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1-13-2016

Interview with Santos Jackson Baize (oral histories transcription)

Roseann Bacha-Garza

Santos Jackson Baize

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Roseann Bacha-Garza is interviewing Santos Jackson Baize with her son William Jackson at their home. They discuss the Jackson African American lineage and stories passed down about their relatives growing up along the Rio Grande Valley.

Roseann: Okay, we're going to get started. My name is Roseann Bacha Garza, it is 10 minutes to 4, on umm, Wednesday January 13th, 2016. I'm in the home of Santos Jackson Baize with her son William. Uh, conducting an interview for the CHAPS program at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. So I'd like to thank you for inviting me into your home. And uh, allowing me to come here and interview you and ask your families about-uh, questions about your Jackson family heritage. Uh, so uh, can you please state your full name and tell me what your birth date is?

Santos: 6-8-29.

Roseann: Okay.

William: What's your name?

Santos: My whole name?

William: Yes.

Santos: Santos Jackson Baize. (chuckles)

Roseann: Okay, and you were born on June the 8th, 19-

Santos: 29.

Roseann: 29. Okay, and who are your parents?

Santos: Jose Jackson was my daddy. And my mothers' name was Santa Rosa Martinez Jackson.

Roseann: Ok. And Jose's parents in the Jackson line?

Santos: Umm.

William: What are their names? What's your daddy's, what's your daddy's name...

Santos: My daddy's name?

William: Hmm hmm.

Santos: ...was Santiago...I guess? Santiago.

William: No. Your daddy's name was Jose, your grandfather is Santiago.

Roseann: Okay, and uhh, umm and then Santiago was the son of? What do you have here?

William: I have here, Brown Brian Jackson.

Roseann: Uh huh. Brown Brian Jackson.

William: I don't know how, uh, I got this off, the information was off ancestry.

Roseann: Ok.

William: So, I don't know, I haven't researched it to make sure that it's legitimate, but that's what I've seen. And then Brown was one of Nathaniel's sons.

Roseann: Ok.

William: So he was one of his, I think he had four sons?

Roseann: Hmm hmm,

William: Umm, yeah so that's what I have, and Nathaniel and Matilda were the ones who were, came to the area.

Roseann: Right. And, where did you grow up?

Santos: I grow, I grew up in seven-mile south from San Juan.

Roseann: Okay, on uh...

Santos: I was born there and I was raised there.

Roseann: Ok. On which road, or?

Santos: It's uh close to San Juan.

Roseann: Ok.

William: So seven miles south?

Santos: Seven miles south of San Juan. It's more Alamo than what is close to...Alamo's not a big town.

Roseann: No, no, no.

Santos: This is a small one, we lived out in the country.

Roseann: So how close was that to the Jackson Ranch and the cemetery is right now?

Santos: It's not very far, but I don't know how close it is. I know where the...

Roseann: Was it south of the military highway?

Santos: It was close to the military, closer to the military road.

William: Yeah I don't think it was south, I think she showed me one time and like in just in a frame of mind, if you think umm; where's the ranch, the ranch was here, and it was just above here, in this area here, which is north west or north east, of the ranch. I remember her, like many yeas ago showing, "oh this is where I was raised," and stuff like that and the family, where they were at and stuff. But it was, I'm just thinking about it right now, it was very close to, I was thinking my whole life that she was raised in Elsa.

Roseann: Uh huh. (chuckles)

William: And then she showed me, "no this is where I was raised at." And then, well I never, it just dawned on me how close they were to the ranch. To the, to the Jackson Ranch where they were at.

Roseann: Cuz that-that particular ranch property were, well at least where the church and the cemeteries are, are right on the border of Pharr and San Juan. Like very close to I-road.

Santos: Yeah. I think the grandparents were buried there if I'm not mistaken. I don't know for sure but I think he is because...

Roseann: Yeah, I do have a list of everybody who's buried in that Eli Jackson cemetery. So yeah.

Santos: When it used to get flooded, you know, and the water would come up to the- to the yard...

Roseann: Hmm hmmm.

Santos: So, I've been there too many years ago.

Roseann: Hmm hmm, hmm hmm.

Santos: And it was part of, well you could see you know what is there. There were was some relatives that used to be there, and they explain and you know (muffled) I'm the younger one of the family.

Roseann: Sure. Now, are you one of the oldest living relatives of the Jackson Family descendants?

William: I think she is.

Roseann: Yeah?

William: Yeah, well, I mean direct descendants this way? I think she is because my uncle and my aunt have passed. And she was the youngest of the three so she's, of that part of the tree and she would be the last one. In our generation she's the matriarch. (chuckles)

Roseann: Okay.

William: Of the entire family, so.

Roseann: Now, when you were growing up, did you hear about any stories about Nathaniel Jackson and Matilda Hicks and their family and how they came to come here, and how they traveled over uh-from Alabama.

Santos: I was old enough-I went to school in, we had to go to school, but we went to Hidalgo.

Roseann: You went to Hidalgo.

Santos: It was closer, I guess, McAllen was too distant, too much distance...

Roseann: Right, hmm mmm.

Santos: I remember that I...but when they moved to Elsa, well I was probably eleven, or uhhh maybe less than that, then I went to Elsa school. (soft chuckle)

Roseann: That's okay. Do you have any, are there any family stories, folklore, things that, stories that were passed down from generation to generation about uh, maybe, uh like for example, uhm I was told the other day, I-I interviewed somebody from the Webber family, which was a ranch that was a little bit to the east of there, and again, that one was also a mixed race family when they arrived, uhm the wife Sylvia was had been a slave prior to coming there and was freed by John Ferdinand Webber uhm, and that particular family member was telling me about stories her dad would tell her grandpa would tell that, because of the mixed race uhm, uh part of the descendants that, 'not to be surprised if someday one of the children is born with maybe the texture of a black person's hair or darker skin.' Uh, you know is there, 'cause since that time, there's been so much-I guess-procreation when they came here and then they mixed with perhaps a Mexican...

William: We have, as a matter of fact, my older sister, Martha, has very kinky hair and we have pictures of her with an afro. And we have myself also, my hair is extremely curly, and if I let it grow out it'll do the same thing. **(Santos chuckles in background)** We have a niece, who looks exactly like my older sister Martha and her hair is also very kinky, very very tight and stuff so. We have, I know we have that running in our, in the blood. The second, well the newest generation, none of the kids have that. My oldest, one of my oldest nephews, uh Nolan, he has two boys but they look, a spitting image of him, and they look white. (chuckles) And uhm then my other, my niece, she has a boy and a little girl, and their, they don't have that gene, or they don't have that. I mean, literally I could show you pictures of my sister and if she wanted to call herself black, she literally could...do that.

Roseann: Well she could because...(chuckles loudly)

William: We are! (soft chuckle) It's in the family. And that-that's been it. We've had that, I know for sure. There always, there always, and my cousins, uh, was it Joe and Richard? They both have very kinky hair. Again, almost to like growing up in the 70's, in the 60's, or the 70's and the 80's with the kinky...

Roseann: Do they have pale skin and light eyes, or is there like a contrast or some of them darker skinned?

William: It's kind of funny that my cousins from my uncle's side, they're all dark skinned, right? And everyone else in the family, like ours, my moms and then my aunts, they're all light skinned. And so we would get together, and it's like **(changes voice)** "are you sure we're related?" **(room chuckles)** But that's they were very dark in a sense that you could tell, I mean in this area, like okay you could tell they were Hispanic, they were Mexican.

Roseann: Sure.

William: Right. And then, and for the longest time, we were thinking Jackson was a- was a Mexican name. And not knowing that it was actually, going back to the civil wars, slave name. And you know, masters slave name, so that was interesting that, I grew up thinking, hey it's a Mexican name and then, I got into college and someone says **(changes voice)**, "no that's not a Mexican name." **(chuckles)**.

Roseann: Yeah. Well...that's okay. I guess the way I understand it is that he, Nathaniel Jackson, was probably a little well to do uh-back in Alabama and uh, and well enough to do to have-own slaves, but he freed them, uh obviously fell in love with Matilda and brought her, with her already born children. 'Cause she had children before she married Nathaniel. And then uh, they had children together as well. If you look on the uh, census uh, from uh 1880 uh and I guess, well they came here in 1857, so whatever census are available after that, uh you can see that they list Nathaniel Jackson as 'white', they list Matilda Hicks as 'black', and then they list the children as 'm', which could either mean mixed race or mulatto.

William: Mulatto yeah.

Roseann: So uh I think I had originally thought it meant 'mulatto', but I technically think the census taker was meaning mixed-race.

William: Just mixed.

Roseann: Yeah, so you can see that those documents are there, you can see, you can find them online. So uhm, but then they came here, uh what I'm looking for is evidence of underground railroad activity uh-because they were obviously, uh, had their sentiments toward the union during the civil war and uh they were against slavery and when you had Underground Railroad uhm issues where you had black people traveling probably wanting to go to Mexico, because Mexico...

William: Was a free state.

Roseann: ...had already outlawed slavery as they did in Texas as well. But during, during the Civil War, Texas was a Confederate State of America, the CSA, so then of course there were people here who were not friendly uh-toward the freedom of slaves.

William: Right.

Roseann: Although I think technically in Texas there weren't that many slave owners, but the people who did have slaves, had a lot of slaves.

William: Wow.

Roseann: So uh, but not necessarily down here in Hidalgo County. So what I'm looking for is some sort of perhaps like a folklore story of the Jacksons and them uhm opening their home to people who were traveling through. Uh because you know we are right by the river, and it's certainly easy to just pop over if there was any problems, any people coming around trying to capture slaves who had escaped.

Certainly there are stories of about RIP Ford, who was a Confederate Colonel, uh and other Texas Rangers who were uhm tasked with finding slaves.

William: Slaves. Oh okay.

Roseann: So uhm, with the Underground Railroad, I don't know if I brought that with me today, but I'm finding with the research is that there were flags that they would hang outside and they were made in a quilting manner, so they were sewn with symbols on them. Meaning if a particular symbol was outside your house it meant, 'operate clandestinely, there's people around looking for you guys, don't come out during the daytime,' or 'come on in, the door is open we want to help, we want to help you'. So I'm looking for that kind of activity here. Or any kind of evidence or any kind of stories that perhaps that was happening down here.

William: Yeah, unfortunately, I don't remember any of those. There's other things, that I remember, like hearing about my grandfather but not anything like that. Now it's kind of funny that you say quilting because I know mom mentions that my grandmother would do that a lot. Like that she was really into the quilting, but I don't know if that had anything to do with that.

Roseann: Well if she had any old quilts that were around that may be representative of something like that, things that were passed down through the ages that might be helpful.

William: Yeah, and I know with where they were being raised that being like a step towards the-the Jackson ranch and stuff, that-that seem to may be something quite possible. But that I've actually heard something like that I couldn't tell you but...that actually happened.

Roseann: Yeah, okay. Uhm, well what can you tell me about your relatives, and aunts and uncles, or maybe other people that I can talk to that might have some stories or...

Santos: I don't know about his family, they live, they should live in Pharr but I don't know very much about them because well we never, you know, we never really, that's about it, because everybody's already gone. The lady that is, one of the lady's that was, it was, that man's mother, she knew a lot about it, but she's dead, I think her daughter is dead too, so.

Roseann: And what are these pictures that you have here?

William: So, who's this mom?

Santos: Eh?

William: Who's in the picture here?

Santos: Well see, that's me.

Roseann & William: Okay.

Santos: And this is Aola's sister.

William: So that's Tia?

Santos: Tia Julia.

William: Julia, oh okay, so she passed.

Santos: And this is your Tia Frances.

William: Frances.

Santos: And that's his nephew, that was one of his brothers. One of his brothers, they say there was only two brothers, or, and he had, his brother had a boy and a girl, and both of them well she was killed, and my cousin died, you know, so

everybody is gone and his mother is gone too because well we're all. So, there's noth-nobody but my brother's children, and they are younger than me. (chuckles)

Roseann: Do you recall maybe going to any masses at the Jackson family church down there by the river, on the other side of the levy?

Santos: We used to come to Alamo, my mom and daddy would bring us to Alamo, but that's where I was baptized and everything, I had to get my birth certificate there but I don't, I guess they were, they didn't visit each other, you know, very much or I don't know.

Roseann: Were you friendly with other families, uhm the names of other families that I'm doing research on are Rutledge, Brewster, Singleterry, Box?

Santos: They used to know the Brewsters, they used to say they were related, the ones that I would say, were more closer were the Champions.

Roseann: That's another family.

Santos: One of them was my godfather, and the other one was his brother, my godfather's brother. There were two. They used to come and visit with daddy sometimes, you know, they hang around. And they're gone too, all of them are gone.

Roseann: And you're uh. .

Santos: But there's a lot of Champions here, they should be here in Edinburg. But I don't, I don't visit nobody.

Roseann: And your Godfather's name was, what was his first name?

Santos: Uh, Juan Champion.

Roseann: Juan Champion.

Santos: And the other one, we called him, it was I guess, like William but, they called him Willy, Willy Champion. But I don't remember much of them now, you know.

Roseann: Oh that's okay, and what's the other picture that you have here?

Santos: This one here is of Alberto Jackson, and he's uh brother, I think it says to-of Santiago, and that's, so that would be her Uncle.

Santos: They were my daddy's half brother, they were from the same daddy except the mother.

William: Uncle.

Roseann: Okay.

Santos: And they had four ladies, I think in that marriage, but they're all gone too.

Roseann: Hmm, hmmm. Okay, a WWII Veteran. Great grandson of Nathaniel Jackson, yeah, a retired farmer and carpenter. Yeah. Who led a wagon-train of settlers from Alabama to the Valley in 1850, it was really, it was really 1857. But uh, but that's okay.

William: And that's how we were able to figure, like kind of connect our family, was through him and stuff, and it's like oh okay, and the reason I say, uh that uh, maybe my great-grandfather was Santiago-well they called him Santiago, but in yeah, it's Jimmy, right, which is short for James, and James in Spanish is Santiago.

Roseann: Ahhh.

Santos: So, around here if you want to kind of blend in with the folks, then you go with the Spanish name.

Roseann: Right, that is true, you assimilate.

Santos: You assimilate, it's like my son, his name is James. And our-our-our helpers in the cafeteria, they say 'what's his name?' and I go 'James', and they like 'what?'

and I go, 'Santiago', like 'oh okay, Santiago', (**chuckles**) so they understand the Santiago.

Roseann: Right, yeah. I'm just trying to list of all the different descendants and there's a lot of, uh, well yeah, Nancy Jackson. I'm looking for the older ones. Nathaniel, Eli, another Nathaniel. There's Martinez in there too, okay, so uh, I'm gonna look into this Brown Brian Jackson, to see where that one fits in between James and Nathaniel.

William: Nathaniel. 'Cause everything at, everything I was looking up, there seemed too much of a big space between James, right, or Santiago, and Nathaniel and there was too much time frame in there. And I think there was uh, my wife looked up, for some reason she did a Google search, and she came up with a family tree that went to Nathaniel and fortunately, or unfortunately we were able to go back to Richard I, back to 1505.

Roseann: Uh huh (chuckles)

Santos: And that was like Wow. And so, so this family, the Jackson name right has, you know, royalty in it, and things like that, there's a knight in the family. So it goes back pretty good. My cousin, one of my older cousins, who's Richard Jackson, was like "oh okay, I'm a knight." (changes voice)

Roseann: He's the namesake.

William: (changes voice) I understand, I understand how that all works out.

Roseann: Oh how funny, yeah, uh. There was another uh, there's another issue also with the Nathaniel Jackson being of, I don't know if it's Cherokee Indian, but also of Native American descent. So uh, what's interesting about your family is that you actually have all three races represented within your chemical makeup. So you have the, the Anglo-whites European from Richard, and then you have, uhm, Native American when from before Nathaniel came over in the wagons with Matilda, uh-she's also somehow Cherokee or Native American mix, I don't think she's pure African American, she's also got another mixed race in there.

William: Oh okay.

Roseann: And then uh so then you have that's the Asian, the mongoloid, the Caucasoid, which is the European, the mongoloid, which is the Native American, Asian, and then the Negroid, which is the black.

William: Blacks, right.

Roseann: So you actually have all three, so if you were to go into a DNA workup, you would see those three in there.

William: I think one of my second-cousins she did that, and she goes, 'it came back crazy'.

Roseann: Yeah.

William: She goes, it was, 'there was everything in there mixed up', and it's not surprising. Because I know like on my dad's side, we have my great-grandmother who was full blooded Cherokee.

Roseann: Uhm hmm.

William: So that. And then he comes and marries mom and throws a little Mexican in there. (room laughs)

Roseann: Right, sure...and then your children can probably go to college for-for free. (**chuckles**) or reduced price, or I don't know.

William: Unfortunately I think I was the last generation, that could, 'cause you have to 1/16th, and I think I was the last one (**chuckles**). I didn't know that but uh, but uh, and I was able to go for free because of the service.

Roseann: What I'm, I'm also trying to recreate in a map, sort of like this one, uh, but really immediately in the Hidalgo County portion, uh, because I'm studying these families; the Jackson's, the Webber's, the Singleterry's, the Rutledge's, the Brewster's, the Champion's, uhm, uh, although the Champion's came through Port Isabel first, and then they came this way. That's one thing I have found, but I want to develop a map with the names of these ranches. Uh because...

Santos: They were the Brewsters who they were, they, I guess they were not related, they were just friends, you know, all sort of friends with my Daddy. It was only one I remember, but now I don't remember where they used...(chuckles).

William: Because I remember she, whenever we were younger that, her hindsight being 20/20 that she would, we would drive in that area, my dad would take us and take her, and we would drive in that area and she would tell us, so-and-so lives in this place and this location and she knows a lot about the Jackson and this, and well that was 30, 40 years ago and...

Roseann: Right, and of course none of them are alive today.

William: None of them are around, yeah.

Roseann: Which is the purpose of doing these oral history interviews is to capture as much of the history as you can before people pass on, and then the stories go away, with them.

William: I know with my grandfather, she used to tell us the story and I used to hear them from my cousins, uh, that he used to go along the river, that he was supposed to be a good luck charm, something about the hair on his chest formed a cross?

Roseann: (chuckles) Okay.

William: That he was a good luck charm and that there's white horse, uh, ghost, or something, presence, and if they saw it then that's where gold is buried. And they would take my grandfather because he was protected.

Roseann: Oh wow.

William: And they would go dig in the location, where people would see the horse.

Roseann: And this is your grandfather Juan?

William: Yeah, Jose. Yeah, yeah.

Roseann: Jose, uh huh.

William: So that was interesting, it was like okay, "wow that's kind of funny."

Roseann: Yeah, but that's a unique story, I have never heard that one before.

William: Yeah, and that the, they would uh, digging, well he would just be the guy holding the lamp, keeping a lookout, and that the guys digging heard horse coming, and then my grandfather ended up in the ditch, that they were digging, and he never went out again after that. (chuckles together)

Roseann: Right, right. Well you know there could be some truth to that because of all the uh, riverboat traffic, and the flooding of the river, and they may have capsized something, may have fallen over and got lost, and I mean, now it's different the river is uh dammed, and the flooding is much more controlled. So but back then, you'd have a flood, and then, or a hurricane, and the river would change course, for

example here you see this loop on the river, it's got a little 's', lots of 's' curves here, but during a hurricane the power of the wind and the water would cut a channel right here, so then this property that was on the American side...

William: (interjects) is now...

Roseann: ...was now on the Mexican side. Those are called "bancos". And that's another thing I found in my research uhm, there are lots of banco properties that have names to them. The Longoria banco, the Juanita banco, there's different ones, and uh, they're probably named for the people who owned the property and lost it or gained it. But once the uh, ..

Santos: Ours always had the Jackson graveyard, the place.

Roseann: And there's two graveyards there, one is right by the church, and there's another one kind of up on, well, now it's settled up on the levy, just on the south side of the levy actually so it could technically flood, again, yeah,

Santos: I haven't been over there, for years and years. (chuckles)

Roseann: but it's really, and actually you can't see it unless you know where it is. The grass is very high and it's not well-maintained, sometimes it's cut, and then I don't recall exactly how many times I've driven past it, but uhm, I-I typically haven't planned a trip there were I've brought my snake chaps, because with the grass being so high you don't know what kind of critters are under the grass. So, every time I drive by I look to see if its' been maintained and if it is, I'll go in, if it's not, I'll wait 'til the next time. But, yes, there's names of ranches, El Sauz ranch, which was...

William: By the salt? By the Salt Lake? By the Salt?

Roseann: Well, there's, the one I'm talking about is owned by the Box family. Down by the Jackson ranch, so I'm uh, there's another one, that must be a popular name because there's an outcrop in uh, of chert, of a specific stone. There's a Brewster Bravo cemetery.

Roseann: Yes I got picked up by the border patrol trying to find that one. (William laughs)

Santos: I forgot where the Brewster cemetery is. (muffled)

Roseann: Well that cemetery is technically on the property of the Santa Anna Wildlife Refuge, and uhm, you can go to it if you want, you just have to not cross over onto the property that you're not supposed to. The Refuge property. But there's uh, it's also on the south side of the levy. And uh, I have a lot of pictures of the headstones in there, because that one is actually pretty well maintained. Last time I was in there, it was, the grass was kind of high, but it wasn't too high, uh, and I had uh a Webber family, and they wanted to see the different cemeteries around. So uhm, there's the Handy's, that was another person, that was uhm, in the civil war. He was in the confederate side, that is other thing I am trying to write about with this subject is, in the civil war, you have the north and the south, the union vs. the confederates. So, uh, there were soldiers down here, or people who were sympathetic to the union side, and then there was ones who were sympathetic to the confederate side. So, it's very interesting how uhm they lived near or next to each other, and seem to, I wouldn't say not necessarily get along but they managed not to...

William: Break out a war gun.(chuckles)

Roseann: Yeah, and and I think part of what happened and what I'm trying to find more stories about our, did they come here, first? Or did they really travel across the river first, and then wait for things to settle down and come back over. Uhm, I know that uh in the Santa Anna Wildlife refuge, I just learned about a family, the original Spanish land grantee, or Mexican land grantee, uhm last name of Leal and they had an adopted son who was a Texas Ranger for four months during the Civil War really just simply designed to uh travel up and down the military highway on horseback to protect the families who were living in ranches along the river. Cuz there was just a lot of activity going on. So uhm, little by little, I'm finding out little stories and...

Santos: I wouldn't wanna go live over there, not over there. (muffled)

Roseann: Yeah. But now it's it's a lot of farmland, a lot of developed farmland, you do have the border wall, which is open in many spots for the farmers to go through with their heavy equipment and yes the border patrol was down there, patrolling a lot uh, but not as much up in Starr County. There's so many uh,..

William: There's a large amount of traffic up there.

Roseann: Yeah, yeah, but there's traffic down here too.

William: My brother-in-law works with the Border Patrol and he tells us there's a lot of traffic, more so in Starr County and Laredo area over there, not as much as it down here, I guess it's

Roseann: It's too open, probably not as easy to hide.

Santos: They can't go to Mexico. (muffles) anyway...

Roseann: It's too bad, I lived in Mexico for a couple of years, uhm, in Chihuahua back in 1999 and 2000, and I loved it, I enjoyed it sooo much

Santos: (muffled) He said Kentucky. (chuckles)

Roseann: and now it's not, just not favorable to crossover. Hopefully it'll get back to normal.

Santos: I don't think, I never do I, I used to go with mom over there, but, when I was growing up you know...

Roseann: You go eat over there, you go shopping over there.

Santos: Oh, It's nice, it was real nice, when it was better you know, when.

William: We used, we used to go over quite a, to Nuevo Progreso, a lot as children we would get our haircuts and eat over there and stuff like that.

Santos: I don't think I want to go.

Roseann: Yeah, right now it's...

William: ...different? Yeah...

Roseann: ...it's tough, it's tough, it's sad.

William: And this is real interesting, I'm a, I'm a History Minor, and I taught history in schools. And I used to do a lot of, uh not necessarily as much or an in depth information with the kids, I used to tell them, "you live in an area that is filled with history," ...

Roseann: Uh uh.

William: Right, I mean uh.. "before you guys, before I was even born, there was things going up and down the river, that you wouldn't believe were happening," you know things like that. And it's like, "really," and they were like, "oh yeah."

And I would tell them about the final battle or the last south post of the Negro soldiers here in the valley.

“Really sir, like that?” (changes voice)

Roseann: It’s very interesting,

Santos: (muffled) I’m not very brave, I’m scared.

Roseann: It’s okay, it’s okay, uhm, yeah, but there’s a lot to your point about teaching the students, that’s a big part of what our CHAPS program is all about, we develop uh, we help to develop curriculum and lesson plans for k-12...

William: Oh, okay.

Roseann: ...education.

William: Actually I was gonna take this and give it to one of our history teachers, and see if he could use it.

Roseann: And what school would that be?

William: Uhh...Nikki Rowe high school.

Roseann: Oh okay, okay.

William: I’m currently, I’m there as a counselor now, so.

William: Still a war buff, still bore my wife with the History Channel, as much as I can.

Roseann: The History Channel is becoming so interesting. Even people, who can’t stand history, like to watch the History Channel. They just make it, I guess the Hollywood glamour of it, they just make it really interesting. Which is part of this project, not only are we writing this book. Or these two books, the trail guide and then the academic edited volume of it all. We are hoping to be sponsored by the National Endowment of Humanities for a documentary film.

William: Oh, wow.

Roseann: So on our website, uh when you go to our website, on the front page of the website, you’ll be able to click on a short film, about the “cotton times,” and it talks about Baghdad, Mexico, and how the union was blockading and it’s about 7 to 9 minutes, uh, and we are petitioning to get a grant to develop a dozen of those,

William: Of those short.

Roseann: Of those short films, so that we could weave it into a two-hour documentary that perhaps will be on PBS.

Santos: Oh wow.

Roseann: And this would be promoting the different things that happened here in the Rio Grande Valley during the civil war. And uh, most people, most civil war historians and people who are fans of the civil war have absolutely no idea the last battle happened down here. Or why.

And they’ll say, people oh well “Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse on April the 9th, and this battle happened on May 12th and 13th,” which a month later, and these people were diehards and didn’t want to give up.

William: (chuckles)

Roseann: But I think, what we’re trying to show, how valuable the region was, for cotton trade, and then which turned into arms, and medicine, and money, for the confederacy and that how uh, I don’t know how many ships were-were docked, not docked, but parked off of Baghdad and off of Brazos Santiago Island where the mouth of the Rio Grande is, waiting for cotton to go back to Europe. I mean, there was a major and international, or global trade of cotton, waiting to come through that port. And so, uh, millions and millions and millions of dollars, of uh, commerce

was happening down here. And here we still have a very much of frontier aspect of the land, that, leads up to the river. So uh, and then, also in that sense, we're trying to create a sense of regional pride of-of this area, because of its uniqueness, and special qualities. And I think that now, we can, uh-you know, our attitudes and our modernization can lend ourselves to be more accepted, of different cultures, and different races, and the different mixtures of people and that truly the people from this area are special, because of this mixture of their cultures, we have the bi-nationals, you have the American, the U.S. and the Mexican, but then you have all this other Native American heritage, and then you have this uh, African American or black uhm, even before uhm, the Jackson's and the Webber's and that group came, prior to and during the civil war years, you know hundred years before that, you had a shipwreck, off a Spanish ship looking for a river to the other ocean, to the pacific ocean. You know. Not knowing in that there wasn't one here but they were still exploring but they shipwrecked off of uh you know the mouth of the Rio Grande. And they got in a little bit, uh towards I wanna say somewhere uhm, I don't remember the name of the place but it's up here, I wanna say they call it "Los Indios", it's an area near Santa-Santa Maria, there's a church up here, near the Brownsville area of the map. And uh, supposedly that Spanish ship had a lot black slaves on it and it shipwrecked. And of course they got engulfed with the local Native American culture, they were either attacked or they just had to assimilate into their culture. So you had that mixture, 'cause they were procreating of Native American and black, and you know, so then when the Spaniards got here, with Jose Escandón and 1749, those Spaniards were mixing with the Native Americans, and then those Native Americans were assimilating into the Spanish culture, and then they were creating a whole new mix, you know and then after you know the 19th, the turn of the 20th Century, when the Anglos settlers were coming in, you had the Anglos mixing with the...so there's a lot of mix going on, and I think what's kind of romantic, not in a love way but in a dreaming way, is that you have the different people, with a different, with a special unique look to them, and then they're perfectly uh, fluent in English and Spanish. Or you know, they might look, so called quote-on-quote, "white", with light hair, light eyes, you know blonde hair, light skin but their first language is Spanish, their second language is English. So it's really a very unique place. And a lot of people in the rest of the country are not bilingual, you know, so that one right there, is a very special aspect to the people from here. And that's what, it's not so much we at the CHAPS program are trying to change the attitude of people but we just want to make awareness...

William: Informed. Yeah.

Roseann: So that when a student of yours, at Nikki Rowe High School reads about this, and learns about this, they start, they kind of perk up and say, 'hey, I am part of that, I am special'.

William: Growing up in Elsa we had no idea of the history of the area, none whatsoever. It wasn't until I started going to the university that I learned about this, I spent countless hours in the old research area of the library and just by hitting the book, and learning about this stuff, and I go, "wow, why didn't our history teachers," you know we learned about the civil war, we learned about Vietnam, we learned about, how about the valley? I know there had to be some kind of history in the

valley, so we gotta general part of Texas history kind of thing, not an in-depth kind of

Thing, like Dr. Guajardo that did the "Llano Grande" projects, he dove into the *porciones* and things like that. And so that's, that's interesting. And just, to develop that kind of history to this area, I think it's real, I think people need to be aware that this area has history. I think that's what missing, okay yeah, you go to Tennessee and you know that they have history, or you go to New York, and they have history, but to go to Texas, all you hear is the Alamo. They don't know the last battle of Texas, that there was a shipwreck in Texas...

Roseann: Right.

William: ...that boats used to go up the Rio Grande. Kids like, "what, it's so shallow," (changes voice) "it wasn't like that before."

Roseann: There is, I'm kind of trying to look into the hard evidence, but there is evidence that it had been so high, that a ship got beyond Rio.

William: Oh really?

Roseann: Yeah.

William: Oh well that's good. And then there's, when I was doing uhm my research on the San Juan plantation, uh they had 10,000 boilers, at the sugar plantation you know processing the sugar cane, how did they get here? There wasn't a railroad in the 1880's.

William: No, they had to bring them by ship.

Roseann: And so they talk about, which I'm trying to discover, as I keep on digging, but and it's not in this map, but uh, Hebronville had a train, went out to what used to be called Peña station and it's now called Hebronville, and that was a train going all the way out to Laredo.

William: Uh, huh.

Roseann: I guess it's over here somewhere.

William: Yeah, it's in this area.

Roseann: The, one of the boilers, went by train, to there, and then it was dragged to the San Juan plantation, because this part of the South Texas, is part of the what's called the South Texas sand sheet, so the-the-the layer of dirt on the top of the land is sandy, it was easy to drag.

William: Uh huh.

Roseann: The other theory is that it went also by train to Laredo, and then it went down the river, and that but it was too heavy, to put on a riverboat, so that they just plugged up the boiler itself and floated it down.

William: (chuckles) Wow. That would be an act of engineering.

Roseann: So, and then also, another you know, areas they go to Port Isabel and came up this way, you know hit Arroyo Colorado, which came out, uh well it's not on this map either, but when the Arroyo Colorado was much deeper and, it does run uh past,...

William: Parallel.

Roseann: San Juan. Then empties out kind of by the El San Louis stand uh if you were to look on a map, of what would be the uh, Arroyo Colorado, you would see that, a the path that would have taken. Yeah, there's all kinds of stories, that's why I

came to learn your stories (distant laughter) and to hope there was something about your Jackson family descendants that you could remember and share.

Santos: Oh I'm sure to be happy to find something.

Roseann: But if you have any other relatives that now that you know, what we're delving for, that if you have any other relatives that may know something, or you know, I know the woman I spoke to who gave me your name, uhm.

William: Diana?

Roseann: Yeah, she said she had a DNA test that she had done.

William: That's the one I was saying about, my second cousin.

Roseann: So uhm, I would like to see that, just so we could show the-the, how, it has gone through the-the generations of what is.

William: I could have one done if you like also, it should be a direct, a direct descendent, I guess.

Roseann: Hmm, hmm.

William: And see what comes back?

Roseann: Yeah, I wouldn't want to put you out any cost.

William: No, not at all, actually it's gotten like curious, and my wife, she's like "you should do that, you should do that." I know it, it's gonna come back a little bit of everything.

Roseann: Uh huh.

William: (chuckles) I'm the melting pot.

Roseann: Yes, but that's okay, that's what makes us all Americans. We're all, you know. It used to be, you were Italian American, or you're Spanish American, or you know Russian American, but now there's you know, the generations go through and you're such a mixed.

William: Right. It's no longer, associated by that, by the country that your ancestors came from. Now it's just we're so far into, the history is just...

Roseann: 'Cause many people have five different, you know, cultures in them. I have three, my kids have five, maybe six. (distant chuckle) My husband is from Victoria, Texas and uh, his lineage would be Spanish, well, Spanish and Mexican, but then somehow there may be an Irish in there that nobody talks about (William chuckles) or you know, I know on my-his mother's side is definitely Native American, you can see it, in the grandfather, and the great-grandfather. So uhm, yes, so it's all one big melting pot now, you know. Uhm, so otherwise, I think that's really all the questions I have. Uh, but if you think of anything else, please let me know and please keep these maps as a gift from us, the postcard, the pin and the pen. And uh, and then just keep watching and looking at the website for any updates as we hopefully get funded.

William: And you have, most of your research will be on there? Uh, if you do.

Roseann: We are in the process of-uh hopefully getting approved for another small grant, uh to continue uh with the project in relation to this, last February when we launched the project, we conducted a six-hour professional development workshop and we invited, I think, well we invited a lot of people of almost about 45 teachers. Anywhere from, I don't know the youngest one, the youngest grade level, uh, but...We are developing lesson plans right now, we actually have them out, sampled with a couple of teachers, uhm for fourth grade, seventh grade, and eleventh grade;

so we've elementary, junior high, and high school. And so those teachers, who will come back in, hopefully the end of this February, uh we will have a set of lesson plans to give them, and we're also developing a traveling trunk of items, uh, so that they can have it in the classroom, to use to when they teach their kids. So the traveling trunk would have items such as: (you know) soldiers uniforms, confederate, uh union, we're trying to get them to be as close as authentic, such as Second Texas Cavalry, the U.S. Colored Troops, we're trying to get it to be really like what they wore here, the different hats, because you know, you might have the kepi hat, which is the typical civil war looking hat, the one with the short brim, but down here, you have the Vaqueros who were you know run-riding horses for the cavalry which had the bigger brim hats, so everything we are trying to put in there, to be authentic to the region.

William: Wow.

Roseann: So there'll be buttons, examples of Texas buttons that were on the different jackets, uh, money, uh replica money of course.

William: Right.

Roseann: Uh, we're trying to figure out, what would be good to have as well as camp items, canteens, and things like that, and then we're trying to do uh activities, so we can have a little activity book and what we really want to uh, I want to do a nice activity about the quilts, for the underground railroad, because it's a nice creative activity. It's, it's kind of like a secret language, and I don't know, they-they might...

William: That would be interesting, more to, I know it's kind of, like, I guess, there's irony in everything that we do, but now my wife is quilting (chuckles). And like, where did that come from? But she might, and my mom tells me and she tells her all the time, how much my grandmother, used to love to quilt and stuff like that, maybe there was something there.

Roseann: Right, which would be nice. Yes. So, like I said if you tell your relatives that you had a conversation with me and what-this is what we're researching and if they have any-any good stories, or.

William: Yeah, my older cousins, they are uh, four or five years older, more so than me. And so they were with my uncle, who was older than she, he was the eldest, right? Tio Juan was the oldest right?

Santos: What?

William: Tio Juan was the oldest?

Santos: No your Tio Frances.

William: Oh Frances, okay but Tio Juan, and so you know he's the male, and so they would, stories would go through him. (chuckles)

Roseann: Sure, sure.

Santos: Yeah, he died before sister, and then sister, and then I'm the only one, of the Jacksons. It makes it so sad.

Roseann: Yeah.

Santos: Yeah.

Roseann: That's okay, at 1929, you're not, you're not too old.

Santos: (chuckles) I'm pretty old.

Roseann: Yeah, that's eighty, my math is not doing, too well.

William: I have to it's so far, that I have to do it all the time onto my phone.

(chuckles) Like what, how?

Roseann: Eighty-six. Yes? Eighty?

William: Yes, this year she'll be eighty-six.

Roseann: Uh huh, wow, congratulations, yeah.

William: Well we appreciate your time for coming out here.

Roseann: Oh no. Yeah thank you.

William: And definitely, uhm I will look more into the, I saw the website one time, and, "oh okay this is kind of nice". And now that I know, I understand what you're doing more I will definitely visit more and add a link. (chuckles)

Roseann: And if you have any teachers who are interested in it, uhm we are giving a presentation, uh one of the professors that I work with the, the director of the program, is giving a presentation on January 20th, a week from today, at the McAllen Public Library, so it's very close to Nikki Rowe high school, so uhm...

William: Is that uh during the day, or in the afternoon?

Roseann: It's going to be at 7 o'clock at night. You gave me your email address right?

William: Yes. Yes.

Roseann: So, I will send you an invitation...

William: Oh good. I mean.

Roseann: ...and you can pass it to your teachers and their students or whatever.

William: I may end up showing there, just myself.

Roseann: It'll be a, it'll be a one hour presentation at the library, from seven to eight o'clock, Dr. Skowronek is gonna be giving that, yes. So he's in charge of our program and yeah, so he's gonna be doing that, and so otherwise, but in I'll keep you posted as to other things I've found out then you know, let you know when the book comes out. Which won't be until sometime next year, you know how that goes. But uh...

William: Yeah.

Santos: (distant laughter)

Roseann: So we'll just end it now. Let me put my, there STOP.

(End of Recording)

Per text exchange on June 14, 2016 between William Baize and Roseann Bacha-Garza, all ok with the above transcription.