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Interviewee: Julio Calderon

Interviewer: Thomas Lipp

Date: 3 May 2012

Thomas Lipp (TL): Today is Thursday, April 26, 2012 and we are interviewing Julio Calderon aka Illanoiz for the BAAHP. First we want to start with when and where were you born?

Julio Calderon (JC): I was born in Chicago, Illinois at St. Joseph's Hospital 1979 on December 3rd.

TL: Cool, where did you live as a child? Please give specifics on the street, the house...

JC: Sure! I lived in Albany Park which is on Francisco and Albany in Chicago.

TL: Okay, what was the house like? What was the neighborhood like?

JC: The neighborhood was actually the third most diverse neighborhood in the United States.

TL: Oh wow! That's very cool. And the house was in apartment style, or...

JC: It was a house! We had our own house.

TL: So who did you live with?

JC: Both of my parents...uh...yeah.

TL: Do you have any siblings?

JC: Yes, I am one of six.

TL: So it was all six kids and two parents?

JC: Yeah.

TL: Ok cool, what was your early schooling like?

JC: Early schooling? Pretty good. I mean I was from Chicago and I was younger so it was a lot of...I guess you could say...gang violence.

TL: So what was school life like then?

JC: Man, parents would have to walk you guys to school because at my school it was first to eighth grade. And when I got to sixth grade there was an over-flowage of kids at the school. So they cut our school down up to sixth grade. And they actually opened up and abandoned school and they re-did everything and it ended up being the middle school. So what they did was they took seventh and eighth graders from, I'd say, about ten different neighborhoods from the northwest side of Chicago and put them in one school.

TL: Ok really? Wow. So what was school life like? Was there bullying? Was it the typical school life? Or was it more like...

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Of course there was bullying! The first fight I got into I was in first grade.

TL: Oh wow, can you tell us about the experience?

JC: It's just like, you know there is always that one kids that's always-that didn't get to the next grade and they stayed behind and was bigger than the rest of the kids and would pick on people all of the time. So, in order for him to not pick on you, you had to prove yourself to him.

TL: Very cool, so you weren't the bully, you were the...

JC: Nope [laughter]

TL: What did you do after school on an average day usually?

JC: Well it depends. From grade school, from first to sixth, basic typical just come home and...well my father had a big thing about not watching TV or anything. He would tell me I have to work like "Cut the grass" or "Water the grass" or "Fix up the house" or something! He would always tell me not to watch TV. And made a big thing about it

TL: Yeah my father was the same way [laughter].

JC: It was like an hour of TV and that was it . It was like, wow.

TL: And the rest was homework?

JC: The rest was homework and he wanted me to learn more math. He'd always put me to do something else.

TL: Right, right. So it was a strict household?

JC: Yes

TL: I was the same way. What'd you do on the weekends? Was it the same thing? Was it work or was it more time to relax and more friend time and TV time.

JC: On the weekends we went out a lot with the family. My dad liked to go out on the weekends because he was always at work all the time. He barely had weekends off but when he did we would sit together and actually do things together that we usually do.

TL: Like what?

JC: Like go out. My dad had this big thing on weekdays and he would come home around five in the afternoon right after work but he always liked to go to the park to play basketball.

TL: So you two?

JC: Yeah because at the time it was just me and my sister because I am the second oldest.

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TL: Oh ok! So it's your sister, you and then...

JC: My sister, me, my sister, my younger sister, my brother, and my younger brother.

TL: So there's three and three.

JC: Yeah.

TL: That's a good deal! So at least you're not stuck with all girls [laughter]

JC: [laughter] yeah

TL: So was the community tight knit in your neighborhood? Did you live in the same house by the way?

JC: I lived in the same house until I was seventeen.

TL: Okay. So from when you were born until seventeen, since that was the same house, was the community tight knit?

JC: Actually, yeah! It was a pretty....I mean, I grew up with my best friend....I met him when I was four and he is still my friend now. I actually have two of my friends like that. He's actually German and my other friend is from Jordan.

TL: From where?!

JC: Jordan.

TL: Oh wow, so that's really diverse. Is it like German German. Like off the boat? Right from Jordan too?

JC: Yeah he is first generation and my other friend from Jordan was first generation too. Just like me, I was first generation too. Off of both sides of me because I am Mexican and I am Puerto Rican.

TL: Oh ok, were there any events that brought the community together or grew it apart from when you were born until you were seventeen?

JC: Honestly, no, not at all. What we used to do was uh...my father, like I said, was really strict on letting me go out anywhere. So what I did was...I remember watching my uncle when I was younger. My uncle was about ten years older than me I would say. At the time I was four and I remember watching him do a lot of break dancing. So what we did was uh...I would have the garage in the neighborhood. Since my father came home at five and I would be home from school around two/two-thirty, between that when my father would come home, I would practice. Like you would have a break dancing competition...you know what I am saying- just hanging

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out. I just had to make sure to do it before my father came home [laughter] because he'd have a heart attack.

TL: So it was break dancing. Would you do anything else?

JC: DJing.

TL: So you were around that age when you started that. How young were you when you started that.

JC: I was twelve.

TL: Oh wow, did you have a kit already? Like a DJ...

JC: No I would have to borrow a friend's needles. I used to use tapes...

TL: You mean cassettes?!

JC: Cassettes tapes. Yes.

TL: Oh cool, so how did you do that. I know this isn't really relevant. I'm just curious.

JC: It would be like two tape players. On this tape I'd have the music on it and this one would be blank. So as this one was blank, you'd pause it and let it play and as soon as the song was done you'd pause it [the music one] and the next song you think would match and as this one was playing you'd try to, you know, throw it in there. It is a crazy way to do it...to actually give you the concept of matching songs.

TL: That's really cool. That's tough [laughter]. Ok, so what did your parents do?

JC: My father was a commissary manager...he's in charge of food service at stadiums.

TL: Which stadiums?

JC: Allstate Arena, Soldier Field, Wrigley Field, and Arlington Racetrack.

TL: That's awesome!

JC: He did that for thirty years.

TL: And what did he do with that? He was a commissary manager, so what is does that mean?

JC: The head of food department. So like if you would see the concession stands, he was the one that provided all of the food. To make sure they were stocked with food.

TL: Yeah, yeah. What did your mom do? Did your mom...

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JC: Oh yeah, my mom was worked at this place called Peerless and Bordery. She worked in bordery. Like all of the starter hats with all of the teams that are stitched on there.

TL: Oh yeah!

JC: That's my mom

TL: Did they always live in Chicago?

JC: Yeah. Well my father was born in Mexico and my father was born in Puerto Rico.

TL: And how old were they when they moved to Chicago?

JC: My mom was fifteen. No I am sorry, my mom was thirteen. And my father was sixteen. Because they had me at a young age...my father had me when, I guess, he was seventeen or eighteen. And my mom was...yeah, my mom was seventeen and my dad was eighteen.

TL: So did they meet right as they got over?

JC: Yeah!

TL: Very cool. So did they live in the same neighborhood or...

JC: Yeah they did actually. I think the story was...my uncle met my mom first and they had went to go bowling and they brought my father along and another friend along and they ended up meeting there.

TL: Oh that's cool. That's a good story. What about grandparents? Did they come to Chicago too?

JC: My grandmother is still in Chicago.

TL: On what side?

JC: My mom's side. And my grandmother on my father's side is still in Mexico.

TL: What about your grand...grandfather on both sides?

JC: I met my grandfather once on my mom's side and I'd seen my grandfather on my dad's side.

TL: Are they in Chicago or are they in...

JC: No, I don't even know.

TL: No I just wasn't sure. Now I know you live in the Bronx. Did you move directly here from Chicago or did you move somewhere else?

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JC: I left my house when I was seventeen because...man, it was just a lot of violence in the neighborhood.

TL: Where you involved in any of that?

JC: Oh man it was crazy. So in order for me...because as you're younger and you know your friends and you'd get to see the neighborhood, so a lot of my friends ended up being gang members- you know what I'm saying...in gangs. They would always be like "you should come with us here, you should come with us there." And I ended up trying to stay away from that because I could see what it leads to.

TL: Good for you.

JC: So in order for me to not do that, I would have to find something else for me to do.

TL: Mhm, and the music was that?

JC: Yeah so I was with the music and the break dancing thing. There was one summer in '96...between '96 and '97 a lot of people were dying...a lot of close friends actually. The first day of school, someone got shot right in front of me. Middle school, I was saying bye to a friend and as he walks out, they shot him. It was crazy.

TL: This was all in front of you?

JC: Yeah.

TL: How old were you when this happened?

JC: I was sixteen.

TL: Oh gosh, that's horrible. I'm sorry about that.

JC: Oh you know, its Chicago. I'd say like out of twelve or fourteen of my friends, ten of them passed away. Even my friend, my close friend since four years old, he got shot.

TL: Is he alive?

JC: He's alive. He got shot twice.

TL: Where did he get shot?

JC: Well the thing was, he had a younger brother and he was coming from work at like 9 o'clock at night. He was going into a store and he asked his brother if he wanted anything from the store and he was like "I'll walk with you." So as they were walking to the store...they were coming back from the store...a little kid, I guess at the time, had a newspaper in his hand walking. And

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the kid must have been nothing like twelve or thirteen years old. That's the crazy thing about it. And my friend was about twenty or twenty-one.

TL: Was he in a gang?

JC: No not at all. I guess because he was white and the neighborhood he was at...because his parents just moved...still the same area-Albany Park.

TL: This is the German...

JC: Yeah this is the German guy. At the time there was a big gang fight between two rival gangs in the neighborhood: The Vice Lords and The Royals. The Royal were considered predominately white. And the Vice Lords were predominately Puerto Rican and Black. So as he is coming back from the store, some little kid says "What's up." And they were looking like "Eh?" and they keep walking and he pulled a gun out. As he pulled the gun out, my boy pushed his little brother because the guy was aiming at his little brother. As he pushed his brother, he got shot.

TL: That's a good man. Did he have it in the newspaper?

JC: Yeah he should be in the news paper.

TL: No, no I mean the gun.

JC: Oh yeah, the gun was in the newspaper! He said the guy was...because my friend looked at it and he saw him pull it out from between the newspaper.

TL: Wow! And where did he get shot that he lived?

JC: What areas did he get shot in? He got shot twice-one on his shoulder and one on his side right here and actually took half of his lung. He literally has one lung.

TL: On his left side?

JC: Yeah. Because he said he got shot and he hit the floor and he got shot again. When he shot again, it kind of woke him up and he got up and ran and jumped over a fence.

TL: Oh wow so it took him out of shock almost?

JC: Yeah! And he hid under a porch and he could hear the kid looking for him. And after he did that, a guy that was in the gang that was actually looking for him, was across the street in his house and saw the whole thing happen.

TL: A guy that was in the white gang?

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JC: Yeah the Royals and he went across the street...and at the time my friend didn't like that guy because he would always try to start trouble with me...but the guy actually pulled him out and made sure he was alright.

TL: Oh wow so he was a good guy after all.

JC: Yeah but not even six months later that guy dies.

TL: Oh wow. So you moved because of the violence. Did you move directly here?

JC: I actually moved to Birmingham Alabama.

TL: Oh right! You were a chef right? So how long did you live there

JC: I lived there for four years.

TL: So from when to when? So seventeen to...

JC: So from '97 to '01.

TL: So the ages were seventeen to...

JC: Twenty-one.

TL: So they you moved here?

JC: No I actually stayed in Chicago for a while and then I came here.

TL: Oh ok, so when did you move here.

JC: I have actually been here for about a year.

TL: So how old were you when you moved here?

JC: Thirty one...thirty two. No, I'm sorry- thirty one.

TL: Why did you move to the Bronx from Chicago?

JC: Actually, my friends were here- Rebel Diaz. And every time they would go to Chicago they would call me up to DJ or do a show. And we had a good chemistry when we did shows together. Basically he would come up to me...my boy, Rod...and say "I need you to DJ this party" and I'd be like "Alright cool" and he's like "We need it for the show. You know, before we go on." I was like just "just give me the songs" and we would transfer the songs. We didn't even have an hour to go over the song list and I have a method when it comes to things like that where I would things down on a piece of paper for each song and I'd be like "When do you want it to stop? What are we going to do after that?" and I did it really fast. And we would perform in less than an hour. And they were like "Wow, we sound good together." So from there, they

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called me up for a Europe tour... I was in Chicago... and I was like "Wow!" because I've been to France a couple of times for DJ gigs and things like that and they knew I had my passport and everything so I was like "sure". From there we just went on a one month and a half tour and I've been here since then.

TL: And they were here already.

JC: Yeah they've been here for eight years.

TL: So you moved here way after they did?

JC: Yeah, way after.

TL: So when you moved to Alabama, you moved because of the violence. So then why did you move back to Chicago?

JC: After four years of being a chef, I got kind of sick of being in the kitchen. I mean I would literally be there from ten in the morning until two in the morning almost every day. We had one day off which was Wednesdays.

TL: What type of chef were you?

JC: A Mexican-authentic restaurant. I started off as a prep. And from a prep, in less than a year, I went to head chef. But the thing is I knew a bunch of stuff from, like I said, working at different stadiums and I was backstage with the catering people. I also catered concerts-like it would be personal catering. We would talk about certain things and they would show me certain things. It's crazy that I didn't go to culinary arts school.

TL: Is that a regret?

JC: No not at all. I enjoy food [laughter] and making food and making people happy.

TL: Right, right. Was it authentic and affordable or authentic and upscale.

JC: Upscale. It was the first restaurant like that out there. It's crazy. Now they have a restaurant, two stores and a nightclub from that little restaurant that they opened. Literally the first day they opened they had a line that was two blocks long. For a whole week.

TL: Was that from publicity or word spreading?

JC: Word spreading and a lot of newspapers saying "wow we have never had food like this" because it was new, you know.

TL: Exactly, so then you moved back home because you didn't want to work in the kitchen so then you moved here for the music. So what did you expect of the Bronx when you came here?

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JC: Well when I heard Bronx, I'm thinking "Wow the birth of hip hop"-that's the first thing I thought.

TL: So was it different than you expected when you came here?

JC: Actually it was! I didn't know this congressional district in the United States. I didn't know that [laughter] which was crazy because when I came out here I was like "wow you can even smell the difference."

TL: What do you mean by that?

JC: Because literally we are a block and a half away from the city dump...for the tri-state area actually. You can literally ...I came over here and I was like "wow"...it was a little different for me.

TL: Would you say it was better or worse than you expected?

JC: Just a little worse. It's kind of the same as my neighborhood but it's just a little different. There's more predominately Dominican which was...I'm used to diversity.

TL: Are you happy with the move? If you had a chance to do it again, would you?

JC: Yes I would. Definitely would. You know what, I can see that through the Bronx, there is are a lot of great people...a lot of good people. But nobody has nowhere to go to...like there is no places that you can say "Let's go here to hang out." You'd either have to go to Manhattan or Harlem.

TL: That's why RDAC is so great.

JC: Yeah

TL: Do you have any children?

JC: No, no kids at all.

TL: Well if you did, would you raise them in the neighborhood here in the Bronx or in Birmingham or Chicago?

JC: Honestly...Chicago, I would.

TL: Even with the gang violence?

JC: Even with the gang violence. I mean, it's changed since maybe five years ago. It's changed a lot. I mean, it's still the same. It's hard to explain because...anywhere you go there's violence...you just got to teach the kids right from wrong. That's how I look at it. If your kids are involved in what you're doing, they should understand. A lot of kids out there are like that

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because they get neglected or their parent do not care or parents that are working twenty-four hours so they can't watch their kids...they have to support their kids so their kids have to turn to somebody else for that family love-which end up being gang members.

TL: So would you raise yourself the same way your dad raised you? And your mother raised you?

JC: You know, even though my dad was really strict, I would. I see why he was like that, you know?

TL: Right, right. So where do you live in the Bronx right now?

JC: Right now, I live by Southern and 149th.

TL: Ok, so who do you live within the Bronx right now? Or do you just live by yourself?

JC: Just by myself.

TL: Ok, can you please give us specifics on the house, the neighborhood, and the house you live in right now? Or the apartment...whatever it is.

JC: Sure, I am the only one that stays in the community center [laughter].

TL: Wait, what'd you say?

JC: I'm the only that stays in the community center.

TL: Oh ok! So how would you describe the neighborhood?

JC: Man, around here, it's a ghost town. I mean I live in, you would say, an industrial street. There is a lot of trucks and warehouses around here.

TL: The whole community of the Bronx, do you think that's been more or less tight-knit than Chicago?

JC: I'd say about the same

TL: Ok, that's good!

JC: It's pretty tight here. People are really close. At first, people are kind of standoffish.

TL: More so than Chicago?

JC: No, it's more than Chicago. But as soon as you get to know somebody, it's love.

TL: That's really. What jobs have you had since you've been old enough to work.

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JC: [Laughter] A lot! When I turned sixteen, I went to work at the stadium with my father and then when I turned seventeen...that's when I went to Birmingham and did for years of cheffing/cooking. After the four years, I came back and did a couple years back in the catering business.

TL: Back in Chicago?

JC: Back in Chicago. I worked in almost...no, I did work in every stadium in Chicago.

TL: Oh wow! With your dad?

JC: I started off with my father but I met other people and they would hire me for certain parties. Then I started seeing what they were doing at certain parties because I'm a DJ myself and I'd be like "Oh! This is what they need to do for food, you know?" I did that for a LONG time!

TL: Then you came here? And your job is a DJ?

JC: Yeah.

TL: Ok cool. So I know you have been very involved with police brutality with Take Back the Bronx. However, you have a unique experience where you've experienced two completely different neighborhoods...or three actually...Birmingham, Chicago, and the Bronx. First, I would like to ask you a set of questions regarding Chicago and your views on some events, then and now. Then, I would like to ask you the same set of questions regarding the Bronx. If you can think of any noteworthy hidden differences, please feel free to share them. Off of the top of your head right now, are there any incredible differences that you can think of?

JC: Between over there and over here?

TL: Yeah

JC: I'd say a lot more unity when it comes to certain neighborhoods and the Bronx-there is a big unity here. I mean, I guess I'd say New York in general. I mean Chicago is considered "Hate-ville" because someone sees you doing something, instead of helping or giving you pointers, they just sit there and dislike you and bash you.

TL: Right, judge you.

JC: Up here, people are quick to help you out. I mean you always have to look out for how people are in everyplace you go, but here people seem a little more together and willing to do something. To help each other out actually.

TL: So first in Chicago, what was crime rate like in your neighborhood? Not specifically, like a number...more like "high" or "low".

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JC: Well Chicago has been the murder capital [laughter]. I think for the past couple of years, it's been the murder capital.

TL: Wow, oh seriously?! I thought you were saying that it was a nickname.

JC: No [laughter] seriously.

TL: So the crime rate was high then?

JC: Yeah.

TL: Do you think the crime rate gives go reasoning for the high police interaction in your neighborhood? Or was there even high police interaction in your neighborhood?

JC: Actually, the police were actually too SCARED to come around.

TL: Oh wow.

JC: Yeah...the police presence-there's not as much. I've noticed a difference here in New York, there is a lot more here in New York. Out there, you have one or two patrolling the neighborhood and they would walk down the street. But out here you see cops at almost every corner just walking around...which is crazy.

TL: Do you think that's better or worse?

JC: I think that's worse. It's actually worse.

TL: Right, have you ever experience police brutality in Chicago. Specifically, you...yourself.

JC: Yeah, actually, I have.

TL: And can you explain that instance?

JC: Sure...

TL: If not you don't have to...

JC: No, no, no. When we were younger, the cops would always pull you over if you were driving a car or in a group. It was crazy, one time they pulled over me and a couple of my friends... we were walking down the street. I went to go visit a friend by his house. I had never been in that neighborhood before. And he was like "Let's go to walk to the store and get something to drink and come back and watch a movie." And everyone was like "alright cool", you know. "Let's go!" As we are walking out the cops searched all of us. And we were like "we have nothing on us." And they were like "well, what are you doing in this neighborhood?" And we were like "well, we came to visit my friend." "Who's your friend?!" And I'm like "he's right here." "Oh where do you live at?" I mean, you know?

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TL: Right.

JC: And as I'm doing that, there were some guys across the street on the porch. And I had a hat on...and the big thing in Chicago is that if you have your heart turned to a certain way, it's a certain gang.

TL: Oh.

JC: I had my hat on straight and the cop put it back on my head...threw it back on my head... and it had it two the side! So I fixed it! And he's like "Oh, what's wrong?" And I'm like "What do you mean 'what's wrong'?" And he's like "why did you fix your hat?" And I'll be like "Because I don't want my hat...that's not how I wear my hat." And he like "Oh...what gang are you in?" And I'm like "I'm not in no gang," you know? And he put my hat to the side and started screaming out loud "Oh, look what gang! This guy is from this gang."

TL: That's horrible.

JC: And I'm like "what the hell is this guy doing." I'm just like "whatever", you know? They found nothing on us. After they found nothing on us, the guy's like "get out of here" go back home. And we are like "we are going to the store." And he's like "no, go back home."

TL: So he would let you?

JC: He wouldn't let us go to the store. So I fixed my hat walking down the street. That's actually one incident. Other than that, there is a bunch of other times. It's craziness...the stuff they would do. Also, they would do...they think...they *think* you're from a certain gang, they'll put you in the car, take you to the other side where the other gang that doesn't like the gang they think you're in, and they tell the guys that's what gang you're in. And they would leave you there.

TL: That's horrible.

JC: And after they would leave you there, you'd basically have to run because these guys are going to let you just stay. So you have to basically run back...to a bus or back to...

TL: Are they cuffing you when they put you in the car to bring you over?

JC: Yeah, they tell us they're going to take us to jail for certain...the thing out there, if you're standing more than two people deep...at the time...they could arrest you for mob action.

TL: Oh wow!

JC: Yeah, so now they cut that law and now they just do "disorderly conduct".

TL: Ok.

JC: Which is still the same thing.

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TL: So besides those two type of police brutality, have you yourself, experienced any other types maybe?

JC: Of police brutality?

TL: Of police brutality in Chicago, right.

JC: Other than that, no. A bunch of different incidences like that.

TL: Right, do you know anyone who has experienced other incidences other than those two types of police brutality?

JC: Yeah, actually my friend...the cops beat him up. Andwe were at a party, the cops came in and took us all in- it was about fifty of us. And they took us all in...a paddywaggon. Obviously, they separated the girls. The girls go in the cop cars and they threw all of the guys in the paddywaggon. As they open the door, the first person they saw, they just punched him in the face. It happens to be my friend...broke his nose. He fell out of the car bleeding. And actually the same incident, we were on the side...I was actually a juvenile at the time...and so they put me to the side and all of my friends that were 18 and over were on one side. I guess somebody we didn't know took a candy bar off of the cop's desk being funny, you know. The cop thought it was my friends and grabbed him and straight just threw him in the openist face with the door to go to the wash room in the cop station. And the guy's mom, my friend's mom, was standing right there screaming , "what are you guys doing?". They just straight beat him up in the bathroom and brought him back out.

TL: That's horrible. And nothing ever came of it?

JC: Nothing. And the mom tried to take them to court and it was just dismissed. It was a bunch of headaches for her.

TL: So because all of those, what were your outlooks on those events and what were your community's outlooks on those events?

JC: It's just craziness. Instead of protecting people .Why would they just try to beat up people, you know. The main thing is to protect and serve. We are not supposed to be afraid of the police. The police are there to help the community and to make sure everything is orderly, supposedly. But it's not actually...they like to strike fear in people so, when people see them, they like to act like everything is alright. With any type of authority, people are only going to act good when you're there. When you're gone, they're going to be how they are anyways. So I mean...its craziness [laughter].

TL: So what were your and your community's outlooks on the police then? Very negative, I would guess.

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JC: Yeah, very negative...very negative.

TL: Would you fear the police or were you just hating the police?

JC: Both [laughter]

TL: Right. What was it mostly do you think? Was it more like an anger or a fear? Do you know what I mean?

JC: Man, I guess when I was younger, it was more of a fear and now that I'm older, it's more of an anger. Because they could have done a lot of stuff. It's crazy because you could tell a cop "hey somebody is getting robbed right there" or "this person just got robbed. This is what the car looked like. They just took off literally a second ago. You guys could chase him". And they're like "Oh no,no,no. We have to sit around and fill out a report." And it's like "wow, you guys could basically...". I guess I can understand that they need to understand what the situation is before they go chase somebody and not know why they're doing it. Which is craziness because they could be caught and it could be settled.

TL: Right and that would have been the end of that. And then they could find out. So then my question would be: out of all of the Hispanic males in your neighborhood, or even all of the males that have experience police brutality, were they negatively affected. By that I mean, did the people in the community become stronger or did it make them scared and fragile? Do you know what I mean?

JC: After that police brutality stuff?

TL: Yeah after all of the police brutality, right.

JC: Well I mean, it's always been stronger because of the gang thing. After the cops and all of that, they just stay away from them [laughter].

TL: Right. Do you think police brutality influences how they think of themselves as Hispanic men, or Black men, or White men even.

JC: Well yeah, because, especially if you're an immigrant...a Hispanic immigrant also because it's so much worse because you stay so much away from the police. Like if something happens to you, If you get robbed, you can't call them. Because the first thing they are going to ask you is "let me see your I.D." That's the first thing they're going to ask you.

TL: So did it make you worry when you walked the streets of Chicago?

JC: Well yeah, always. Because if you're walking down the street and if you see a cop slow down to look at you, you're obviously going to know that they're going to mess with you. So you just try to ignore them, which is crazy because it's the same thing I would do if a gang member did that. They pull up to me and start throwing gang signs, I'm going to ignore them.

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I'm just going to keep walking and mind my business like I don't know what they're talking about. It's basically the same thing.

TL: If you were an immigrant, would it make you ashamed of being an immigrant or being a nationality because you're afraid?

JC: No not at all. There's no shame in anything. It's more of a scarce from the cops.

TL: Right, do you think your outlook would have been different if you lived in a predominately white neighborhood. I'm not saying as far as crime rate, but do you think it was anything related to your race.

JC: Oh yeah, definitely. Because if I did live in a predominately white neighborhood, I would still get pulled over and get asked what am I doing here.

TL: So do you think you and your peers would have been more or less proud of their Hispanic male identity if they lived in a neighborhood that had less police interaction?

JC: I mean, we're still proud if there is police there or not.

TL: But do you think the police being there and creating that police brutality, does that make them stronger or make them weaker. I kind of already asked this question, but do you think if there was no police at all, do you think they would be more or less proud of their identity.

JC: Less police? I think more people would be out, yes. More people would be more flamboyant and more out there about their nationalities.

TL: And proud?

JC: Yeah.

TL: That's really interesting. That's horrible. But now, switching to the Bronx, how is the crime rate in your neighborhood. I know you live in kind of a more secluded neighborhood, but the neighborhood that RDAC experiences. You know, more of the South Bronx. Do you think that more high or low?

JC: The crime rate? That I have seen, it's a little lower.

TL: Do you think the crime rate here gives...well, since it's lower, it doesn't really make sense for there to be higher police interaction, right?

JC: Exactly, yeah.

TL: So you think that's definitely worse, correct?

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JC: Yeah [laughter], *definitely* worse. There's less crime here...at least now, because it used to be bad, as I was told...but now there is less crime here and more police presence.

TL: Wow, so there's more police brutality? Or no? Since there is more police presence...

JC: I mean, I have never experienced it out here since I've been out here but I've only been out here for a short period of time so I can't...

TL: That was my next question actually. So you haven't experienced police brutality here. Do you know anyone who has experienced police brutality here?

JC: Yes I have.

TL: Could you explain any of those experiences possibly?

JC: Sure. I guess back in 2005 or '06, my friends that came to move down here...they actually just came back from a tour in Germany. And after they came back from the tour in Germany, actually their first day back here, one of our other friends from Chicago came out here to meet them here. They were walking back to their house, and when they were walking back to the house there was a police...I guess there was a vendor outside who didn't have his license to be out there...and immigrant vendor...and they were smashing his fruit because he was selling fruit. Instead of letting him get his stuff or taking it for evidence or putting his stuff away, they were basically throwing his fruit on the floor and smashing his boxes. My friend...two of my friends were walking by...it was three but the two that were walking by asked the cop if he needed translation from the guy that was...because he didn't know any English at all.

TL: Just calmly asked him?

JC: Yeah just asked him "Do you guys need any translation? Is everything..." you know? The cop grabbed him and throw him on the floor and started beating him up and like "this is basically none of your business" type of thing. And his brother came up and was like "What's going on?" And he started freaking out being like "Why are you grabbing my brother?!" They grabbed him too and throw him on the floor. Same thing- beat him up.

TL: Are they resisting at this time?

JC: Not resisting at all. There's actually a YouTube video of it [laughter]. Not resisting at all. They throw him on the floor, handcuffed them, and threw them in. They were being charged with trying to beat up a cop. Basically, assault and battery on a cop. Which, they were like "Wow, we just asked you guy if you needed translation and you guys beat *me* up."

TL: Did the whole thing get videotaped?

JC: Yeah the whole thing got videotaped. The third guy that was with them, our friend from Chicago, he was videotaping with his phone.

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TL: Did anything come up from it?

JC: What happened was, they were in jail for a couple of days. People started protesting and then they came out. After they came out, they went to court for like a year. And all charges got dropped. But meanwhile, as they came out... a week after they came out... they have actually a studio in Harlem they were recording at. At three in the morning, their house got raided by the cops. They don't know what reason for what. They got thrown on the floor at gunpoint and...

TL: Both of them?

JC: One of them. The other one wasn't there. They said they were looking for drugs and they were like "There is no drugs here. You can check the whole house" type thing. And basically, they came back, and they were asking what the whole thing was about and to this day, nobody know what they came to raid the house for. Nobody know anything about it.

TL: Is it even in the police records?

JC: No not at all.

TL: Were they in uniform when this happened?

JC: Yeah they were in uniform.

TL: Was that ever brought up in court?

JC: Yes it was, but they had no..they...

TL: ...Denied it.

JC: Denied it. They had no record of it or no recollection of it happening. And this is a week after they had that police brutality. So they're thinking they're trying to get scared to not go to court or whatever. But the charges got dropped. After the charges got dropped, they turned around and sued the cops.

TL: And how'd that go?

JC: A year later, they actually won.

TL: Really?! Wow! And what was the effect of the win? I mean, did they win money or did they win...

JC: Yeah they won quite a bit of money. And what they did was open this community center [laughter].

TL: Oh wow, that's a great deal! Have you been involved in any activism in the events that have happened in police brutality?

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JC: Yes

TL: I know you have been involved in Take Back the Bronx but if you could explain that a little further...

JC: We had a couple marches with the Ramarly Graham. I was on the internet here and one of my friends calls me and is like "Wow did you see this on World Star Hip Hop?" and I was like "What are you talking about?" and he showed me the link and he was like "that happened like a couple blocks away from where we stay and I was like "What?!" And it's a video of cops beating up a seventeen year old kid. And we're like "Wow!" I'm looking at the video and I can see the neighborhood and I'm like "Wow, that right down the street. Like, how do we not know about that?"

TL: Right down the street from here?

JC: From here.

TL: And how many cops was that?

JC: I think it was like five cops and one seventeen year old. And I'm thinking this kid is big...it's a small kid! A small boney kid!

TL: Really?

JC: Yeah.

TL: Wow.

JC: His friend is filming it and the cop is threatening to mace him and he's like "move back" because he sees him videotaping. And they said it was because they had some drug paraphernalia on him, which he actually didn't. What I've heard was...what they did was, they threw him inside the paddy wagon and the kid's head was busted open and they still just throw him inside the paddy wagon. I guess they needed to make their quota and they had picked up other kids in the paddy wagon from other places. And the kids that were in the paddy wagon were like "wow, what they did was they said 'this kid nothing on him' and saw the cop pull out a little bag of something and throw it on the kid and say 'this will be found on him'"

TL: That's horrible.

JC: It's craziness. And I'm like wow this is still going on? That's some stuff that would go on in Chicago. They'd be like "Whose is this?" And it would be none of ours and they would take it from the last place they raided or picked up from the street; which is crazy because if you find that much drugs on somebody, aren't you supposed to take it in?! So they just took it from the guy and keep it for themselves for other stuff to do. Its craziness...like wow.

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TL: Do you think any of them keep it for their own recreational use?

JC: I don't know.

TL: Do you guess?

JC: I guess they do! Or to plant it on people- that's what they're notorious for.

TL: So what is your outlook on the police in the Bronx?

JC: Same thing.

TL: Any worse or any better?

JC: I think it's worse here. For the cops, yeah. Because I look at it like, they do the same thing the gang members would do when I was in Chicago. So when I'm out here...even the other day, I was walking to the store and I see a car just slowly pull up next to me. And I'm afraid. I'm not from this neighborhood you know. Like, I don't know who that could be.

TL: Right.

JC: So I'm looking to make sure everything is ok. If something happens, I could run or I could...the window was halfway down and I see his eyes. I'm looking at him and I'm like "Ok what's going on." And they open the window fully and it's a cop. I'm like "Oh my God! Wow!" That's some gang tactics. The same exact way they would do...which is craziness! But out here, what's crazy out here...

TL: Wait that was in Chicago or here?

JC: That was here! The craziness about the Bronx is that there are younger kids that are cops. They look like me! Like in their thirties or they're twenty five or thirty and they look like regular guys off the streets, which is craziness to me! Like wow!

TL: So even though Chicago is the murder capital, there is less police interaction. Even though here, there is less crime rate, and more police interaction and, therefore, more police brutality.

JC: Yes.

TL: And then these kids are younger so they could be more hungry for violence or..

JC: I would look at it like the old Asian way of killing people-like of war.

TL: The Asian way?

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JC: Yeah from China. It's their strategy when it comes to war. They take the same people and put them together to make them kill each other by saying "that guy was saying this" or "that person was saying this." And they end up killing each other and it makes it easier for them.

TL: So it's instigation.

JC: Yeah I mean, they would take guys that look the same way as me and recruit them real fast to make them cops. And their mentality is the same as ours when it comes to...you know? Oh, now they have authority and they can bully you. It's a big bully thing.

TL: So you know that part you were saying from when they would take people in Chicago from one gang...or what they thought was one gang, and put them in another...does that happen here too?

JC: No, the gang violence is a lot different out here.

TL: In what way?

JC: There's not a lot of gangs out here. Because, I'm used to an over flood-age of gangs. Like, I can't even walk down the street without being stopped.

TL: By cops or by gangs?

JC: By gangs.

TL: What do you mean stopped? Sorry to interrupt you.

JC: Like if you're in a gang and you're driving around with a bunch of friends and you'd see somebody you don't know or you think is from a certain gang- because everybody has their certain looks. They would start throwing up gang signs at you and screaming at you.

TL: And did they beat you up?

JC: Well they will pull over and throw a bottle at you and they can do anything they want. It's just how it is. Or they'll come to check you. They'll come and surround you and be like "Oh you're from this gang." And I'd be like "I'm not from any gang, man." And then I'd keep walking and they'd be like "Oh no, you are" and they'd keep harassing you. It's a bullying thing. But I don't see gangs out here.

TL: So it's nicer?

JC: Yeah!

TL: What would you have a tradeoff then? Would you rather have more gangs, less police or more police, less gangs.

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JC: The funny thing about it, I'd rather have the gangs.

TL: That's really interesting.

JC: Yeah, because the police...

TL: Can do whatever they want.

JC: Can do whatever they want and get away with it, man. That's the crazy thing about it. They could say "you're doing this" or "you were doing this" and they would believe you. It's your word against the cop and the cop always wins.

TL: So do you think it all has to do with race here also? As it did in Chicago?

JC: Yeah I think it does.

TL: The same amount or not as much? You hesitated so I'm just not sure...

JC: Yeah, I mean, I was looking at it as, I live in a diverse neighborhood. Even if it was that German guy, if he had that Hispanic look, he would get the same treatment. Out here it's a little different. Out here, I live in a section that is mostly Dominican and I don't see that diversity and I see the same amount of people getting harassed.

TL: Do you think a white person would be harassed here as much as they would be...

JC: If a white person is walking around the streets here a cop will be like "Oh, do you know what neighborhood you're in?" And "Do you need help going somewhere." [laughter]. I mean that's how I would view it. I also see...its craziness. Wow....if I were in the opposite neighborhood, they would be more like "What are you doing here?!" And "get out of here". As opposed to "What are you doing here?! Do you need help?"

TL: That's horrible. I'm sorry.

JC: No, no [laughter]

TL: No, but that's a horrible thing to face. And then, last but not least, do you think it's the same thing as in Chicago that they would be more proud of their race and out there with their race if it weren't for the police? Like do you think the Dominicans would be much more celebratory of their race...

JC: Yeah, it wasn't for the police. Yeah, a lot more than they are. Yeah, yeah.

TL: A lot more?

JC: Definitely.

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TL: Ok that's all for now but thank you very much.

JC: Appreciate it man, thank you [laughter].