

**Oral History Interview of
Froy Salinas**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
June 30, 2008
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Hispanic Interview Series***

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Interview Series Background:

The Hispanic Oral History Project documents the diverse perspectives of the Hispanic people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Froy Salinas as he discusses his involvement in politics and the 2008 presidential election.

Length of Interview: 00:31:36

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Introduction; background information	05	00:00:00
Changes he saw in the state and local legislature	08	00:10:02
The major issues facing the nation in 2008	11	00:18:18
The 2008 presidential election	13	00:26:51
Foreign Policy	14	00:29:40

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Sanchez, today's date is July 30, 2008, and I'm at the Southwest Collection with Froy Salinas, Froy is a former member of the state legislature and is now a lobbyist in Austin. Froy, thank you very much for sitting in with us here today.

Froy Salinas (FS):

Good to be here. June thirtieth.

DS:

June thirtieth, is that what I said?

FS:

You said July.

DS:

July, oh sorry [laughter]. Froy's right, it's June thirtieth. Well, let me start off by asking your complete legal name. I think you know the spiel on how we start off.

FS:

My name is Froylan Salinas, and Froy is short, it's part of my name and no one could spell my name, so somebody when I started working changed my name or said, "Why don't you go by Froy?" And I said, "That's fine." I needed a job so I went for it. That's how I got started.

DS:

And how do you spell Froylan?

FS:

F-r-o-y-l-a-n

DS:

Do you have a middle name?

FS:

No

DS:

Where were you born?

FS:

I was born in Tahoka, actually in Wilson [?] [00:01:05], Texas, which is outside of Tahoka. It's Lynn County.

DS:

And what did your parents, what were their names, and what did they do for an occupation?

FS:

My dad was ___ [0:01:15.7] Salinas worked for a railroad, in fact he helped build the first railroad in West Texas, and my mother was a homemaker. When they first came here the railroad didn't have any openings so he worked, he had gone to war and come back, World War one. He was clearing land for people, and he had recruit to go and camp out and dig up mesquite, trees, and bushes burn them to create farmland. That's what dad—that's what my dad used to do.

DS:

El raize? [The root]

FS:

___ [0:02:01.5]

DS:

___ [0:02:02.5]

FS:

Yeah. They had to dig up the mesquite bush by the roots otherwise it would come back.

DS:

How did he go from clearing the land to working for the railroad company?

FS:

He had worked for the railroad back in—I guess before 1914, 1910 something like that. They were building a railroad to Slaton from Plains to Lubbock, Tahoka, and all that there, they were building it all—Santa Fe was building it all over the place. He worked for them, helped them build it. Then World War one came on and he signed up for the war and they were about through with the railroad so he left. And the supervisor told him if he ever needed a job to go see him in Los Angeles, California, and he would give him a job. So bam, '18, '19, whenever he got out of the war, he went to California worked out there. But during the depression they were laying off people. He had to keep moving eastward you know to have a job. And then well it finally dawned on him that nobody wanted to be in Tahoka so that's when he decided to go get a job on the railroad. When he got there they didn't have a job. So it wasn't until 1945 that he got back

home to the railroad. Meanwhile he was a contractor and cleared land for people. So that's how he got back, and he waited for a job once a job came open, he worked till he retired.

DS:

What about yourself? You went through the school system there?

FS:

I went through the first grade through the twelfth grade in Tahoka, and that was as far as I got because my father passed away when I was eighteen year old and a senior in high school. My father was an older man he was fifty when I was born, by the time I was eighteen he died at the age of sixty-eight. He was buried here in Tahoka.

DS:

So where you the—what number where you as far as the family?

FS:

I was the oldest in the family and so when he died I kind of had the obligation to take care of my sisters who were younger than I, and my mother who had never worked outside the home. So I started working in Lubbock for an office supply company. I learned how to work old typewriters and adding machines and that's what I did for eight years. After that I went into the insurance business, and I did that for twenty-five years until I retired from insurance. Meanwhile I decided to run for office, I got involved in politics and I ran for office and I became a state rep back in '76. The reason I ran for office was that at that time there was a lot of distrust between the Anglo community and the Hispanic community and a lot of discrimination about what rights people should have. And I thought that by being inside government I could make some contributions changes that would allow both communities to come together better and to better understand each other. And I think I probably did some good in that area maybe not I don't know.

DS:

I guess a big part of that was the single member districts. Can you talk about that?

FS:

Well yes, in 19—that's how I got involved to start with. Back in the seventies, we had multiple districts all over the state, and I was one of the plaintiff's lawsuit that stood the state of Texas federal court in order to have single member districts. Because the way that it was set up, a minority couldn't get elected because we had to vote at large. And by having single member districts, the minority had a little better chance, although the district that I first won was by 32 percent minority and 16 percent Anglo. So it wasn't really a minority district although some people thought it was I guess you know because I was running it, and was able to get elected.

But it wasn't really a minority district, but it was better than multiple member district I probably never got elected.

DS:

In a multimember district it kind of dilutes the minority vote doesn't it?

FS:

Well it disenfranchises the parts. It just makes it a lot harder to get elected because first of all it's more area you have to have to more television ads and whereas districts are smaller, more compact you can go door to door and talk to the neighbors say, "I'd like to have your vote" and that's easier to win elections that way. That's why our city council is now and school boards. And because of the lawsuit stay on state districts we eventually got a single member district for the city and the school district. See the county always had single member districts, the county commissioners four—they divided that county into four areas and you had four county commissioners, and we still did that. But the state, the city, and the schoolboard did not have single member districts until that lawsuit.

DS:

Okay, the city's lawsuit happened while you were in office already. So what was your part in it?

FS:

Well I helped guys through that. Actually I helped draw the districts because I was familiar with it and I wasn't trying out to get anybody I was just trying to make areas compact and divide it equally so that we would have an opportunity to have—active districts I drew where set up so we would have an opportunity to have a black representative and also a Hispanic representative. And that goes for the city and for the school district. I helped draw both of them. I'm sure they've been redrawn since then because you're supposed to draw them every census, every time we have census because population is supposed to be equal in those districts, and as long as they're equal minority community will have an equal opportunity to have their representatives' on the schoolboard to help speak out.

DS:

Who else was involved in setting up those grids and all those districts?

FS:

Well there was a lot of people that were involved that I called mining. Eliana Vera [?] [0:09:13.7] was an editor of one of the newspapers here was also involved back, way back in the early days. And ___ [0:09:25.1] county first—county commissioner, and several other people. I can't recall every body's name, but TJ Patterson in the black community, and Andy Richardson, and Herald Chapman, and Joe _____ [00:09:40], and some of those people that are still—I don't

know if they're still around or not but in know TJ severed on city council quite a few number of years and he was involved in that because he was one of the people that was active in black community along with Rose Wilson who was head of NAACP I believe at the time.

DS:

Okay, and so once you know that came to fruition and we started electing officials what kind of changes have we seen not only at the state legislature with what you did but also at the local level.

FS:

Well, I hope there's been a genuine increase in respect for each other as far as people we all belong to the same race, and that's the human race and I think that if we treat each other equally or if we would like for other people to treat us, I think we're going in the right direction. The majority of community in this area as far as I know prides itself in being very Christian. Well there's nothing very Christian in being discriminatory or being a bigot or being racially prejudice. Who knows, Christ probably closer to black than any color because times, all the people where dark. So from that viewpoint I hope we have coming on what.

DS:

You know some argue that Hispanics we're different because a lot of us still cling onto that culture and we like to celebrate the culture, for example *fiesta patrias* [party of the patriarchs] is coming and people are worried because of that.

FS:

Well they shouldn't be worried because actually the sixteenth of September is a holiday that the Mexican-American's celebrate because it's the anniversary of the independence—to celebrate the independence from Mexico from Spain. Had there not been that independence and Mexico had not created itself then there wouldn't be Texas because at one time Texas—the whole state of Texas was a part of Mexico. So really we should all as Texans celebrate this holiday because that's one of the flags that flew over Texas is the Mexican flag and the Spanish flag. The Mexicans declared their independence from Spain and that's why we celebrate the sixteenth of September. It's really a holiday we should all celebrate as Texans because that was the beginning, one of the beginning of our—it's part of our culture and it shouldn't be scary to anybody. Really if we had been smart back and not prejudice, because there was a lot of prejudice after that happened, if we had been smart, every child in Texas would be bilingual, every child in Texas would speak Spanish and English. We don't. You go to Europe and kids speak five or six languages, and we think we're ahead in our education system. Because of some or our prejudices I think we are behind in that respect because we should accept all cultures that are around us and you know be glad that we know a little bit about them and we should partake in them. *Fiesta patrias* [party of the patriarchs] is one way we can join together in one

community that has Black, Hispanics, and Anglos all in one community and we should celebrate together.

DS:

And was that festival celebrated in Tahoka when you were growing up?

FS:

It was celebrated in a lot of the smaller communities, I don't remember Tahoka, Slaton had a big celebration. Lamesa had a celebration, and Lubbock had a celebration. We'd take turns going to whichever one had the best dance and the most reasonable prices, we would go to Slaton a lot and Lamesa. Slaton for Tahoka was a little closer than Lubbock so we went to Slaton a lot when I was a young child.

DS:

You brought up a point where we were talking about the importance of a culture and language, and in this global economy you're right, the more languages you know the better off you are.

FS:

Absolutely, I mean actually we were kidding ourselves and holding ourselves back if we think the movement—I've heard about the English only movement and it's just—I think, Where are these ignorant people coming from. There are a lot more languages than English, you know, English is a good language I enjoy it, but there are a lot of languages we could learn. And probably be profitable for us and our economy. And we do a lot of trading—today we do a lot of trading with Mexico and countries in South America, we do a lot of trading with China. Like you said it's a global economy the more languages the more cultures that we know a little bit about the better off we are.

DS:

I know we talked about this topic in the past is there anything you want to expand on as far as the *fiesta patrias*?

FS:

Well, when I was here one of the things I try to emphasis to people is that to try to make this *fiesta patrias* as inclusive in the community as possible because of what I was talking about a while ago, the historical aspect of it. If we would share that with the total community and get the total community involved in the festival as a fall festival rather than a sixteenth of September only festival you know that it's really a broader thing than just the—although their basing thing being the independence from Spain via Mexico and tie that into Texas history and how we're all a part of it and how we evolved from that into Texas and everything else. It it's something that we could use our education system a little better than we do and I think perhaps that has been

lacking sometime and part of it has to do with the Texas education agency down in Austin. Sometimes they don't know—I don't think they know which direction they want to go or they're somewhat short sighted in my opinion in what they want taught in schools. They should expand the teachings in school. It seems like they want to teach kids just to be ready for this one test, they really don't do a whole lot I don't think. I think they ought to expand it and teach the different cultures of the state, reading, writing, arithmetic basics, and get our kids prepared for the global economy that exists, and get them ready for the future. I just, the little things that they won't emphasize the teaching of a test. I think they're a little bit off [Phone rings 0:18:05.1]

DS:

Is that your phone? [Pause] Well let me ask you this, this is an election year 2008, and the two big parties have already narrowed down their nominees to McCain and Obama. Can you tell me, as a sort of academically involved in politics, what are the major issues facing our nation right now?

FS:

Well, the economy for one thing, we're paying near four dollars a gallon for gasoline that has an effect on everything. It effects our price of clothing and our price of milk, eggs, food, everything because by and large our products are transported from point A to point B, or from one place to another, and every time you put gas or diesel in a truck to move that product, the more that product, the more gasoline or diesel costs the more cost the good are. I think that, the higher cost of this war we were involved in that we probably shouldn't have gotten in to start with. Those are major issues. I think that Americans are tired of all the costs of the war for one thing, and the hike. I remember when George Bush as running for office he was saying that because he knew something about oil business that he was going to over there and talk with the Saudi's the price of a barrel of oil was twenty-nine dollars I believe at the time, and he said he'd get over there and brow beat them and get them to either to open up the___ [0:20:08.1] and give us a little more production or lower the price. Well he did a great job of getting us a lower price. From twenty-nine dollars to a hundred and forty dollars a day so I think he went backwards. The American people are tired of that, so if enough Anti-American people will voice their opinion in November. I think whoever spouts change and what the policies that we've had, the failed policies whoever does that in the best way the ticket lights up to the American people is going to be our next president.

DS:

I guess also along those lines, something that plays a part and is probably a larger part than it is right now was immigration, and immigration reform. For example the fence that is going up and the work that's going on in South Texas in regards, can you talk about those items?

FS:

Well, I know that the fence is not going to do any good because the guys who want to go across it will just build a bigger ladder. You know or dig a hole under the fence, so building a fence is ridiculous, it's not going to keep people out. I think what we might be able to do is perhaps have more people along the border enforcing immigration, and make it easier for people that want to come in and work to come here legally and work. There's a lot of jobs that people don't want to do, people that are here so why not allow other people that are willing to work or want to work. Good God if they want to be Americans, being good citizens for a number of years and then allow them to be Americans if they want to be that. It's not easy to be an American, but if people want to be that let them have a path to get there. Everybody wants to take care of their families and that's why these people come from other parts of the world to our country because there's opportunity here. Opportunity to make a good living and provide for your family. That's what every body wants to do. They want to work, and those people who don't want to work, there's no place for them, I don't know what you do with them, I mean let them starve if they don't want to work, but if an able person can work they ought to work. It shouldn't depend on the government to feed them from childhood to the grave so to speak. I believe the government has a role in taking care of people that can't take care of themselves, but those of us that are able bodied should work as long as they want to. I'm sixty-eight years old and I've retired several times and I don't like it. I'd like to rather work, and I'm going to work till I die I guess because there's nothing wrong with working and trying to make—and it's made for your family and a better life. But as far as your question on immigration, I think there's plenty of ways you could address that issue and building a fence is not one of them. You can't. There's fourteen or fifteen million people here who say I don't know illegally. Good luck to you traveling and round them up and take 'em all back. Some countries peoples that are here, for example some people from the country of Mexico and so forth are my ancestors. Some probably feel like they had a right to be here because they were here long before anybody settled in Texas. They were here, they just happened to move south, saw their relatives, maybe it was better farming or better place to grow cattle, corn or whatever and they just moved south a little bit. They crossed a river and they wound up in another country. Someone's ancestors now decided to come back so you know, that's why they don't necessarily feel that they're here illegally. Like some people would say they're all illegal, yeah, I guess under law they may be illegal, but in their mind some of them don't feel illegal at all. They feel like they belong here, they were here long before we were.

DS:

Yeah, in fact here at the Southwest Collection we're putting up an exhibit called Medieval, and it's talking about the time frame with the *conquistadors* [conquerors] and all them going through here and mapping, staking out the south. People tend to forget that.

FS:

[Laughs] That's why you have—if you ask who, it's kind of funny to me. A school named Coronado here in Lubbock, you have a school named Monterey. Coronado is named after the explorer, I would guess, that came through there when there was nobody here. And the *llano estacado* [staked plains] is our area, “staked plains,” that's what it translates to because it was so flat they had to put stakes so they wouldn't get lost because the area all looked alike. The way they get through here and back going up to Colorado or wherever they went, is by driving stakes into the ground and maybe putting their flag or something. That's where we went—that's how we got there.

DS:

It's almost like a rudimentary survey at the same time isn't it?

FS:

Yeah. We had—like in Austin for example, we had streets like *Guadalupe*, people call it Guadalupe. We have a town right there seventy miles from Austin called *Llano*, double l-a-n-o everybody calls it lano. It's not lano its *llano* in Spanish double l-a-n-o and it was named that because it's flat. I mean good God.

DS:

I know we touched on that immigration issue, and we talked a little bit about the upcoming race, is there anything we haven't covered that you think you want to talk about?

FS:

Well, not really I think pretty much we have we have a president now that is fixing to go out of office. I mean I know that there are a lot of people in Lubbock probably supported him and he's probably going to go down as one of the worst presidents we've ever had because of the war, and in his own mind you think he did the right thing, and who knows, history I think will decide that when I'm gone and all of us. Fifty years from now people will say whether he was right or wrong. I happen to think it was wrong to go to the war, there were no weapons of mass destruction over there, we got rid of a dictator that was probably a bad person, but as far as are we better off now than we were then, I don't know that we are. I think he probably stirred up some of the terrorist a little bit more, and we have probably more terrorist and more people that hate America than we did before we got into that war. Really this logic on foreign policy for example, we gave Saudi Arabia and Jordan, all these countries money, foreign aid, millions and millions of dollar, if you go to the United Nations to see how they vote they vote against us 75 and 80 percent of the time. So are we really buying friends? I don't think so, I think we probably have set ourselves in a course of getting hated by more people throughout the world, and less respect for us because America never did go—we would always talk about, well if somebody invades our friends we would go help them. We never went through invading anybody like we

did Iraq. Went over there and overthrow their government I mean. You see people over there killing our soldiers, and killing our people suicide bombers. Well I think I would be mad to if somebody came over here and did away with—even though I don't think he's not a good president—if someone came here and threw him out and hung him I'd probably be mad myself. He was my president why'd you kick him out for.

DS:

What was the foreign policy like when you were in the state legislature?

FS:

Well, we had Nixon, we had Reagan, we had the first George Bush. I personally would've rather had twelve years of the senior George Bush than four years of him and eight years of the young guy. The older Bush, to me was a better president or better person. And probably more sensible, smarter and just a better person all the way around. We had some problems with some foreign policy things that during the Clinton years for example, they tried to bomb the World Trade center, and they weren't successful, but we caught those people and tried them and put them in a prison. Today Osama Bin Laden is out here sending tapes out. He's up there in some cave somewhere in Afghanistan. We could've got him, but instead of going-- staying after him a keeping the troops up there after him, we removed the troops and sent them to Iraq to go get rid of another—get rid of Saddam Husain, and he's not the one that caused 9/11. 9/11 was caused by Osama Bin Laden. So you know I think those policies mistakes. History will tell, will tell us down the road.

DS:

Okay, well thank you so much I know it took two interviews to get this done [laughs] thank you so much and I really appreciate your time Froy.

FS:

Thank you very much.

End of Recording