

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Eduardo Rivera

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-08

Eduardo “Eddie” Rivera, ramp serviceman at United Airlines, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: February 6, 2022

Location: Rivera Home, Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, project manager *Tumultuous 2020*

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:49 / 1.82 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on April 15, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Eduardo “Eddie” Rivera, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-08

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Eduardo “Eddie” Rivera was born in Puerto Rico in 1980. He came to Chicago, Illinois, with his grandmother when he was four years old. Growing up in the Hyde Park neighborhood, Rivera was often caught between worlds. At school, he was academically high achieving and at home, he found himself surrounded by gang violence. During high school, Rivera was a talented baseball player and was part of the team that won the national championship. Success on the baseball field earned him a full ride baseball scholarship to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He initially planned on studying economics, as he always loved numbers, but his coaches recommended sports broadcasting to ensure he maintained the GPA required for the scholarship. During his sophomore year, as he was planning to switch his major to economics, he was injured and could no longer play baseball. This resulted in him losing his scholarship and being forced to drop out. He returned to Chicago and began working for United Airlines. At the time of the interview, he had worked his way up to a management position with United Airlines.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rivera was on leave for an injury he sustained from the repetitive movements he performed at work. When he returned to work in April of 2020, he described O’Hare International Airport as being a ghost town. In normal times, Rivera says the load factor of baggage into planes was 10,000 items per day. During the pandemic, it fell as low as 1,000 per day. While his wife, Gabriela Ramirez, worked remote and took care of the kids, he tended to the house and went out to buy groceries and other supplies. Rivera describes the constant worry that he would bring the virus back to his family of six as he came in contact with a variety of travelers. Rivera details his experiences through the next two years, describing his personal opinions and the way they’ve been shaped by the corporate and governmental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Puerto Rico; Chicago, Illinois; United Airlines; airlines; COVID-19 pandemic; pandemic’s effect on travel; pandemic opinions;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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