Dani Moore Oral History Transcription

Abstract:
Dani Moore grew up in Tarboro, North Carolina, and earned a B.A. in Economics from Wake Forest University and Harvard Divinity School. Currently, she is the Director of the Immigrant Rights Project at North Carolina Justice Center. In this oral history, she talks about her childhood growing up in a poor family in Tarboro North Carolina. She touches on the interracial differences and their complicated relationships in her community and school in the early stages of her life. This oral history also covers her work experiences in the social justice advocacy fields with different organizations. A large portion of this project touches on the historical immigration controversies and on going challenges faced by the immigrants’ communities in North Carolina.

Key words:
Words:
Newport Rhode Island
Vietnam War
Tarboro
Trailer Park
Charlotte
Triangles
Immigrant’s rights
African-American
Latino Reproductive Justice Organization
Latino community
Vietnam Veteran
Racism
Racist
Green County
Pitt County
Snow Hill
Farmville North Carolina
Durham
Tarboro High School
Racial Segregation
Black Community
Wake Forest University
Harvard Divinity School
Anita Hill
Clearance Thomas
Feminism
Economic justice.
Mark Chilton
National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARRAL)
Institutes for Public Media Arts
Battered Women Shelter
NCARD
National Literacy Organization
UNC Chapel
North Carolina Justice Center
Immigrant rights
Mexican- American
Hmong
287-G agreement
Secure Communities
Dreamers
NAFTA
Immigration Reform and control Act
Activism
Social justice movement
American
Immigration policy
Massachusetts
Non-profit
DACA License
DOLMA RINCHEN: The first question I would like to ask you is could you please tell me your name and tell me if it means anything?

MOORE DANI: (00:00:16:23) Well, my name is Dani Moore. Dani is short for Daniel. My parents named me Daniel is kind of interesting story actually. I didn’t always like my name and my dad often shortened it to Dani but I heard the story of my name, as I got older. My mother wanted to choose a French name, even though my family is not French because her brother married a woman from Paris and really wanted to make the Parisian woman in our family feel welcomed and wanted to do something to honor her and it was really poignant and bitter sweet that we have done that and my family had done that because the Parisian wife’s her husband and two children died in a car accident few years after I was born. So there is an interesting story behind that.

Dolma: So when were you born and where did you grow up?

Moore: (00:01:09:11) I was born in 1969 in a naval hospital in Newport Rhode Island. That’s because my dad was still in the Navy and active in the Vietnam War and then we move around quite a bit with my dad’s job after he returned to the United States from war and I mostly grew up after the moving around for few years, I mostly grew up in Eastern North Carolina in a small town called Tarboro with “T” not to be confused with Carrboro. But Tarboro is a small town near Rocky Mountain.

DOLMA: Could you elaborate little more on the place Tarboro in terms of its neighborhood, demography, you know the community where you grew up?

MOORE: (00:01:57:18) Sure, Tarboro is an interesting and good place to grow up in I think in the 70s and 80s in many ways. My mother we relocated there after having grown up herself in Green County and growing up in Pitt
County. So those counties around Tarboro are very rural and there were a lot of tobacco fields. There were some industries at the time but Tarboro, we choose to move there when parents got divorced. My mother wanted to be closer to her brothers and sisters and have the support of family, friends, uncles and cousins for my sister and me. We were struggling economically and financially growing up because my mom was single mom who often earned minimum wage. There were times she earned little more but there was certain level of precariousness about her job situation. So we lived in a working class neighborhood in Tarboro. We were very lucky to have our own small home, little brick home in the neighborhood. It was a neighborhood near the Trailer park and sometimes I felt ashamed about living very close to the Trailer Park and being on the same bus as the children from the Trailer Park. They throw a lot of messages about, which neighborhoods were cool and which neighborhoods weren’t so cool. Again now that I look back I realized we were very fortunate to have a home we were pretty secure in. I also felt that growing up in a small town in North Carolina those years was a lot of safety and being able to bike wherever able to play in the creek with my friends and kind be out in the town. The town has some very charming things about it and also some things I really like to see change.

DOLMA: You mentioned about the Trailer Park, could you say a little bit about that, why people and why did you feel ashamed when you were little?

MOORE: (00:03:59:21) I think those messages are very powerful when you were growing up and when you are in a like most of my friends did not have divorced parents. Almost of all of my friends in the public school had two parents living at home and I think it was hard for me feeling like I was one of only one or two families I knew with single mom. The fact that we didn’t always get our clothes at the store like at the Belgar, Jessy Penny or whatever, we got clothes from the Clothes Closets that often what my mom could afford. So there was the sense of being both the worlds, we went to church where I was friend with kids whose families have more
money and lived in the bigger and more prestigious neighborhoods. I went to the country clubs like that and then I rode the bus along with the families who lived in the trailer parks and I guess there was such powerful message about what kind of income is sufficient, what kind of people are ok, what kind of people you want to be like and what kind of people you don’t want to be like. So I am afraid that as a child I bought into some of those messages as an adult I question more.

DDOLMA: I think Tarboro is an interesting place as I imagine, I was wondering like what kind of occupations the general populations were engaging at that time or when you were little?

MOORE: (00:05:22:09) Right I remember a lot of friends, their parents worked in the telephone company. This is before the telephone company was broken up into pieces and that was a big employer locally. My uncle who was doing much better financially worked for tracking company and eventually own his own tracking company. So there was certain level of industry, there were certainly farming and agriculture in the area. But you know some people ran the local McDonalds it’s a small town in North Carolina. I think a lot those jobs have since dried up a bit and those towns in the northeastern North Carolina are not varying as well as other parts of the states like Charlotte and Triangles. But that kind of jobs I remember either working in Telephone Company perhaps owning a car dealership or McDonalds or something. Some of the parents worked in the other places, worked at the country clubs, worked for the Parks and Rec Department. Those were some of the jobs my friends’ parents had.

DOLMA: About the racial diversities in the area, how does it look like?

MOORE: (00:06:29:13) Right. It’s interesting, now that I work on immigrant’s rights and migration. It’s kind of; I am bit embarrassed that I grew up not seeing and not knowing about migrant workers and migrant communities in North Carolina in those years 70s and 80s. But to tell the truth it’s very invisible to all of us, to
our church, to our school. There was one family that they have two boys and they were immigrants from China and they owned the local Chinese restaurant. That was really our only sense of who was an immigrant in our community. So I really saw the world in a black and white. I learnt really powerful messages about African-American communities and white community. How the two should interact with each other and believe about each other.

DOLMA: So you think that time there was immigrants like Mexican immigrants living in the area or they were not living there so you don’t know?

MOORE: (00:07:28) I believe, I would like to do some research on this because I don’t really know for sure but I believe there were combination of African American migrant workers from Mexico and other parts of Latin America in the field during those years in North Carolina. But completely invisible to those of us like I said in school, in church and different parts of my life had no Latino children in our schools at all. Like I mentioned only two Asian students were in our school. So it was a very black and white world. That really shaped a lot of my understanding of the world growing up in North Carolina. I have a little story about that. In the 1990s, when I was working for reproductive rights organization based in Durham, someone came from a national Latino Reproductive Justice Organization and asked me Latino community in North Carolina. This was before I had worked on immigration at all. I think it was before the primary Latino organizations that we know of now had gotten started probably 1993-94. I told her that I thought it would be great if she reach out to some of the farm worker organizations because those were really the only Latinos I knew about in North Carolina. So that answer I gave her was true for me. Also points to the fact that in 1990s, those of us who grew up in North Carolina and knew North Carolina well really hadn’t yet seen the people from the Latino community becoming part of our state.

DOLMA: Going to back your story, do you feel comfortable of talking little bit more about your family background?
You have talked a little bit about your father being Vietnam Veteran.

MOORE: (00:09:23:11) So it was a huge shift in my family when my parents divorced. We have gone from you know a two parent family that had pretty secure financial situation with nice house nicely designed and we had a pool in the back yard and then it was really sort of a fall into some crisis. A lot of insecurity, my mother was definitely; the doors and the reentry into the job market and world of work devastated her after staying home mom with us for my first eight years. So the move home to North Carolina is a good thing for her but it was also, she was learning to drive and get a driver’s license for the first time. Figuring out what it meant to rent or buy a house. She was working as a nurse some of the time and then there were other jobs that she took on different times and tried to make and meet. So a lot of my growing up was trying to make sure that that mom’s job was ok and I was taking care mom and making sure we had enough money to go to the grocery store and really my mom was a very powerful person shaping my own understanding of politics and economic justice issues. She influenced my beliefs both for probably for better and for worse. So I can tell a story about I definitely remember trying to go to the grocery store with about three or four dollars in change at different times and trying to get enough food for all three of us. Maybe when I was fifteen or sixteen, trying to get food for all three of us on three or four dollars and just the stress and fear that comes along with being in a situation like that yet my mother, even though we probably qualified for food stamps or some other kinds of food assistance. My mother’s racism and her ideas about what those government programs were about prevented us from applying for the help we needed. That is a bit of what has influenced my thinking on the issues growing up.

DOLMA: So you mentioned a little bit of racism in the end, I didn’t get the whole can you elaborate on that?

MOORE: (00:11:42:17) Sure, my mom certainly grew up in a very racist environment. I believe I did too. The
messages sometimes they are very hovered and there are times when it’s much more behind the scenes. You learn messages about which students in class are worthy of teachers’ support, which students in class need discipline more than the other need to be suspended or get into troubles send to the principle office. My mother had embraced a lot of those. My mother used “N” word once in awhile; her brothers and sisters used it more frequently. But my mother often even though I love her (god rest her self) she had grown up in an environment where black people are definitely at the bottom and they were not fully human. Her language and her behaviors reflected those deep beliefs she had.

DOLMA: So she grew up in Tarboro too right?

MOORE: (00:12:39:23) She grew up in Green County and Pitt County. So the town she was born is Snow Hill, North Carolina and the town where she mostly grew up is Farmville North Carolina. She grew up in a farmhouse with a few fields of tobacco. They didn’t have a lot of money and a lot of fields. But I am sure my mom had chances interact with black workers and possibly some of the Latino workers on the family farm growing up.

DOLMA: You said three of us, so you have a sibling.

MOORE: I have a younger sister.

DOLMA: Where is she now where does she live?

MOORE: She lives in Durham and we are very close and my mom has passed away but we really missed her.

DOLMA: I am so sorry to hear that.

MOORE: Thank you.

DOLMA: I am shifting to your high school, what kind of school did you go in Tarboro?

MOORE: (00:13:37:10) I went to the Tarboro High School, it’s a public school fairly large for a small town and it is really the only high school in the town. The town was about 10,000 people when lived there. My graduation class would be 200 or 300 students. I did very well in school and it came very easy to me and I think that
getting straight “A”s and kind of understanding everything without a lot of effort to study being put in was when I was hoping to get into a college and make something for myself and probably get out off Tarboro. I think I started to feel some of that around fifteen, sixteen years old. I need to get out of this town and hoped I can find a career that can take me somewhere else.

DOLMA: So at time what kind of education system or what did you enjoy learning in terms of history?

MOORE: (00:14:35) I didn’t figure out that I wanted to really involve in social change worker. Really didn’t figure out my own political view until after college. So in high school I was really into science and Math. I was part of the Math club. I really enjoyed almost all the subjects because it came pretty easy to me. I liked literature, science and Maths probably the best. Had I paid little more attention to Civics, it was called ELP Economics, Legal and Political system or something like that. If I had paid more attention to that I might have developed earlier interest in history.

DOLMA: Were you part of any like organizations or clubs in school?

MOORE: (00:15:19:11) Probably all of them, I almost did all. In a small town high school in North Carolina, there is sort of like so many things you can get involved in and I find often that student that are doing well and not facing discrimination, not facing negative attitudes from teachers get a lot of support like being in science club, Math club, student government. I was in all eight plays during the drama period. In high school we have four plays and four musicals. I love doing the drama work with my friend. So, yes, I was involved in lots of things and my mother must have really found some kind of miracles to be able to get us all these activities. I took private art lessons. You know my mother really, even though we worried about money but she really found ways to make those things possible through scholarships or through taking off work for an hour to
DOLMA: So your school you mentioned it’s a small town, I assume it is like a racially mixed? Is it?

MOORE: (00:16:26:22) It was very racially segregated period growing up. The middle school; no the elementary school I went to, this was when we first landed in Tarboro I was entering fourth grade and I went to Pattillo elementary school. Pattillo was old high school for African American and probably only was like only 10 or 15 years the integration of schools in Tarboro. I don’t know the exact year I wish I had learnt more about that growing up. But there is reason why we didn’t learn that history of racial segregation in towns like Tarboro. I landed kind first into the Pattillo, which had been black high school right in the center of black community in Tarboro residentially segregated community. It’s also near Princeville, which I learnt when I was an adult not when I was growing up. Princeville was a town first town founded by freed slaves in the whole U.S not just in North Carolina. So sadly I didn’t learn that history growing up there. But my elementary experience was an example, which I could hear racism from my mother. She said the first few days I picked you up, I saw you in a sea of black faces and I was hoping you were ok. But driving into this community into the black community where white families often didn’t drive. To pick me up from Pattillo elementary was the part of the story of the segregation. Growing up, of course my classes were integrated. Then in middle school I was in kind of the honors level classes or the most advanced classes. There were few African Americans students in those classes but it was largely white and often African American students were tracked into the lower levels of classes. So there were few families especially the children of teachers and ministers and others happened to be in my advanced classes and they became my friends. But we were only friends in school, we may eat lunch together or study together for something but we really didn’t have kind of the friendship that allows be at each other’s houses growing up. So I think in the
70s and 80s that’s a fairly typical experience for young people and teenagers. There is still a certain level of segregation during those decades.

DOLMA: So you said some of the reasons are obvious in terms of not teaching about the segregation and slavery and all these things. But what are some other reasons on why the government didn’t teach about those things?

MOORE: (00:19:10:10) I don’t know, I think it’s very hard for people in power to change. I think it will take kind of a revolution in how we teach history as all people mattered. I certainly look into some books like People’s history of United States and other places to be models of how we might learn history in a different way. That’s not so scripted in our idea of power and privilege that history can be taught in one way. So I wish I had earlier experiences and I wish I had done a project, a learning project on Princeville when my actual schools had been integrated. But I think white students unfortunately growing up in Eastern North Carolina don’t usually have opportunities to build their consciousness to raise awareness around things like that and hopefully that is changing hopefully teachers now and principals now are committed to bring that into the curriculum.

DOLMA: What happened after high school, you graduated and then?

MOORE: Right! But I didn’t know what I would do about college. My mom hadn’t able to save any money for college. So I really needed to go somewhere I could get scholarships. My dad was going to; he was fairly a strange during my teenage years. But he was helping a tiny bit and he was going to be able to pay a few thousand dollars and wanted me to choose a place that I got full scholarship and I understand that. So I ended up going to Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. It was you know I was very fortunate to get a full scholarship there and to be able to study abroad and take advantage of a lot of opportunities Wake Forest University had to offer. But in some ways it’s hard school for me to go to. As someone who didn’t have
quite enough money to be in school to do the things my friends were doing. It felt in some ways kind of a country club school and I wasn’t ever sure that I totally fit in at Wake Forest. It was also the first time I struggled some academically. I wasn’t as prepared as many students who were at Wake Forest and first I was really learning to study in order to make decent grades.

DOLMA: So in the college did you change your perception towards diversities or did you meet different people?

MOORE: (00:21:46:22) I think I was just a baby learning all that in college. I was part of student government again. I was elected to the honor council and having done a campus wide election. I was kind of woah maybe I do have some friends and maybe I can sort of do something like this that more public and having influence on people. But it also allowed me to chance to get into leadership program on campus. One of my ok Wake Forest, I am not sure if this is true. This is a story I have been told that two percent of Wake Forest student body were people of color at the time I was there only two percent and ninety eight percent of the athletes were African Americans. So we had very little diversity on campus I could see in terms of beyond African American students. There were few International students but really I wouldn’t say there a lot of Latino or immigrant students broadly. But I had a friend in the Honors; we were in the Honors court sort of leadership development and he had someone in his dorm burn across his door. They built kind matchsticks wooden cross and they lit it on fire on his door. I just felt like I can’t believe that was happening in 1989 and 1990. I heart little went out to him as someone who was leader on campus but it has to face that kind of in your face, strange kind of discriminatory symbol. Then I also knew that on campus there had been a party where the fraternity dressed in black face. I was trying to think that was not appropriate about things like that. But those were only two examples I only recall starting to think about race, class and gender while I was in college. Most of my political awakening happened after college.
DOLMA: Talking about Wake Forest, how far is it from your hometown?

MOORE: (00:23:57:07) It’s about two and half hours from where mom was living in Tarboro.

DOLMA: Then after you high school, I mean after your college, I think you went to Divinity College right? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MOORE: (00:24:23:10) I did. I waited a few years and worked for number of social change organizations in the Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill areas and then I applied to several schools. I wanted to figure out graduate schools and I really had hard time choosing between some public policy program looked very interesting and couple of divinity programs. I looked both Harvard Divinity School and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Partially why I was interested in that having read about black liberation theology and when I visited Union, I got to meet James Cone one of the great heroes in the field and one of the great writers and thinkers. Ultimately I got accepted in both types of programs and I can tell you little bit more about why I wanted to go to graduate school. I felt like I kind of needed to explore and learn but ultimately the policy class’s list of classes didn’t look as interesting as what I would be able to do at Harvard. There are a lot of flexibilities when you study at Harvard Divinity School, you can also take classes with Kennedy School of Government in Harvard graduate school of education and the college. So I was attracted to the idea of studying with Cornell West, who I have been read a lot and really appreciated very much, to study with (indiscernible) in the role of black church and social movement. There were number of people at Harvard that I was interested to learn from.

DOLMA: So in your undergraduate you studied Economics right? How did you choose that?

MOORE: (00:25:54:12) I didn’t know what I wanted to be when grew up. I knew I was good at Math and I was thinking
of doing a Math major. But then I had a very hard vector calculus class. I was about to make a “D” in that class. I was freaking out, so I switched my major to Economics and I never was that great at Economics. I think if I had little more of political awareness about economic justice issues and worker’s rights and more of that time I could have studied Economics in a way that I asked better questions of my professors and my class mates. The economic department there was really gear towards people who were going to be end up in business. I remember some very awkward moments in senior years, applying jobs to work at the stock exchange and be traders in Chicago on the mercantile exchange. There were not a great fit for me. Whether it was “me” from Tarboro or coming up in a working class family or that was me the person who didn’t love the Economic classes first places. So I was really struggling around with what I wanted to do.

DOLMA: So you realized you didn’t want to do Economics after college?

MOORE: (00:27:08:13) Yes, right. I was trying to figure out what kinds of job make sense and given that all of those interviews didn’t really feel like me. They didn’t feel like fit for me. Plus I encountered some sexism and some opinions in those interviews sound like I didn’t really want to work in those places anyways. So I ended up getting a job with University and working my first job overseas for the University and came back and ended up teaching in a kindergarten classroom. So it was big shift from working in stock exchange to working in a kindergarten classroom. But I think that was the time, I was trying to figure I wanted to do.

DOLMA: So you said before you join the graduate school you worked in some social justice field. How did you encounter with that field?

MOORE: (00:27:57:17) Yes, I did. Right after college was when I was figuring out what I believed and one of the things that really affected me greatly is and really sort of jolted me into thinking about political vision and political ideology more was the Anita Hill and Clearance
Thomas hearings dealt with sexual harassment. But to me it was incredibly interesting to study in race, power, and gender oppression to see all of those older white male senators questioning law professor Anita Hill, an African American woman about the behavior of an African American man, who had been her co-worker and mentor. To me it brought a lot of questions for me like what do I really believe about power and who should be in the senate? Asking those questions, I think there should be more women and there should be more African Americans in that room. What I really believe about being a strong woman and what I ever consider a career in law, what I ever want to work in policy? So that whole period watching those testimonials on TV really led into reading more about politics and feminism. I think once you started looking into feminist theory, reading feminist especially those of us realize we need to read more than the white feminists. You start realizing the connections between the issues and for me it became impossible too continue not unpacking white supremacy and not unpacking some of the other things I learnt growing up as I was trying to think through ideas on Economic justice.

DOLMA: So you talked about the incident, can you elaborate little more about that because I can’t imagine and don’t know much about that time?

MOORE: (00:29:59:21) You know I said I just gone through the period of the interviewing the jobs and business. They were just not going to be a good fit for me and was trying to figure out what I want to do in this world and what do I think having grown up with this mother and this sister and this story. How do I want to make the world different? So having been through those interviews and realizing I don’t just want to make a lot of money and help other people invest their millions of dollars that is not who I am. Then seeing this very stark national story played out on TV about a law professor who has been dehumanized in terms of sexual harassment she faced in her work place. To me it was real opening into Feminism and into learning
about it and interrogating about myself, which I have never done in college. But it also let me to questions about white supremacy and racism that I learnt growing up that I would hope to unlearn as I continue to reflect on that. I needed to you know few years later I guess it’s after graduate school. I met Anne Bradon, who was a white anti-racist, leader in the South. I was really lucky to talk to her one on one and she encouraged me to join organizations that were led by people of color. If I really wanted to work on racial justice it is important for us to join organizations where the decisions are made by the people of colors. Those kinds of experiences really helped me decide how I want to do political work in North Carolina and Massachusetts. But it was Anita Hill period that for me is really eye opening. I think right after my college I needed my eyes open. For so many of my friends that are activists they had their years in college as a time to start organizing, to start changes on their campuses and communities. But I guess for me, I was a late bloomer and it was that 1991 and 1992 period that helped me start asking questions.

DOLMA: You talked about working with reproductive something organization in 1990s, so that was your undergraduate school right?

MOORE: (00:32:20:18) Yes, that is right. So I had a couple of jobs, where I was figuring what I wanted to do. I was really lucky start working in and around North Carolina here in Durham in around 1993. So that was just a couple of years after college. I think that was the awakening feminist sensibility that led me work on reproductive choice issues.

DOLMA: I see, so that was aimed for all kinds of races right?

MOORE: It was, it was mostly white organization that was trying to figure out to be more relevant to the lives of women of color in North Carolina at that time. We had a white executive director, I was a bookkeeper and helped little bit with organizing tasks. Mark Chilton, who is now mayor of Carrboro, was on staff with us and we had a woman of color. Who was running the women of color initiatives; she is now a doctor in California. So you know I learnt a ton in my work there. It was my first
non-profit job and I felt very lucky to be able to get paid for something I really believed in.

DOLMA: So, what is the name of that organization?

MOORE: (00:33:41:09) It’s a statewide, it stands for the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League of North Carolina. There is a national organization that has similar work and not so much of a chapter model. But the NARRAL North Carolina is an organization has North Carolina based members who wants to influence state level policy in a way that allows for ranges reproductive options for women. So everything from fighting back against anti-abortion, anti-choice and legislature, legislative initiatives in Raleigh to; you know something is tried to in another state to limit women’s access to abortion and reproductive health care. Then they might try the same in North Carolina. So we had lobbies on staffs, we activated people try to expand choice for women rather than restricted and I learnt a lot about that was my first job when I learn about organizing, how things work, how it is important to have stable organizations with staffs who allow some of the jobs need to be get done and also integrate volunteers into the work. So I learnt a ton there.

DOLMA: I am trying to make chronologies of your life, after working in this organization then you went to graduate school?

MOORE: (00:35:04:20) No, I have several more years of working. I try to think, I went to graduate school in 1998. So I had four or fiver years of doing other things. Before graduate school I worked for NARRAL for a while, that was half time; I worked half time for an organization here in Durham called the Institutes for Public Media Arts that was using documentary film, radio, and photography for social change purposes. You know several people here at Center for Documentary Studies were on our board and influencing our work there. I also worked in a Battered Women Shelter on the weekends. That was the first time I was starting to Latino families intersecting with the non-profit world I was part of. We had first Latinas
staying at the shelter. I also worked little while for a company like a startup company that was trying to cover communities and politics. So I was an editor the company called City Search that is based here in the triangle. That was the forge of the (.com) world when you know the online explosion was happening. So it’s kind of interesting I learnt a lot about you know writing about community needs and helping people finding information they wanted. If someone was interested in farm worker issues or interested in finding a liberal church or whatever. This is a website they could help them things the community interested in. so I got a lot of working there too, that’s the only time I worked for corporation in my history. (00:36:39:22) That the working for corporation was a chance for saving a little of bit money and I used that for my expenses for the graduate school.

DOLMA: So when you were interacting with local immigrants that time, how is it different from now interacting with immigrants in North Carolina, is it a lot of difference or?

MOORE: (00:36:58:08) Ya, that is a great question. I mean it was a tiny tiny awareness I was building by working at the Battered Women Shelter in Chatham County, which is where Pittsboro is. We saw few Latinas come through the door. We experienced a lot of language barrier because that time I didn’t speak Spanish. I still didn’t much about migration or immigration at all and it was until I got to graduate school and had a chance to work with immigrant’s rights organizations in Boston that I learnt a lot more and became more interested in that work. I wanted to go to graduate school because I felt like Wake Forest, my undergraduate I had not taken advantage of chance to learn about history and sociology and education things I felt really serve me well in career and social change. So it was a chance to explore some of that I really felt like I didn’t get as an undergrad. So my first history of social movement class was in graduate school than in Wake Forest. So ya, I felt like there was something else that I needed and that I didn’t yet have. It would be a luxury to
spend couple of years really reading and reflecting on some of those topics.

DOLMA: Now I understand your interest and I am wondering how did your Divinity background support or change in your work and social advocacy and social justice field?

MOORE: (00:38:42:11) So when I first went to Harvard Divinity School, I was most interested like I said learning about black theology, liberation theology and coming back to the south and working for racial justice here. I had a few models of white women working in racial justices from groups like NCARF and others in the south that I really wanted to figure out what that would look like for me. I believed in and I still believe that a lot of the good working social movements happen is through the institution of church. I wanted to study how the church plays roles in civil rights movements. How ministers and people of faith have stepped up into leadership roles and activist roles in that movement through their church as sort of a base. But I am not actually very religious myself. So it’s with a lot of questions about faith and religion that I went to divinity school. I couldn’t have gone to Divinity school that was less progressive or sort of more conservative divinity school as it happened I was interested in the two divinity schools tend to be the most grounded in progressive social movement and the most interfaith. So I was learning along side with you know Buddhist and Muslims and others and that was really important to me because I didn’t want to be a Christian only look at this history. I thought after graduate school I would end up working somehow in bridge role between black church role structures and on going racial justice in the south. But what happened was I actually got an internship in an immigrant rights organization. It was the first time that I had worked directly with immigrants and in the movement for immigrant right. It was so interesting to me and I learnt so much by working there and I worked there for three years. I really liked it and I stuck with it and it was just perfect timing because North Carolina at the time when I was in grad school just riding the crest of huge migration that happened in North Carolina. So we generally think
that 1990s was the period in which the Latino community in particular kind of exploded or migration numbers really exploded. It also when the community became visible to the white and black communities that we have, so 90s are I guess the beginning of tri-racial or multi-racial consciousness about doing work for racial justice. So I was in graduate school from 1997-1999. I graduated in 2000 because I came early and cared for my mother when she was dying with cancer. So that’s kind of the period in which I came back to North Carolina to find that a number of Latino organizations had been established, growing and thriving. You know like the Fiesta De Caplo other things in the 90s. My organization North Carolina Justice Center started in 1996. It was really a rich time to rethink what racial justice looked like in North Carolina as just more than black and white. So I feel like, of course working in Boston, which is known as such an immigration city. A city where immigration is rich in the history and you know working on immigrants’ right in Boston and Los Angeles or New York is very different than coming back to North Carolina’s tri-angle region working on immigrant’s rights. So I felt there were a lot of lessons I learnt from those places that served me well and helped me step up to certain challenges here in North Carolina. But also we have to make our own stories in these new states.

DOLMA: you mentioned you worked three years after graduation, where was that? Was it in Massachusetts?

MOORE: (00:42:56:12) Right Harvard Divinity School is in Cambridge Massachusetts is right outside of Boston and my work was in East Boston. Which is a very vibrant immigrant community.

DOLMA: Then you mentioned about NCARD, can you talk a little bit about that?

MOORE: (00:43:04:11) Well, there were number of organizations in 1980s and 1990s that tried to work on racial justice and another progressive issues in North Carolina and I was trying to figure out, who I wanted to be and what kind of work I wanted to do and how I wanted to intersect with people of faith. I also come
out as a lesbian in the 1990s, I had already come out as a pro choice having worked for the reproductive Organization. A lot of choices I was making and beliefs that I held as an adult were contrast to the more conservative up bringing that I had and the church that I grew up in. So going to Divinity School was a good place to tried out work out some of those questions and understands better and how people of faith can play a role in issues that I care the most about and not only always on other side of the debate. So I wanted to engage with people across the differences of faith, politics and ideology with respect and be able to engage in dialogue, not completely dehumanized, silence them to be able to or maybe build some common understanding based on people’s faith tradition that how might we treat each other as brother and sister in the world as people in the world. So what does the business owner owe to the workers? What does one family owe to another family if there is violence in the neighborhood? What does the United States owe to the immigrants when they come to our country seeking a better life? All those questions are probably the issues of faith and spiritually. Even though I am not super religious in terms of an institutional religious orientation right now, I think those questions of how we treat each other and then what we owe each other are religious questions for many people living in North Carolina.

DOLMA: You have talked a little about your interactions in the social justice field, now I am kind of wondering curious of learning about one of the first memorable experiences especially in term of advocacy? When was that and do you remember anything?

MOORE: (00:45:44:08) let’s see. I do remember in Boston. I worked for a wonderful organization. It was immigrants’ rights neighborhood organization. They try to use multiple strategies to get the work done to make life better for immigrants living in that neighborhood. So we used community education, youth programs, direct advocacy, legal assistance and some community organizing. So the blending of those strategies was great learning for me, I never worked
for an organization so clearly believed in blending the strategies. But I was learning a lot at the school about popular education and ideas about what is a laboratory education looked like. The community group that I worked for asked me to teach English as a second language. I thought I don’t really want to do that but I will you know I am pretty good at English I grew up speaking English. I will be an ESL teacher for a while but I wanted to do some other stuff that sounded really interesting to me. So I taught one class for Vietnamese students and one class for Brazilian students. I had been learning at school. I had been taking class at the school of education. They looked at laboratory education and how the teacher is not full of answers that just give them banking methods. To the students is an empty receptacle that they receive all the information and then instead education should be dialogical and should help people build their own consciousness. So I have these ideas of how to teach English as a second language and what I learnt the big aha moments for me was that we need to keep in mind that all of the theory, practice and good learning we have. But we also need to listen to people. The students in my class just wanted me to start with ABC, let’s learn some words with A, let’s learn some words with B. They really because of their own schooling and their own experiences and their own needs in their daily life right then, they wanted to learn English in a certain way. I had to be stick to some of my beliefs about how ESL classes could be run and other teachers helping me figure these all out but I also needed to listen to the students. So to me that was powerful lesson in terms of having a real relationship with community members that are facing language barriers when they go to the doctors, when they deal with government office of whatever. They need to be able to spell things out to people like here is how you spell my name and I need to know all these letters and how you say them in English? But I didn’t starting there was the best place to start. So listening to the members of the community for me was something very good to learn.
DOLMA: Coming back to North Carolina, then you started working with the same NGOs you have worked with before or new ones?

MOORE: (00:48:43:02) No, I worked for a National Literacy Organization that is based in UNC Chapel Hill when I first came back. I was also caring for my mother who had cancer. Trying to balance half time working on literacy issues and half time with my mom. Though it was a really hard time going through all that. But I learnt a lot from that job as well. Then I had one another job with Progressive Non-Profits in Raleigh and then in 2003 I started working at the North Carolina Justice Center on immigrant rights.

DOLMA: I know there have been a lot of backlashes against advocacy for immigrants in the United States. How do you confront these challenges or rather what is that keep you going?

MOORE: (00:49:32:23) So I think the backlashes are often about misunderstanding. I mean there are times it’s pure racism and I recognize as that. But as people learn more about migration and particularly in North Carolina. They unlearn some of the myths; they have been taught for example many people in North Carolina like me growing up never thought about immigration and never thought about immigrants and who they were and what their stories were. I think we assume that everybody could come legally if they just tried. I think that’s a very pervasive myth happens all across our state. It leads people to the next step after that is think that if you don’t come legally, if you don’t come with your papers. Then you are an illegal person, you are less than human and you need to be punished. It really activates our frames of crime and punishment and I think the anti-immigrant groups are good at pushing the law and order frame. You know these people are criminals, not only are they speak another language, they are different than us they are the “them” and they are not us. They have broken the laws and they need to be punished. So I think that in North Carolina, helping people to understand the stories of asylums and the stories of immigration laws and you know how many families in North Carolina are mixed
status families. Where some people are citizens, some people are green card holders, some people are in process and some people are waiting for an additional approval, some people are here without authorization but might be getting in line later. All of these things are part of what North Carolinians could benefit from it if they learn more about these.

DOLMA: So, we know there are huge numbers of Mexican immigrants but apart from them do you know like approximate demography of immigrants living in North Carolina?

MOORE: (00:51:46:01) I think the latest census figure shows about 7% of North Carolina is foreign born and of course the largest portion of the immigrants, the foreign born people who live here are Latino. A large portion of that maybe 70%-80% is more from Mexico. So we have a large Mexican-American population here. But I also think that one of the other myths out there is all immigrants in North Carolina speak Spanish and they are all Latinos or they are all Mexican. So my organization is one of the few in North Carolina, it's helping to broad the story to more than just Latino immigrants. Immigrants in North Carolina speak tens and hundreds of languages. Children in our schools are coming with more than just Spanish. They are coming with many languages and there are refugee populations here. North Carolina is one of the largest states receiving the people from the Hmong community. So kind of explaining that story more, it’s more than the Latino immigrants in North Carolina is helpful. There are also times, when the Latino community is right in the lead in some of the big questions. If these are questions of driving more brown, racial discriminations and racial profiling in terms of law enforcement. That is an issue, which is also affecting African immigrants and Asian immigrants. But just given the number, given the establishment of certain organizations of Latinos in North Carolina that there are many times, these issues will be explained as Latino.
DOLMA: Talking about that, in addition where are these coming from and under what kind of circumstance they come to United States?

MOORE: (00:53:43:12) For every person, there is a different story and I as a someone who grew up here can’t imagine and presume to tell those stories. But there are few things that we know, I mean we talk about push and pull factors of migration that people are pushed out of places at times by war, by bad economy, by suffering, by needing to flee from something dangerous. So the push factors out of a place. There are also the pull factors into a place and we know in North Carolina people have been pulled here by an economy that needed workers in the industries particularly agricultural, construction and landscaping and many more. People are pulled here by various very particularly poultry plant and meat processing plants. Then people are pulled here by their family members, you know my brother is already in North Carolina, my husband is already in city, I am going to take my children and we are going to be with him there. (00:54:54:02) I think those pull factors are also something we talk about and then I don’t it’s really different than 1850. Many immigrants were coming here for a better life. They are coming for the many opportunities they hear about whether it’s through friends or family, through the American stories the US story that is out there in the world. They may find a different reality that they may get here and find a job that is more exploitative than they expected. It is paid less and the conditions are worse than they expected. They may come here and find a lot more discrimination than they expected. But I also think that we also need changes in the world. A lot of policies are worldwide that allow people to stay at home in the places they know and love. Maybe people want to migrate and they don’t and I think those choices are or people should have choice to remain at home and be able to survive and to be able to thrive in the place where they grew up or they might want to live.
DOLMA: So North Carolina is one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States. Why do you think so?

MOORE: (00:56:12:03) I think, well in terms of number we may not be the largest. If you just look at the actual numbers of the people moving but in terms of percentages we are along with Georgia for the last decade, we had one of the fastest growing places particularly for Latino immigrant. I think part of that is it was due to the economy in the southeastern United States for a long while. I think that drove in the growth in the 90s I mean the 2000s. We have seen with the recession, some of those have no longer available. They may not be the same level of demands for workers. People were still going to those historic immigration destinations like Boston, Los Angeles and New York. But I think we have seen a shift in the late 90s and early 2000s of immigrants through their networks and through word of mouth, through family connections settling in the new states. The state like Tennessee, North Carolina, Iowa, you know all the states you wouldn’t normally think of as having large immigrants populations and it’s been up to those of us that are you know whether we are volunteering the movements or paid staff in the movements for immigrants’ right to sort of figure that out in states like North Carolina. What does it look like to people like me who grew up in a world where race was defined only in terms of black and white to be having Spanish spoken in our grocery stores and who to welcome people into our churches that have a whole different stories then we do. So I think that North Carolina as a destination along with Georgia and few other places has been made by the economic pull factors that I mentioned before but also by as people got more established here, they started encouraging friends and family members to move closer.

DOLMA: So talking about the challenges, what are some of the common challenges most immigrants are facing?

MOORE: (00:58:23:16) I think immigrants face similar challenges, as do other people in North Carolina. My
organization works on economic justice for everyone, not just immigrants. So when people are facing difficulties accessing health care, you know, immigrants may have an extra layer of difficulty accessing health care because of language barrier, because of immigration status, because may be they might not be eligible for certain health programs, health benefit programs because of immigrant status. But they are facing some of those challenges some of the African American residents or white residents are. So immigrants are facing challenges in terms of getting a good quality education for their children, in terms of finding a job that pays a living wage and save and helps them be economically self-sufficient in terms of, you know, so many things that other low income people face in North Carolina. But there are added challenges just because people are facing immigration status problems. They need to regularize their status, they may face a waiting period even if they are legally presence for certain benefits that they may need, the safety net benefits. Language can be an issue although we know that immigrants really want to learn English and are usually doing everything they can to learn English. And I think that facing racial profiling and discrimination is a huge factor for many people. People talk about being scared to dropping their children at school for fear that driving without a license will land them in deportation. And for many families that has been true, deportations are all time high under President Obama and there has been established throughout North Carolina, a system for catching people.

MAN: Tell me about the system for catching people. What does it look like in North Carolina?

MOORE: (01:00:29:12) Right, well there is a program called 287-G that is, that refers to statute under which local law enforcement can become deputized to take on certain roles that immigration agents would otherwise play. So at a routine traffic stop, may be like a busted taillight or not using your turn signals something like that. A police officer whose agency has a 287-G agreement could in fact start questions about
immigration status just because someone speaks Spanish, just because they have brown skin, just because their last name is not Moore, but in fact it’s Velazquez or something like that. So that to us is a racial profiling concern but it’s happening all over North Carolina. 287-G grew in Arizona and North Carolina much more rapidly than it grew up in any other states. And the sheriff of Charlotte of Mecklenburg County moved to DC to be the first director of this program for deputizing local law enforcement as an immigration agent because he was one of the pioneers. He soon spread it all throughout North Carolina but it also spread throughout the country. 287-G is a little bit less of a concern now, the program is sort of becoming little more unpopular because of racial profiling concerns but there is an equally troubling program called Secure Communities or S-Comm, we always say secure from whom, presumes that immigrants are dangerous people. The name of this program though is Secure Communities and it means that everyone who is arrested regardless of whether or not they are guilty and found guilty of the offense for which they are arrested, their fingerprints are put through a database that does check their immigration status. So we see a large number of deportations for noncriminal offenses like traffic offenses winding people up in deportation. People in North Carolina often don’t have access to attorneys once they are facing deportation and it becomes almost like an automatic, you know, you are going to be shipped to Georgia, to the Stewart detention facility for example outside of your family and in any legal help you might be able to get here and then sometimes within 24 to 48 hours, people are deported. It can happen really fast.

DOLMA: I was thinking what happens to the kids who are born here. Where there any cases where their parents are deported and the kids were left?

MOORE: (01:03:03:06) There had been many cases, I have friends personally who have adopted young people whose parents were deported. It’s a huge concern it’s something that we’ve been working on for number of years trying to help families get more prepared for that
kind of emergency. Helping parents select someone who might be able to be a caregiver for their children in case something like that happens, starting to put the paper work together, you know, they can’t grant custody, their children is someone else but they can at least say here’s something I would like to happen. I would like the child to come join me in so and so place if this happens, I would like the child to stay here with an aunt or uncle or a friend. So yes that’s a huge concern we have really agreed to this example of children being left by the side of the road when the police officer takes the mother away in handcuffs. That happened in Alamance County. That’s happening, that kind of thing is happening a lot. Police officers are not suppose to leave children unattended when they arrest the parents. So there have been certain guidelines that immigration and customs enforcement and local police officers and sheriffs have adopted to try to prevent those kinds of horrible emergencies but yes parents are being separated from children sadly continues to happen at record level under this President.

DOLMA: Since organization like yours work directly with the immigrants’ rights. So how do you build trust with these people? I think they are all living under fear, right?

MOORE: (01:04:38:23) I think many immigrants are living under fear even if they have papers themselves. If they have papers of a regular status, temporary status or permanent status, they have family members who are less certain, who have more fear. So I think that building trust with immigrant communities is something that we think about a lot. Some of the trust that happens in my organization is related to the fact that we are providing legal assistance. And so sometimes if you are lawyer, explains a lot to you about what you need to do, about going to court or deportation or whatever. That can build trust, the kind of expertise that the lawyers are offering. I am not a lawyer, and my work is other immigrant groups and Latino groups that are in North Carolina. I think those organizations that are directly providing services, building an organizing base with immigrant
communities have a lot of different ways of building trusts. It can be challenging and I think it takes a lot of times to build trust. But that being said, I think also immigrants come here and they are very trusting, you know, they are looking for the church leader, the mosque leader, the nonprofit, the teacher, the guidance counselors’ school, the people that they can deem trustworthy to confide in. So a lot of the people in our networks whether we were working in educational issues or whether we were working on social worker you know about the issue of children left alone. Immigrants are widely looking for and trying to discern must be a very difficult decision point for them. Trying to discern whom they can trust with the story they are facing and whom they really shouldn’t trust with that story.

DOLMA: Apart from the organizations that are working for them, are they forming kind of their own community since their population is increasing?

MOORE: (01:06:48:19) That’s a great question. I think a lot of groups are forming all different kinds of organizations to meet their needs. I think it can range from you know, I heard recently about Burial Committees like when someone dies and they want to get the body shipped to home and buried. That can be a task where people pull their resources or pull their cash and talk to who they know and get in touch with someone that can help with burial challenges. Just something like that, there are soccer leagues of course, there are mutual aid organizations in various communities where people come together to solve a problem and they really don’t need the nonprofit world to interfere that much. They are self organizing, they are doing fund raisers to fight someone’s deportation like cooking some food together and selling some food to raise money for someone’s legal expenses. We hear examples of those kinds of things all the time.

DOLMA: Among all the immigrants, who are actually eligible for getting proper papers?
MOORE: (01:07:58:09) Well, this is something we talk about a lot. US generally, they grew up like me often there is some way to become legal if you really want to, if you are willing to fill out paper work and pay that fine or whatever. Of course you can just do it in the right way, you can come and be here legally. Why don’t you just go do that? That’s the attitude of a lot of people in the United States. What we have been trying to help people to understand is the truth is that for many people there is no line to get it at all. There is no way in for particularly people from Mexico for people who are not wealthy in other parts of the world. Sure, there are certain numbers of refugees that will be designated from certain places. They will have chance to move to the United States be resettled through the refugee camp in which they were residents. There are some other channels; there are some visas available like the agricultural workers in the fields. There are some NAFTA visas available for certain type of workers. But the number of visas available and channels coming here legally are so limited for almost everyone. That makes about our immigrant communities in North Carolina, that we have been trying to help people understand that the really the immigration system is so broken and it’s very broken since 1986 and 1996 reforms. It’s been so broken there really is not a line to get in and Congress needs to fix some of the broken to allow people at least a chance to regularize their status.

DOLMA: So, talking about the broken immigrant systems, like in 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act has happened right. Since then, do you sort of think there is some kind of fluctuation in terms of improvements and then getting worse, compare with now how the trend was look like?

MOORE: (01:10:08:21) Certainly the 1986 and 1996 laws are huge in our work. But it is important to understand that there have been a lot of little twigs and changes in state laws and other changes that have (indiscernible) with people’s life. So I wasn’t aware of immigration issues or the immigrant community in the 1986 and in 1996 time frames very much. But we talk now about
an out dated system that really does stay back to the 1986 time frame. A system that is not working for current demand and current supply and current needs of families. In 1996 we saw a great crack down sort of start with that’s part of why my organization the Justice Center got started is that Congress decided that legal aid could no longer represent undocumented immigrants in their legal matters. So there has been, it's when Congress decided that even legally immigrants couldn’t obtain certain safety nets and benefits they needs. So the changes in 1996 are still things we are living with now as injustices to the current population of immigrant living in the US. There is a move amongst immigrant’s rights organizations to fix 96. We talked about that you know we have to fix the unfair policies written by congress that time. All these is to say there has not much will in the congress to make laws work with what people need and I don’t know how soon there will be the will among politicians what is right for people to really honor human rights, family needs, treat people well. But there are changes could be made that would solve a lot of problems that people are facing.

DOLMA: So, following about the changes in the policies and stuffs I am curious in your opinion what do you see the role of activism or social justice movement, not only in the immigrant movement but what are the relationship between different movements that are going on in North Carolina?

MOORE: (01:12:47:13) I feel really lucky to get paid to do something that I love. I feel like how do I even deserve this like to be able to make a decent salary, good benefits and good working conditions at job that is about another group of people. So I am not even directly affected by the immigration issues in some ways I am, people in my family are immigrants and they are facing some of these issue but I am not someone struggling around these questions myself. So I have been learning about it and thinking about it and talking with friends and colleagues about what it means to be an activist during the advocate? Whose paid to do this work but also who is ally to the movement and not a leader in the movement? I think the immigrant
rights movement needs to be led and is being led by the people who are directly affected by these issues. It’s been inspiring and amazing to see emergence of the dreaming generation the Dreamers taking on leadership roles. But it’s also it’s new and it’s not, there had been workers who had been standing out for their immigrant Workers who has been standing out for their rights for many years. It is very powerful and interesting to be part of the movement and to learn what it means to be an ally in the movement trying to help and trying to be a support and assistance in people fighting for their own rights. In some ways I see that we can you know of course the immigrant’s rights movement can learn a lot and borrowing a lot from civil rights movement in the United States. Learning a lot from women’s movement and LGBTQ movement. There are so many parallels. It’s been lovely to see young people coming out as both undocumented and as queer unafraid and unashamed. So there is so much power in loosing that fear what it means to say who you really are. How do you define love? Who you are in your family? To tell the secret that has been hiding for so long about immigration status. So that’s a really interesting kind of frontier of the movement. I have been excited to see that borrowing and interrogating has affected by people’s strategies, people’s messages just because I worked for an economic justice organization and I grew up with this history of somewhat struggling financially in my own family. The stress and fear come along with economic insecurities. I really like that I have chance to work on immigrant rights as an economic justice issue. But as a white woman, I also think it’s important that we work on these issues as racial justice issues. It enriches the work so much. I think to be intersectional when we can. It’s not always going to be the right choice to win something in congress or to win something on John Street in Raleigh at the legislature. But as much as we can remember how the issues are connected like immigrant family dealing with immigration problems is also dealing challenges are schools in K through 12 getting access to the college, is also dealing with problems in work the place
sometimes. So connecting these issues enriches our movement except much more powerful.

DOLMA: Talking about the movement, there is currently a lot of talk at our Federal government about immigration policies and reforms and you know this is also true at the state and community level. So why do you think immigration has became such a hot topic in our country right now?

MOORE: (01:16:48:05) It’s a great question and I don’t have all the answers. I have questions than answers. But there is I think there is a sense that it’s helpful to see immigrants’ rights about deeply about racial justice, deeply about what it means to be an American. You know there are campaigns and programs nationally called defining American. Does it mean to be white, do it means to be middle class? Does it mean to be male? Or does it mean to be straight or you know like there are all these questions. I think it also is, there is quote by a sociologist that I really admire. The quote goes something like this “immigration has become a theatre, where we engage all of our anxieties or anxieties about lost jobs and lost faith in the nation.” So I think when people are struggling what the American dream means in their own family whether it’s a white family and African American family. What it takes to pursuit of happiness and the pursuit of freedom and liberty in United Sates. I think immigration questions do run into all these questions about what it meant to live in the United States enjoy the standards we enjoy now. But a amidst a growing economic inequality that the US is facing you know the whole 1% and 99% conversation the US is starting to have the idea that generations are graduating from high school and college without a clear sense of what their careers are going to be whether it’s sustainable for them to work, eat and pay rent things like that. So to me immigration is more just the broken system that Congress needs to fix. It’s very much related to questions we have about economy and what means to make it here what is happening in the world.
DOLMA: So how do you think, maybe it’s a repetition of previous question but how do you think immigrant’s rights in our communities and country as whole?

MOORE: (01:019:01:23) Right, I think the Federal debate on immigration law reform has been very good at clarifying some questions I had over the last five years or so. So, it’s doubtful that we will get aggressive human centered immigration reforms out of congress where things are so polarized. There is so much money and politics and so many powerful interests would like to keep the immigrants poor and exploitable. Without papers, the xenophobia and racism are much part of those debates. The dehumanization is so much part of those debates. But I think that immigrants’ right is really grabbing two humongous wage issues. When it comes to try to win policies that help workers and family. One is this whole criminalization, are we willing to be divided into the “good immigrants” or the “bad immigrants”? Is there certain amount of assimilation or certain level of integrations in the US societies and those are two different. But certain amount of acting Americans or being American that allows or that makes certain groups of immigrants more deserving. Does that mean perfectly clean criminal record? Does that mean not relying on public benefits ever in any situation? Does that mean having an advanced degree from your home country? What are the things that make people deserving a chance to live in the United States with status? I think the other you know and also the issue of terrorism really comes into the questions of who are good immigrants and who are bad immigrants. Who do we want here and who we never let in here. The other issue that it is going to continue to be challenging for us as a movement is the role that big business companies and money interest play in any immigration policies. As much as this country is built on genocide and slavery and much of our food production and farm production is built on a system of slavery and share cropping having an exploitable labor force of people of color, I think it is really deeply built into the psyche of the United States. Business interest in Washington and around the country trying to get an immigration reform that is good for their bottom line
and good for their profits. It’s not necessarily a policy that is good for workers. My organization and others are trying to really figure out where the compromise is or we are going to make compromises on the question of who is good and bad and who are criminal and terrorist, who is ok and are we going to make compromises on workers’ right both for immigrant workers and US born workers. If we allow an under class of workers to continue to be exploitable, invisible, deportable, jail able. Then we are going to have two systems of workers and it’s going to be very hard for the workers whether they are U.S born or immigrant workers to stand up for their rights on the job. I am really interested in making sure that immigrant rights movement continues to engage those questions of criminalization and economic exploitation on the other hand. Hopefully it is possible both in Raleigh and Washington figure out policies that honor human rights and worker’s rights. But it’s going to be hard and those were the edges where people are making compromises.

DOLMA: Talking about state level and federal level, I was wondering since you have worked in Massachusetts and now you are working North Carolina. Do you see there is huge difference between same issues in the two states?

MOORE: (01:23:21:11) There certainly is, over all Massachusetts is a more progressive state and the immigrant right infrastructures there has been around for 20 years or more. There have been institutions serving immigrants much longer than 20 years, but even like a policy type of organization has existed last longer in Massachusetts. So I think it’s possible to win small victories in Massachusetts for example better language access policies. State government and local government in Massachusetts would be much better in providing interpreters and translate the documents than we are able to do in the southeast. In North Carolina I mean I think racism exist in Boston Massachusetts as well. There will be reactionary, nativist, and ultra-conservative voices in Massachusetts as well. But in North Carolina I think the debate is that
such a beginning level, the level of understanding is not very deep. Many legislators in Raleigh don’t feel like they have to do or they need to do what is good for immigrants. They don’t really think that many immigrants need to be here; they would like to limit legal immigration. I think that is our job and a lot of other people in this movement. It is our job to help North Carolinans to understand the stories of migration that all people must be treated with respect.

DOLMA: Following up with that question, how your professional life and issues you fight for evolved in the past years. In your wildest dream, what immigrant life look like in a given community?

MOORE: (01:25:09:17) I would day over the last year, I am really interested in North Carolina in efforts where by immigrants are organizing by themselves. I think there has been a lot of reliance of on older generation of Latino leaders. It’s very good to see the emergence of new leaders whether they are workers at poultry plant or a dreamer who is trying to go to college. The emergence of new leaders is something that is wonderful to see and I think many of us in non-profit world should be supporting the leadership and then decision making of those new emerging leaders. I think you know the driver’s license issue in North Carolina has been incredibly polarizing even for people who are in the immigrant’s rights movement themselves. I would like to see people in our movement know each other better and build more trust and build more unity. So that we can fight that kind of changes in Raleigh and D.C that our communities need. It’s really hard when groups are feeling like they need to when a policy is a certain way and if they are in a different side of an issue when we really all do care about the same thing. We all want immigrants to be treated with respect. We want them to have full range of rights that they can access. So I would like our movement to grow and be stronger and develop more unity around the things that we can win.

DOLMA: Can you talk a little bit more about the driver license policy change?
MOORE: (01:27:05:07) There was not a policy change except for the DACA license issue. I can say a little bit more about that if you like. There was a very divisive bill that was introduced where some groups felt like it was a good way to win a driving permit for people who are undocumented. And other group felt like it was far too punitive, far too negative to all of the things that would add to the driving permit permission. My organization was opposed to the bill because it was a show me your papers Arizona style racial profiling bill in many ways. It had other very negative punitive perversions that would have criminalized our communities or even criminalized people that help in our communities. So it’s kind of the worst or the worst anti-immigration wish lists in addition to very limited driving permit. We believe that immigrants need to drive and that they should need access to drive and driver’s license should not be restricted at all. All people should be able to drive legally with a license and with insurance. And we will keep fighting for a good bill that allows people to drive legally. But we couldn’t support a bill that was so punitive and criminalized so many people.

DOLMA: How is their license different from others?

MOORE: (01:28:27:04) It would have been very different, it would have been a lot more expensive, it would have only allowed people who have absolute clean criminal records, it would have a fingerprints on it, and it would have marked the person in a country illegally and they were undocumented. So given the problems I have mentioned before about the 287-G program and S-comm (Secure Community), we are very concerned about how you know the discussion of the local law enforcement would have in like a traffic stop situation or in a school setting even or in many other setting in which they would have interrogate people on immigration status. This driving permit would have actually been an admission to people that they want in the country legally.
DOLMA: In your opinion, how does this current immigration reforms and dream act issue would affect the conditions of immigrants in North Carolina?

MOORE: (01:29:43:20) I think that immigrants’ rights leaders and supporters like me are interested in winning something that we can win for the community, you know, people are suffering every single day, people who have graduated from validate high schools are not yet able to go to college because they can’t afford it. They need instate tuition; they need access to scholarships and financial aid. People are being separated and suffering, you know, with deportation challenges, with exploitation on the job with so many things. So we need some concrete wins in the policy arena. I think it’s challenging though because as much as we want to win instate tuition and dream act at the federal level for those well deserving students. I think we are worried about what that does to the rest of the immigrant community. Of course we support the dream act and instate tuition but we know that certain congress people are interested in only helping the dreamers and not helping their parents, you know, not fixing a broken system that would help other people in the community. And that’s troubling, there’s even a bill where they will only allow young people to regularize their status if they join the military and well that’s a great pursuit, that’s a wonderful, we respect that. For many people who want that, we would also like to see a bill that allows education opportunities or community service as the three choices available to young people. So military education and community service, it’s important to include all of those in the bill so that people aren’t pushed into the military as their only option. So those are the kind of the policy debates that I think are really kind of shaping what the works look like day to day, you know, is that really the only thing that we can win out of this congress as a chance for the young people to go to the military. I am hoping for a chance to win for the young people to go to college. So as much as I am holding on to that value that I believe in, I am also holding on to certain value about how workers should be treated under the bill. So all of those affect sort of what we are fighting for, what our
strategies are, and how we are trying to shift the debate through newspapers and videos and things like that.

DOLMA: Right now at this point, is there any way for those graduated from high schools to attend colleges?

MOORE: (01:32:16:16) In North Carolina, they would have to pay out of state tuition at the community colleges and at the 16 UNC system schools. Out of state tuition is lot more expensive, may be four times or five times. There are very small numbers of scholarships available but those are only available at private universities.

DOLMA: If they couldn’t go to college, what do they do like my generation people?

MOORE: (01:32:45:08) That’s a great question, I think it would be great to talk to them directly, hear about their experiences because translated through me, I may get it wrong. But I think that they are trying to figure out how to make money, I think many are continuing to live with their parents. That’s also true for US citizen but I think that they are trying to figure out if school abroad is an option for them. In home countries, I think they are trying to start their own funds to raise scholarship money for themselves or their friends. I think they are moving to different state, I know of several people from North Carolina who have relocated in Texas because they could go to University of Texas at Austin even as an undocumented students that’s just an example. But several states have passed instate tuition for undocumented students; of course if you can’t go to schools, there is a tremendous incentive to move. So we are losing some of our best and brightest leaders through that. Well, those are really great questions and I appreciate for the opportunity to talk about my life and my work. I am glad that you are learning about this in your classes and interviewing people in North Carolina. Hope it will be a good experience for you.

DOLMA: Thank you so much.
MOORE: Thank you. Great to meet you.