Raul H. Yzaguirre

Courtesy—Part 1

“Very early on I made two decisions. I am talking about the time that I was five or six years old. And I remember them very well. The first one came when I was riding in the back of a pickup and thinking about these things, and I decided, ‘I don’t know what this is all about, but I know that I want to make a difference. I want people to know that Raul Yzaguirre was here. I want people to know that I was here. I want to be able to say that I made the world a little better.’ That was my first decision. Then later on, some things happened and I saw adults being very, very mean to each other, particularly to animals, and I remember going out and hugging my dog and saying, ‘I will never be mean.’ I think [those are] . . . the two things that have influenced my life.”

Courtesy—Part 2

“I grew up with a lot of curiosity and a lot of sense of wanting to see the world. I didn’t have much opportunity to travel when I was a little boy, so the curiosity got to be so intense that I ran away from home and I [told] people, ‘No, I didn’t really run away from home, I ran to’ because it wasn’t like I had an oppressive environment at home that I wanted to get away from. It was that I was curious, I was thirteen years old, and I wanted to see the world. I wanted to be a man. I thought I was a man, and I wanted to prove that I was a man . . . I had this dream that I wanted to work on a ship, and so I had a place where I wanted to work on a ship. It was around Corpus Christi, Texas. I had been there on a field trip and I’d seen it, and that’s what I wanted to do. So, low and behold, that’s what I did, and it’s almost incredible when I think about it now because [they were] lots of little accidents that came together.”

Cultural Competence

"We, as Latinos, have to learn how to be almost schizophrenic in this society. We have to, on the one hand, preserve our values and our culture, and our manners which are somewhat dysfunctional in a culture that rewards interruptions and cross behavior and so forth. And so we need to learn how to operate that way in certain circumstances because our manners are often misinterpreted as not caring, or not interested, or being passive, but, in fact, were just being courteous. We need to keep that courtesy. We need to have other folks, as we become more influential, emulate us. But in the meantime we have to compete with, ‘When in Rome, you gotta do what the Romans do.’ So, you have to learn how to function in this world . . . I guess what I’m saying is that we need to teach others cultural competence. We need to learn cultural competence, and by that I mean the ability to navigate in different waters, the ability to understand the milieu that you’re functioning in--the culture, the norms--and work within those norms to get the objectives accomplished."