no I guess you have to take them home and get them to Mr. Evans.

Rojas-Carroll: yeah, we'll get them from Mr. Evans,

Cieslik: and then also we'll give you our emails so that if you think of anything else or you want to add anything later, whatever. okay

Rosa: well, I'm Dominican, my whole family is dominican I came here like 12 years ago, I was like 3 or 2 years old. My family they're like, they're the weirdest kinda people cause they look all formal and stuff but they're like just not your average type of family. in every kind they're weird. my dad thinks he's a 5 year old. my mom thinks shes a really hot 16 year old that she's like all around the world. then my sister *looks* like a 16 year old and she acts just like my dad just like a little kid. so that's not a good combination. then my brother looks like a 30 a year old and acts like one. and I'm just in the middle trying to figure myself out.

Ayala: well, I'm Puerto Rican Dominican Black and American Native .. .yeah, so I'm puerto rican dominican because of my dad and black and american native because of my mom. and hearing about mashapaug pond and how it's an Indian name, it kinda touched me in a particular way because I'm

supposed to be getting my name getting an initiation or whatever. basically you shave half your head or you get paint on your face. obviously I'm not gonna shave half my head cause it took me my whole life just to grow my long hair so yeah. I'm gonna paint my face, but um yeah, my family is really awesome. I have an older sister, my mom and dad. they're very supportive. They basically teach me a lot of things. like my dad teaches me Spanish he helps me learn spanish. and my mom she continues to tell me different stories about like her culture, and like she told me a story about how like my grandma marched with Martin Luther King jr. and I thought that was really awesome. So like they just tell me a lot of awesome stories. my family is really close and you know, one is is down we all gotta lift that one up so we all basically stay connected. So we're a strong family.

Rojas-Carroll: do you know what tribe you are?

Ayala: um Cherokee and Blackfoot.

Black: well um, I'm African. Actually West African.

Ayala: uh oh!

[group cheers]

Black: I came here 3 years ago. I'm from Liberia. and I have like a big family. My mom has like 11 kids and we're like all just together. when we get together it's like different people, because we're always laughing and making fun of each other and laughing. so like, it don't hurt because like if your brother jokes makes fun of you you cannot like get mad because he's your relative and we're a good family, just funny and the people come visit us and they'll be like, other languages, and they'll be like you guys making fun of us? and we'll be like nah just laughing at each other it's really fun.

Rojas-Carroll: what language do you speak?

Black: actually I speak English, and I speak ???? and when I speak my language people don't really know because it's not a language it's a tribe.

Rosa: wanna try it out?

Black: alright what do you want me to say?

Rosa: saaay...

Ayala: Hi my name is Jeremiah.

Black: alright [laughs] [Speaks in

[group: woowww!!!]

Rosa: that was so quick! I thought it was gonna be longer.

Rojas-Carroll: and it is a language, it's just spoken by people

Black: actually its a tribe like we have 13 different tribes in Liberia but we all speak first language English so, yeah when I'm at school I speak English but when I'm at home I speak ???

Cieslik: How do you spell the name of your language?

Black: Krahn

Vang: Um, I'm Hmong. I'm a Vang. [laughs]

[group: aww] **51:01**

Rosa: i feel like that's like every family they sacrifice everything they do everything for their children...well...most...

Ayala: ...yeah, most...like my family, we're Christian, that's you know, we go to church and like basically, when um, when my mom was in my mom was in the hospital for like 7 months, just for like yeah, I'd rather not state it cause it's personal but it had to do with a health issue so basically we just kept believing in god and knowing that basically was our strength and our um, that's basically what kept us strong as a family and the church. yeah and I'm really fortunate like Elaine and like I can kinda relate to her we have a great family that looks out for us.

Cieslik: cool

Rosa: I never met you but we have so many similarities. it's a bit creepy. [laughs] we're both

Dominican, we both have the same jokes, it's just weird

Ayala: watch your brother get mad, I'll be like *where's your sister?!*

Cieslik: thank you guys so much this was such an honor to hear your stories. oh she wants our passes, oh we have to go are we getting kicked out? [laughs] let me quickly write down my emails for you guys...just so that, cause I just feel like...

Rosa: my brother is such a funny person because when he comes out he only comes out to bother people food, or trash or bathroom

Ayala: he does like this weird sound it's funny but it's funny it's like an inside joke between me and him like him, 'hm' and i'm just like oh my gosh what are you doing...

....

Vang: you're from Wisconsin?

Cieslik: yeah.

Vang: I have some relatives there!

Cieslik: yeah, um, there's a Hmong community,

Vang: Eau Claire?

Cieslik: Eau Claire! yeah!

Rojas-Carroll: California?

Elaine: Fresno, yeah I was born in Fresno

Rojas-Carroll: i'm not from the central valley but I'm from California.

Vang: my parents are from Laos and they came here early.

Rojas-Carroll: I don't know if you've heard of this book but i just learned about Hmong communities in Fresno and a lot of that story from called *the spirit catches you and you fall down* have you ever heard of it?

Vang: mmmm...

Rojas-Carroll: it's really cool.

recording continues for a few more minutes picking up the signing of release forms and various side conversations

[56:24] end - Tascam recording