

Hector Garcia's Youthhood  
Vignette #2

Hector's early years, education and evolving from for-profit to non-profit was rather tumultuous.

Hector traveled all of North America (Mexico, the U.S. and Canada) by the time he finished college. He learned early that Mexico is as much "America" as the U.S.; that the people in the United States are more "U.S.ers" than they are "Americans". Why does the U.S. call us "Mexican American" when we are already that in Mexico? Why the hyphen between Mexican American and not German-American and other whites from Europe? These are some of the many questions he would ask his audience as he presented. Hector was a born teacher.

Mike Labrosse was one of the eulogy presenters at the memorial service for Hector in Maplewood. Following is one of the things he said:

He was incredibly bright. Hector thought big thoughts. In his vision and his ability to connect the dots, he usually was one level above the others in the room. He would have been the perfect professor at a small midwestern Liberal Arts college.

Hector was born in 1943 in Mexico City. He was raised there, but periodically during those years he traveled and also attended educational institutions in the U.S. and Canada. His socio-economic background was upper middle class. It was common for the parents to send their children to foreign countries for some of their education. Hector's elementary school years were in Mexico. Most of his secondary school education was in Canada and the U.S. His high school graduation occurred in Hawthorne, California.

Hector's education in Mexico was in well-financed schools that virtually had no low-income students in them. Hector did not experience the plight of the poor at that time. However, he knew about them. There were beggars in the streets and areas in complete poverty. His father, Leon Garcia, was a federal senator. He headed the office of complaints of the national campesinos to the Presidency. In English, "campo" means "countryside" in English. Those who work the land are "*campesinos*." Most campesinos are small farm owners or renters. There are migrants who often work for them in given seasonal needs. They also are campesino group, but

they are *peones*—foot-soldiers and servants from the feudal system of Spain. In the U.S., these workers are called “farm workers” (trabajadores del campo). Hector’s parents separated when he was around 3 years old. He did not learn to be pro-active for the poor from his father, but he learned to sympathize the misery of the campesinos. Unlike most of his school friends, he was constantly bothered by the suffering of the poor and by the way they would be shunned.

Hector learned about systemic (institutional) racism while attending high school and college in the U.S., mostly at Hawthorne High School in California. Now that he was in a public school instead of a private one, he was part of a small Latino minority. Now he didn’t just observe racism, he experienced it. He knew that business would be his career in college, but one way or another he would become deeply involved in civil/human rights.

He started college in Hawthorne, but after one year he went back to a business college in Mexico City. He graduated with a degree in business administration in 1967. His first job was being a consultant to a Mexican financial firm that served all of Latin America. In 1971, he returned to California and got a job as a hotel front desk administrator. Marriage brought him to Minnesota, and he started to work for IBM, then for a Prudential securities firm. Over the years he succeeded in finding a way of internationalization of elements of the Mexican stock market. Prudential set him up to work in New York and Mexico and he became a regular two-way traveler. His home absenteeism became a concern as regards meeting the needs of his four-year-old son. He left the job and went to work for a skin-care firm that made it possible to move back to Minnesota and be an affirmative single parent to his son. He did well with his skin-care business, but he was determined to start a consulting company of his own—MEX-US (Global) for Mexico and the U.S. Hector was impressed on what was being promised on the free trade agreement between U.S. and Canada and was one of few who consulted Mexico to request to be considered to become part of it. They succeeded and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became a reality. With the help of 3m Company, he succeeded in creating a Minnesota NAFTA branch and became its executive director. His consulting company continued to well assist his efforts.

Hector believed that NAFTA held great hope; that it would contribute to the growth of the middle class in Mexico and that its success would eventually spread to the rest of Latin America. It failed to do what it could have done. It came to benefit the wealthy and continued to suppress the poor. It was a most painful experience for him. It increased his dislike for business-for-profit and increased his consideration for non-profit business ventures. His desire grew to do something of a more civic nature rather than a business nature.

Vignette #3 will speak of Hector's evolution out of the for-profit world of product-production to a non-production-non-profit work where you gear to meet peoples' personal needs. This had a most positive affect on his life.

By Sam Hernandez  
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