



A Postcard from the Road

Warren, Arkansas: Meet the Tapia family, from Cherán, Michoacán. Patriarch Raúl's been migrating ever since he was a rough and tumble kid with a liking for the road and for the drink. He picked oranges in Florida, strawberries in California, apples in Washington. He started coming up on his own in the late 60s, and when the kids, all five of them, were old enough, the entire family would pile into a van and criss-cross the country, following the harvests. They eventually settled in Warren, far from the gangs and drugs of L.A. or Chicago or Little Rock.

The kids grew up here. Full-blooded Mexican Indians in the middle of the bible belt. Talk to oldest son Jordan and he speaks an accentless Spanish and English, and even some Indian tongue. He says that he'll move back and forth between Arkansas and Michoacán; he wants his kids to know both worlds, be able to navigate both with equal ease. Next in line is Rudy, who did a stint in the Navy (but came out disillusioned and is now looking to finish a college degree), and he talks like this: "Now, I was bohhrn in Mich-oh-a-cahn, but I really feel like I'm from Ahr-ken-saw, ya' know," and his friends are mostly white, and he's likin' that country music, don't you know. Then there's Raúl Jr., whose friends are mostly black: "Oh, you from L.A.? Dat's bomb!" He listens to the late, great rapper Tupac Shakur and the wildly popular Bones, Thugs and Harmony crew. Younger brother Andy, who's taken to plucking his eyebrows and shaving the sides of his head in the very latest club style, is the same way. Now Maribel, the youngest, is getting interested in the Chicano thing, lowriders and oldies, the story of César Chávez... and she says that her friends are white, and Mexican, and black...