Carlos Diaz, who is using an alias for this interview, arrived in Nevada in 2008 at age 7 from his home country (which he told us outside of the interview was Mexico). At the time of the interview, he was about 21 years old and attending the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR).

In his interview, Carlos explains that his father had come a year before to get everything in order, and the family lived in Dayton, Nevada (not far from Carson City). Carlos shared how different his school experience was here compared to that in his home country, where everyone wore uniforms and walked in orderly groups to and from school. Another major difference was the open space, mountains, and nature he was exposed to here. He came from a very congested, urban area in his home country.

His early school experience in Nevada were okay, as there were always many bilingual English learners in his classes. This changed drastically in high school, when his lack of documentation posed many obstacles and challenges he had been unaware of until then. Although he got support and help from his high school teachers it was nearly impossible to find a part-time job, and then when he applied to college he learned he was ineligible for both FAFSA and on-campus student employment.

Even without financial resources Carlos was tenacious about the importance of getting a good education; at UNR, he planning to get an advanced degree when he graduates. He feels it would be extremely beneficial if there were outreach organizations in Nevada where undocumented young people could learn about support opportunities available to them.

He also wishes that he had understood ahead of time the educational roadblocks he would encounter as an undocumented student, so he could have start working towards citizenship or at least legal residence status much earlier. At this point he is told his only certain way of ensuring citizenship is to marry an American.

Summary by Lily Egan, UUFNN Borderlands Justice Team