

## StoryCorps Interview at Pierce County Public Library

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SR: I was twelve, and I was working and living on a migrant farm workers' fields and a book mobile came to the fields. And when I first saw it, I thought it was the Baptists because the Baptists used to come in a big van and they would give us blankets and they would give us food and they would give us bibles of course, and, uh, peeked my head in the door and it was filled with books. And I immediately, and I do mean immediately, stepped back. And you have to understand that I wasn't allowed to have books because books are heavy, and when you're moving a lot, you can't have that much weight with you, you have to keep things just as minimal as possible. So books were something that I had seen, and, of course, I had read in the short periods I was allowed to go to school, but I had not really ever owned a book. So I went into the, uh, book mobile that day and I was kind of nervous and I was really grungy. I mean, when you don't live with electricity or hot running water, your clothes don't ever really get clean, so I was a pretty grimy kid. And the person on the book mobile said, 'These are books, and you can take one home. You have to bring it back in two weeks, but you can take them home and read them.' I'm like, 'What's the catch?' And he explained to me there was no catch. And then he asked me what I was interested in. And the night before the book mobile had come, in the camps there was an elder who was telling us a story about the day that Mt. Rainier blew up, and the devastation from the volcano, and what we needed to watch for. I don't think a kid in the camp slept that night waiting for the mountain to blow up. So I told the book mobile person that I was a little nervous about the mountain blowing up, and he pulled out a book on volcanoes and said, 'You know, the more you know about something, the less you will fear it.' And he gave me a book about volcanoes. And then I saw a book about dinosaurs. I said, 'Oh, that looks neat,' so he gave me a book about dinosaurs. And then he gave me a book about a little Mexican boy that lived in a village whose family were farmers, and they were very poor. And he gave me those books and he told me to bring them back in two weeks. And I took them home and I didn't just read them, I devoured them. And I came back in two weeks and had more questions. And he gave me more books, and that started it. By the time I was 15, I believed there was a world outside of the camps. I believed that I could find a place in it. I had read about people like me and not like me. I had seen how huge the world really was, and it gave me the courage to leave the camps. And I did. So I worked during the daytime at the Pierce County's Sheriff Office and I went to school at Bates Vocational School at night. And I graduated with a certified stenographer's degree. So when I had an opportunity, when Pierce County Library 32 years ago had an opening for a, at the time they called it a Secretary to the Director, I applied and I was hired. So I got to spend 32 years in the background, helping other people to make that connection to the library, to have that available to them, either walking into a branch, or people taking books to the homebound, or book mobile, or children's services going out to daycares. Although I have never, ever put a book in someone's hand, I helped make it possible that there would be books there. That's my commitment to the library.