

So uh, we'll just start with if you could tell us your full name and when you were born and if you could start with "My name is". My name is... am I looking at the camera or? Mhmm well look at me. So uh yeah just pretend I'm not here it's like a conversation with Mark and you but like his voice is gonna be edited out so as much as you can kind of answer in a complete sentence and like rephrase his question in your answer you know like my name is Julian not just Julian. Okay. Yeah that type of thing so. My name is Julian Argote I was born here in Tucson Arizona on February 22nd 1990. And um uh this is actually for our journal purpose do you give us permission to video record you and use this for the Barrio Stories Project? Yes, I do give you permission. Uh can you talk to us about um your family like who are your children and their names. Um my son, I have 2 kids my son is Julian Argote Jr and my daughter is Mia Argote. He's 7 and she's 5. And um if you could just tell us that you uh told me a little bit earlier just that the history of the folks that have lived here in the neighborhood. Um my mom had this place lived here with her for like ten years. I'm sorry can you start with uh "I live" and then just like give us your address? Okay yeah. Um I live here in Barrio Anita on 810 N Contzen Avenue um known the family that owns this house. My mom had it for a good ten years and um when she passed away the owner contacted me and I moved here ever since and I've lived here 6 years myself with my children. But as I said you as a kid. Yeah as a kid uh grew up here my whole life through the owners of the house. My mom's always brought me around I got very familiar with all the neighbors and everything around here. And uh we'll go back to that in a second but right now I just want to focus a little bit more on you and some sort of biographical information so um can you tell us what you do for a living, what kind of work do you do? I am a tattoo artist um I also paint I also do a lot of um cleaning at the tow yard and then help them out tow cars as well. And talk to me a bit about your art practice like um when did you first start getting into it. Uh I got into art at a young age seeing all the art especially in this neighborhood. Seeing that really inspired me to try to do my own so painting, tattooing, drawing. Anything I could get my hands on to paint or to draw. Um and so yeah I guess you were probably a kid when this mural on the park was uh. Yeah I was in high school. Did you have uh any participation with that at all? No um art like that I got more into later on in my life. Um I think that one's all tile. I haven't tried tile but mural art I know the people that were on that. That's also what inspired me because everybody that's on these walls are people from this neighborhood. And uh did you have any teachers? Any folks that uh. Self taught uh all my art is self taught. What has subject matter do you tend to gravitate towards? Um a lot of cultura uh a lot of Aztec and Mayan Design Chicano style like more new school Chicano like the clowns the low riders. Very into stuff like that. Lately I've been doing a lot of monochromatic just one color different color tones. And uh what do you think was uh your like inspiration for particular things you tend to paint where does that come from? A lot of history on books a lot of history on what I've seen in my life I try to paint as well. Things I've seen over and over. But I try to keep it to where its culture to where people can kind of feel what I feel. Um I'd like to when were done if Heather can get a shot of like those 2 paintings you showed us um I don't know if uh either one of those can you talk to us about it either the. Yeah that would be totally fine. We can talk about it now and then she'll get the shot later and she can put it. The one with the baby in the ground as a seed I titled that one "Life" Have the aloe vera coming out I use aloe vera for everything. That one was more just of how I can show the word life if that makes sense. Usually I draw down things but this one I went off of a word and that's what I thought Life is. Do you have a connection to preservation to like agriculture? I tried for a while, I kind of do I have a very good friend that comes and he brings me corn seeds, watermelon seeds, like all kinds of stuff he grows and he tries to teach me. Right. Yeah because I mean it's uh I mean it's something maybe not so much recently but I know older generations there has been these three books around the neighborhood they were

made about 15-20 years ago that allowed you to talk about having home gardens like again that's a bit of an older generation it might've been your grandma's generation. It's just a very Mexican thing. Yeah that's what we were trying to do here but the dogs chewed up the gardens. And so when did you get into tattoo art? How did that happen? Tattooing I got into when I was fifteen my best friend got me a tattoo helped pay for a tattoo and then his older brother taught me from there and I didn't look back. The story of that first tattoo like how did it happen? Um it was my birthday I really wanted a tattoo and my grandma said it was fine I always lived with my grandma. She agreed I went got a tattoo did not expect it to be the way it was. But coming where I came from I thought it was the right way so. Can you explain what you mean by that? Like street tattoos like homemade machines and all that like I thought that's how it was then later found out that going and doing my apprenticeships and all that its not. But it was a fun experience. What was the tattoo of? It was a clown on my arm. It's very old. Everything was homemade. The ink and everything. So it didn't turn out as...Yeah. But it was a good way to grow up It was a fun way of growing up. And then when did you decide that it was something you actually wanted to do yourself? Um when I had destroyed my knee from football I was really into sports and then once I lost my knee, art became all I wanted. Tattooing, painting, etc. Would you mind saying that again? Because that siren popped in. If you could start again talking about how you decided to start tattooing. Um yeah um got into it once I hurt my knee in football. Can you tell us about that too? Yeah uh I was in football and that's all I did was football and landed wrong on my leg and destroyed my ACL and all the cartilage inside my kneecap. From there I was in bed for three months and those three months all I did was draw every single day and once I was able to walk, painting and drawing and tattooing was all I wanted to do. Couldn't do anything else. You said you did an apprenticeship? Where did that happen? Later on in my life I did my apprenticeship at Iron Will Tattoos. It was over on Speedway and um out on Speedway. Very very they did traditional art. They weren't really big on the Chicano black and gray. So I was kind of like the oddball in the group everybody just stuck to traditional Americana. Got a good foot in there though helped me out a lot learned a lot and from there I really have not looked back. So uh how long have you been like uh a tattoo artist like actually doing other people's tattoos and stuff. Can you still keep talking? We should stop while you reposition that. It's good now. If you don't mind just saying like where you got your apprenticeship again. Okay. And that you didn't look back. Um I did my apprenticeship at Iron Will Tattoos under James Vogue. Very different than where I come from. It was very American traditional over there as though I came from a Chicano black and gray. It taught me a lot of the do's and don'ts of tattooing. Had to leave there and once I was done with my apprenticeship never looked back. And uh how long ago was that? So I've been doing this professionally for like the past 7 years. Um Is the train too loud right now? It's not too loud right now. Okay. Can you uh just talk to us about your art on your arms there? A lot of this was more of my life in a sense and the things I like. This arm's not done yet but over here I have. My mom used to have a jaguar in her house before game and fish showed up and took it. Um we had a beautiful jaguar set up. Um it was a gift from one of my uncles and I used to play in it. I used to get the head and the body and just run around the house with this jaguar coat and head on me. Oh it wasn't alive. No no. Game and fish took it away. It was illegal to have because it was a Mexican jaguar and so they took it away so. I've always loved it I even kept a little piece just because it meant a lot man. So that was like one of the first tattoos I got. Um Pirates of the Caribbean one of my favorite movies. Bugs Bunny I got um right here. One of them on my hand kind of giving energy through here from the sun passing through me. Um this hand is gonna be my self tattooing skull on my hand. The guy that was teaching me everything never finished. More clowns. Things I've seen in my life. That whole Chicano kind of drama type of thing. Can you

explain that? I kind of know but just for the other people the idea of the clown and the sad clown. Uh debates into like how we have a lot of happy and comedy type of things and at the same time we have a lot of tragedy in our lives. We cover a lot of it with smiles on our faces. That's where I feel that. Uh yeah let's kind of move into this uh dreams and hopes questions um before I get to like your ideal neighborhood I'm just curious more toward. Take your time. The Sanchez's dog. My dog's he's good. That's funny he just showed up. Um yeah I mean I just want to ask what do you dream about. Feel free to take a moment to think about that if you need to. But just um yeah I mean if you don't feel shy about it. What I dream about? Not necessarily at like night but yeah like what's your dreams? My dreams, make sure my kids is happy. Grow up having fun. Mine for me personally is I get to paint just uh want to paint the biggest wall. That's all I could really dream about. I love tattooing but painting is where it's really at for me. Um maybe it's the same maybe it's a little different but what would be like a dream come true for you? Getting more mural spots. The big dream for me would be just having all the time in the world to paint. Um I think you mentioned this when we talked about your kids but like yeah what right now in your life what do you care about most in your life right now? What matters most in my life right now is my two kids. Them just growing up happy no worries in their lives just growing up being kids having all their friends here doing good in school just. And um yeah this is that question like if you could imagine the best possible neighborhood you know like something maybe unattainable in our lives but like the best scenario like what would that neighborhood look like what would it feel like what kinds of things would happen in that neighborhood. You could think of it too like going to heaven or paradise you open your door and you walk out and what do you see who do you see? What happens on weekends, nights? Like who's in that neighborhood what kind of relationships do you have. We can edit this; you can start restart. One thing I would really like to enjoy to see is to see is just stepping out and just seeing waving and saying hi to everybody just everybody at the park. Kids running around playing riding their bikes. That'd be something I'd like to see more of. The community being more involved in what it already is. More art. Love to see more of that. More color around here. Aside from saying hello, what other types of interactions would you like to have with neighbors. That's a good question. Just being more interactive with all of them you know just more than just a wave. Having good conversation. Yeah some of the old timers a couple folks so like when they were kids like the 40's 50's it was definitely a lot tighter it was like a bunch of families and then they like intermarried and built a house. Yeah one guy, I didn't interview him. He started to try to make like a map about different families houses you know he remembered. Um alright and let's see okay so I'm going to ask you a few things. What kinds of memories as a kid here in Barrio Anita?

I believe the most interesting 2 minutes of the clip is when he talks about getting his first tattoo and how he interpreted different designs and how he was different than everyone else during his apprenticeship.

Transcribed by Justin Nenadovic
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Julian Argote pt2

I was very unique in a sense. You did have your troubled side but you did get a lot of love from everyone here. Me growing up here I was always at the basketball court. I was there till I got in my teens and started painting even then that freedom from everybody around here and they were fine with me painting. That's what I kind of like about it. Just everybody knowing everybody was a good thing around here. Going to the pool before they just shut it down was always fun and I looked forward to that. Benching at the train tracks watching the trains pass by all the time. Getting inspired from the art on the trains. That was one thing we did growing up. We called it benching. Just sit there and watch all the trains go by. Other than that I grew up pretty fun.

Who were some of your friends or kids who hung out with?

Here's the funny thing I didn't really hang out with the kids from around here. Everyone was really more into the gangs and I was more into painting so I kind of tilted a different way and painted. I do know everybody here from growing up like all the kids my age but I just didn't have the same outlook as them. I really needed to paint I really needed to draw it was a thing I had to do.

Why do you think you were different like that like why do you think you didn't succumb to peer pressure or doing what everyone else is doing?

Seeing all the things I saw I just didn't want to do it. I felt like I was so independent and so strong on my own I could do it on my own. I just needed to figure it out on my own in a sense. I am my mom just seeing everybody I couldn't stay.

What do you mean saying the things you saw what did you see?

It was very violent. Compared to now very quiet very peaceful you see everybody playing in the parks. Growing for a while it was not like that. No one was in the parks just the basketball court if that. But it was very violent thought. So I just cut my own route, did my own thing. What years was that? This was around '03-'08 probably. If not, before that. It was very violent.

Can you give some examples?

People walking around with golf clubs, baseball bats 2x4's and asking where you're from, who you are, where you're going, who do you, know things like that. I just more of I can do it on my own. Don't have much fear in me so I was very aware of everything I learned everything on my own so.

Would those guys leave you alone or what?

Oh no those guys would try to mess with me but over time they just left me alone they just stopped which left me alone. Once they knew the sense of who I was because of my mother my mom is also from there and she fed all the other little kids around here so once they knew who my mom was they left me to be.

Can you talk a little bit more about your mom like memories of her?

My mom's name is Leslie Romero. Everybody around here knew her as la puppet. Very well loved and respected lady around here. Especially from kids my age and younger. A lot of poor walking around here with no food so my mom would make enough food for us and

any other kids walking by. If they were hungry my mom would feed them. So she was known around here being that lady that helps out.

Was she housewife or did she work or what?

I did work and then she got married and then the whole thing happen with her husband and she kind of lost it from there. Things went south from there. After that it was kind of me and my sister.

How did she pass away?

She has surgery and the day she got out she had a heart attack going up the stairs and died in my arms.

What year was that?

This was 2012.

And then your nana took care of you?

Yea then my grandma took in the kids my little sisters and my brother and she passed away last year and my brother moved in with me.

Going back to the neighborhood and showing the way it's changed, why do you think it's changed?

I feel the reason why it's changed is because more family's. The people that are like my age or older they have their own families now. They Started seeing what they want for their kids so a lot of like the gangs and the violence and everything kind of toned down and it became a very more family united type of neighborhood especially when my kids got in their accident this year a lot of the families here from this neighborhood have helped me.

Can you tell us the story of how your neighbors helped you out?

Living with my grandma on 29th street, I could barely hear the train on 29th but I knew that I would have to open my window to hear it. And that was the only way I could go to sleep because if I would hear that train I would be like ok I can go to sleep because I got so used to hearing that train.

Can you tell us this accident and what the response was?

Yea my kids got into an accident in September, in August actually and they knew what was going on how I was having trouble with a lot of things and a lot of the families helped me out. Like a lot. I was surprised. People that don't even live in this neighborhood that are from this neighborhood we're showing up just to show the support of this neighborhood and how it really likes to help each other out.

Were there any specific ways on how they helped other than just moral support?

They brought me groceries, others came and fixed my cooler, others gave me money, and others just gave me help for the kids because I was doing it by myself so they came and helped me out. If the kids needed a ride in advance they all came and helped me out a lot.

How'd that make you feel?

Surprised and made me feel really like warm to see these people that are not even my biological family, they showed me a lot of love. Like a lot of love. People from the school they helped out. And it just made me know how much love there was in this neighborhood and around here. And I kind of just wanted to show kids all these people are here to help.

And speaking of the school, what are your thought about Davis or any of the programs the garden or anything?

I love the Davis is with this neighborhood, with the gardens, with the people in the neighborhood, I love how involved they are in that. That's one thing I love about them like I have

been to many schools in my life and seeing how much they want to help and how much influence they are in this neighborhood, I love it. The art they have there at the school as well it's very very nice. I don't know how to describe that either. It's very beautiful. Just very beautiful how they are connected and how much they want these kids in the neighborhood to be involved with the school just as well.

Do you currently have any relationships with your neighbors right now like are you friends with them?

Yes I am. Before this house went bad, they are considered like my family. I have known them literally my whole life. My mom used to come here before she got this place, she would be there and I used to go to the basketball courts and play with the little kids my age. My neighbor is a very very good person. His nephew is in my son's classroom and they have been going to the same school since kindergarten together. Another great person that helps me out. I know the people in the back. Very good people as well. The people across the street, they've been here forever since I was a kid. This house keeps getting different residents. I know a lot of the people in Anita I know a lot of the families and there are nice as well. Other than that my main neighbors those are the ones I know.

What do you think is the value in having the neighborhood where a lot of people that of been there a long time we'll have a lot of trust and know each other and back each other up?

Value wise just the friendships, the trust with neighbors that you build, it becomes very close like very close. Just helping each other out with every thing they can is something that I noticed here. They need something there to help I need something there to help it's a very tight fitting it's very connected with those neighbors.

How's your feelings as a human being in light of this election last year and people hedging our nation? Me personally I have had a lot of demands and I'm stretched pretty thin I'm just trying to get a sense of as you walk through your world right now, how do you feel?

How do I feel In my world right now, stressed in a sense because everything I'm doing by myself With the kids and my little brother but happy at same time. In my eyes I feel like we're doing all right raising them with the right foundations and stuff in life. I still personally feel stressed.

What stresses you out?

Doing everything by myself. Everything. Bills, cook, getting them ready for school, everything they need done, work, that's what it is.

What do you think about new people coming in you know renting or buying? What's your thought on that?

You mean like newcomers, my thought on newcomers, I like it because they can see they way it is now, but they are a little too quiet. They keep to themselves they don't really want to know the neighbors. They really just focus on them and their own. That I kind of bug out on but it's good to see new people and realize what it's become.

Do you worry that the neighborhood might lose its character?

Yes in a sense I do but I feel like having all this art around still shows the history and culture around this neighborhood. It does impact it a little but i still feel it is very close. It sticks to the traditions, somewhat. Is there anything you like to see changed or any issues in your neighborhood, you know improvements or anything like that? Improvements, the pool for one. I miss that. I would love to take my kids there. They haven't had the opportunity going there

especially when it is right across the street. That I wish would really come through and just more art. More art, bringing that garden back those are something I wish to improve.

You said you knew these folks here along time what happened with that house?

The wife drove in the house three times. She is now in jail facing attempted murder for that. At the time I was in Phoenix with the kids because of the accident they were getting their surgeries I didn't get too much on the story but from what I know the wife drove in there three times.

Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you'd like to say about yourself or about your neighborhood?

If I could I would do more in this neighborhood to help out. Given the opportunity I would really love to try and do more for this neighborhood for all the help they have given me. That's one thing I would like to do. That's awesome that's a nice ending thank you so much. Thank you.

To me, the most interesting part of Julian's interview was when he was discussing how much his mother was able to help out the community. The fact that all the little kids in the neighborhood would call her "la puppet" goes to show the respect she was given by those who knew her. I can relate to this part of the story because my mother would always have my friend Zack over who would never have dinner at his house because his mother was never looking after him.