The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Maria Morales

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Juan Carrillo

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California State University, Sacramento Library

[00:00:17]

Carrillo Maria, welcome.

[00:00:18]

Maria Morales Thank you.

[00:00:19]

Carrillo All this I have to say before we begin questions. It's the introduction. You should know, and maybe you already know, that the film and oral interviews are going into -- I didn't know the total name until I looked at this, the Donald and Beverly Gerth Special Collections and University Archives of CSU Sacramento. It'll be part of this oral history project. And so I have to ask you, do you agree to this recording?

[00:01:01]

Morales I absolutely do.

[00:01:03]

Carrillo The date I have to give, it is July, I'm sure of that, and it is the 24th.

[00:01:13]

Morales I think it is, yeah, the 25th, the 25th.

[00:01:16]

Carrillo I think I'm going to do that every time. And it is 2023. It is now 11:26 a.m., and we are here in Sacramento, California. So to begin, would you please state your full name and spell it?

[00:01:38]

Morales Okay.

[00:01:39]

Carrillo And "Maria" you don't have to spell.

[00:01:41]

Morales Maria Cruz Morales. My legal name is Maria De La Cruz Morales, but I always go by Maria Morales, M-O-R-A-L-E-S.

[00:01:52]

Carrillo And could you provide me with your birthdate?

[00:01:56]

Morales May 3, 1955.

[00:01:59]

Carrillo And where were you born?

[00:02:00]

Morales I was born in Mexico City, Mexico.

[00:02:03]

Carrillo Let's begin by talking about your early life.

[00:02:07]

Morales Okay, I was -- do you want me to start now, or you had a question?

[00:02:13]

Carrillo Let's see what you're going to say.

[00:02:16]

Morales Okay, I was born in Mexico City. My mother had an older daughter, my sister Irma, and she told my father, "I'm not having another baby in the United States. They don't understand me when I'm in pain. I'm going to go to Mexico and have this next baby." So she went on her own and went to Mexico City and to a little clinic and delivered me, and 40 days later, which was the time that you usually, you know, could travel with a child, got on a train and came back north to reunite with my father and my sister Irma. So that was kind of backward from what a lot of people would do, just to come have -- to the United States to have their baby. She wanted to be somewhere when she was uncomfortable and medically -- and needed medical assistance, to be with somebody who understood her language.

[00:03:06]

Carrillo Was she raised in Mexico City?

[00:03:08]

Morales My mother was born in Veracruz, uh-huh. My mother was a great student, my grandmother says. My grandmother was from very humble beginnings. She didn't have

her husband anymore, who had been a sailor, and she had the one child, and my mom was always the one to recite the poetry and always, you know, wanting to be at school, very outspoken, and dancing, and my grandmother would say, "Calm down. I can't afford the shoes and the, you know, the outfit for the performances." Just, you know, but my mother was very outgoing and she came with my father to the United States for 10 years. They worked and lived here before they had children.

[00:03:45]

Carrillo And your father, where was he born?

[00:03:47]

Morales My father's family was from Tamazula de Gordiano, Jalisco, but they went on vacation to Colima, and my father was born in Colima.

[00:04:00]

Carrillo I am stunned because I was born in Tamazula de Gordiano.

[00:04:07]

Morales You were born in Tamazula? Oh, that's where all my people are from, my grandfather, my grandmother, everybody.

[00:04:16]

Carrillo This is the first time in my life that this has happened.

[00:04:19]

Morales Holy moly.

[00:04:20]

Carrillo I have never heard somebody say that they were from Tamazula, except family.

[00:04:27]

Morales Except your family. My goodness, we are -- Manuel [phonetic], my cousin, Coronas [phonetic], we're just, you know, all of our family started there. My grandfather had been in the revolution with -- he had joined Villa for a while, and then, you know, my grandmother was very religious, very Catholic, so that he became a Cristero and was hung.

[00:04:49]

Carrillo Mi papa tambien, he was a Cristero.

[00:04:52]

Morales He was a Cristero? Oh, my God. He was -- my goodness. Wow, we might have to revisit -- maybe we're family. You never know. You never know. We'll have to look at --

[00:05:05]

Carrillo Three thousand people when I was born, and that was 1941.

[00:05:09]

Morales 1941.

[00:05:11]

Carrillo Three thousand people, so those who preceded our generations, there were less than that in Tamazula.

[00:05:18]

Morales Yes, yes.

[00:05:19]

Carrillo So I've done all the research and all that stuff.

[00:05:22]

Morales Well, I've done some ancestry.com, you know, back with my grandmother and grand -- we've got to compare some notes.

[00:05:27]

Carrillo Oh, yes. Are we ready to begin again? Do you have to do anything? Okay. And what did your father do for a living?

[00:05:40]

Morales My father did everything, every kind of job that he could do he would do. He was a bartender for a while. He was a farm worker for sure. He was construction worker. He was a railroad worker, and in the latter years, when his body could no longer do that physical work because he suffered from a brain tumor and arthritis, he became a translator for the courts of Sacramento, and how he got that job, I think he was just at the court one day and they said, Do you speak English?" And my dad did speak with a heavy accent, but he had a very ample vocabulary because he loved to read. He was always reading voraciously. So he became a translator for the courts, for all the Braceros that were -- the farm workers that were injured, they would need to have a translator in the courts and he would go and translate for them.

[00:06:30]

Carrillo What did your mother do for you?

[00:06:34]

Morales My mother worked the cannery. She was a waitress, and then she died when I was three years old, so then my father went on Confidentia [phonetic]. That was a little magazine. I guess it was a classifieds back then, and it says "widower with two small children

looking for a wife," and he sent it all -- and in Mexico, it was very well read all over California and Mexico, and he would get stacks of letters and pictures of women saying, "I can be your next wife," and he interviewed about 10 of them. We went to Mexico and interviewed and found one woman from Mexico City and she became my stepmother. Theresa [assumed spelling] Garcia.

[00:07:16]

Carrillo You mentioned an older sister.

[00:07:20]

Morales Yes, uh-huh.

[00:07:22]

Carrillo Is that the extent of your siblings?

[00:07:25]

Morales My -- when my -- I had one more sibling, my brother Felix. My parents divorced when I was two, and my mother did have another child and his name was Felix, and my mother died when he was six months old.

[00:07:40]

Carrillo And your primary language in the house?

[00:07:44]

Morales My primary language was Spanish, yeah. My parents were very strict about only speaking Spanish in the home. We had a lot of cousins and they didn't speak Spanish, and my parents were like -- maybe because my mother -- my stepmother was from Mexico City and she only spoke Spanish. She said, "I can't have English in the house. It's only Spanish." So it was -- but that's what we did. We just spoke Spanish in the home. And my father -- there was a little newspaper back then called "El Hispano" Rudy [inaudible] ran, was the editor of the newspaper, and my job and Irma's job was to read that to my father because he said he couldn't find his glasses, so we would have to read that every week it came out. So it really helped us, you know, to hold on to our Spanish language, to read and write it.

[00:08:33]

Carrillo So you grew up speaking Spanish --

[00:08:38]

Morales Fluently, primarily.

[00:08:40]

Carrillo And say some of the things about growing up.

[00:08:45]

Morales Well, when we -- when we were --

[00:08:47]

Carrillo Family neighborhood.

[00:08:49]

Morales Well, when we were growing up, we lived over by Curtis Park, and my dad married this lady from Mexico, and all of a sudden, you know, things got more difficult for him. He couldn't do the construction job because he was always, you know, getting hurt, and he said, "I can't do this, so I can't afford to support my family unless I go and live in the projects." So we went to go live in the projects and he put us at school, Jedediah Smith, and so Seavey Circle was our home, and it was -- it was a great place to grow up, and a lot of immigrant families. It was a very safe neighborhood for a while, for a while, and then Father Kenny was our pastor at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, and my parents were always volunteering. They said, "There's a march coming. Cesar Chavez is coming. We need to feed all these people. We need to clothe them." So they would ask all the churchgoers to donate clothes, and my parents and my family would go and sort the clothes for the marchers so that when they got here they'd have fresh clothes, and we'd make lunches. So early on, Father Kenny became my mentor for, you know, the social struggles of the farmworkers. And so we were very involved there, and our families just was relentless, and so their support, so much that Father Kenny plucked my sister Edama [phonetic] and I and said, "You girls need to come to Holy Angel School," and he paid for our education. So we were taken out of Jedediah Smith, and then for high school, he paid all of our education for my sister Edama and I, so we were very -- always very grateful, but we stayed faithful to all of his teachings in terms of being supportive of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez and the plight of the poor, always to keep that in the forefront of our mind in everything we did.

[00:10:37]

Carrillo And your high school years were spent where?

[00:10:40]

Morales Our high school years, Bishop Manogue High School, Bishop on Broadway here in Sacramento, yes, and we were very involved with the Maya Club, you know, back there, and then we were hearing about the student walkouts in L.A., and we thought, well, we're a private school, but how does that affect us? And, you know, we would hear the rumblings and we thought there's something -- if they're protesting there, there's something that we're missing here, and so we started asking the school for more bicultural, relevant, you know, things, and so they said, "Well, you can do that. Let's do a program." My sister is very talented with dance, Edama, so she started at the school a [speaking foreign language] group, and my mother was a seamstress, so my stepmom was a great seamstress, so she made us beautiful outfits for Veracruz, for Jalisco. So the

school -- the Latinas -- "the Latinas," the Chicanas who were at the school, we formed this great club. It must have been about 15 of us, and we put on a great show at the school that year that Irma was the main choreographer for, and we kind of created a little bit of problems with the parents when they came to see the show because we did all the traditional, Jalisco, Veracruz, the Cumbias, all of that was beautiful, but my sister thought, you know, there's the Chicano movement. We're Chicanas. We need to have a [speaking foreign language] that incorporates the beautiful music of the dance era and the pachuco look, and so she incorporate -- we were all girls, but we dressed our -- did our head, our hair with like a front and the pachuco chains and the suits and the baggy pants, and we did a beautiful [speaking foreign language] scene, and it was a little controversial with the nuns and some of the parents because it was like, oh, no, no, you should only stick to doing the traditional, beautiful folkloric dances. So I think we always knew -- we were always hearing about the Chicano movement. We always identified more with that because we would get the pushback when we'd go to Mexico and visit the relatives. That's like, oh, the [inaudible] here, right? And so we weren't really totally accepted because we didn't speak the Spanish the way they spoke. Even though we spoke it well, we were not good enough, and then here, we would feel like, you know, we really were a little bit different, you know, we were kind of identified different. So anyway, it was -- Irma, and I applaud her for taking -- being daring and doing something like that.

[00:13:06]

Carrillo Would you expand a little bit on – they use the term "neighborhood" in the question, but in growing up in Seavey Circle, would you describe Seavey Circle as a neighborhood, or is there something larger that you remember growing up in a neighborhood as opposed to --

[00:13:34]

Morales Well, you know --

[00:13:34]

Carrillo I understand Seavey Circle because I know it, but for the scholar 30 years from now, what is Seavey Circle? Is it a neighborhood?

[00:13:44]

Morales Okay, actually, it's public housing, and it's the poorest of the poor need to go there, and at the time that we moved there, there was a lot of immigrant families. People would go on the weekends to the fields and say, you know, "Can I pick any of the pears?" The season's over, but there's a lot of pears on that tree, and so my dad and us, we would go and pick all the pears and we'd come back to the projects and say -- go door to door and say, "Hey, there's a lot of pears for free." You'd just, you know, and we'd all share things like that. But that kind of, after a few years, it changed. It changed. That felt like a neighborhood.

[00:14:18]

Carrillo You were still there.

[00:14:19]

Morales We were still there. We were still there, even though we were going, I think, to Bishop Manogue, I think my freshman year I was still living in Seavey Circle. It changed. It changed to where my brother, because he was not my father's son, went to Jedediah Smith, and he would sometimes come running and just banging on the door. He goes, "They're after me." He was little. He was seven, eight, nine years old, and kids were wanting to beat him up, and it was all -- then the neighborhood changed. The people who were able to get out got out, and then we had started having prostitutes for neighbors and having, you know, drug dealers for neighbors, and it was dangerous. And then, you know, my parents would not let us go out, you know, at any time of day. It was just go to school, come back, and it was no longer a neighborhood. It started out that way, and then it was just people with a lot of poverty, a lot of problems, and it was back when the welfare days where the women were not allowed to have the men, their husbands or their partners, with them. So the family life kind of deteriorated. There's nobody to bring the boys in if they were really being hanging out with the wrong crowd and all of that. So my brother got caught up in all of that, and he became a heavy drug user and eventually died of a heroin overdose, and all of those things really kind of just affected us because we loved him. But there was almost no way, because my grandmother thought that she -- my father would never love him or accept them, and my father tried to adopt him. My grandmother said, "No, you'll never love him the way you love your blood, so I will raise him." But there was no way an elderly lady who came here in the '40s and was born in 1894 and died when she was 106. She outlived, you know, my brother, and she could not protect him from everything out there. So he did succumb to the viciousness that affected a lot of our Chicano boys, which was eventually the path to prison, the revolving door, the drug use, and all of that, so --

[00:16:25]

Carrillo The word "discrimination" pops up here when you were describing your brother running home or the changing neighborhood and the immigration, the immigrant reality around you. Did you experience discrimination, racial discrimination at that time, growing up?

[00:16:55]

Morales You know, I think that because of Father Kenny and him plucking us from - even though we lived in that environment, he put us in the Catholic schools. I don't think that we really suffered that much discrimination. People would always ask us what, you know, some of the lay teachers as the class started, "What are you? Everybody identify, you know, who you are, what are your -- where are you coming from." "Well, I'm Russian. I'm Irish background," and then we would say, "We're Mexican, you know, we're Indian and Spanish combination." She goes, "No, no, no, just say you're Spanish." And I always thought, you can't tell me what I am because my parents were Mexican and we're proud of being Mexican, and I think that that's something that they instilled in us with all of the Mexican movies that they took us to. I don't know if you remember the Seena

[phonetic] Sentra [phonetic] was really a big thing here in Sacramento. It was the central theater, and you would see these wonderful, powerful women and Maria Felix, a revolutionary, you know, movement and how they worked -- rode along with Pancho Villa and fought for freedom and justice. So to us, we had a lot of those icons in our memories, and so we didn't -- I don't really think that we suffered discrimination. I think we were lucky. And in the Catholic high school, the nuns were pretty egalitarian, but they did tell us, you know, when we were going to college, they go, "Well, you're not really going to go to college," and I said, "Well, yeah, I am. I'm on all the college prep courses and I'm going to go," and I was able to get into Sac State, because I did get a good education with them.

[00:18:29]

Carrillo So what were your earliest memories, then, of the Chicano movement?

[00:18:36]

Morales Actually, my earliest memories are at Sac State. I was a student there. I knew Jose Montoya. I met Juanishi [phonetic], Rudy, you know, all of the artists. Teded [phonetic] Romo was not -- no, Judy Romo was my good friend in college and we used to work at La Raza Bookstore, and we used to volunteer, you know, to make sure that we had, you know, books available that we couldn't find in the regular libraries.

[00:19:08]

Carrillo The term "Chicano" or "Chicana," do you have early memories of that coming into your vocabulary?

[00:19:20]

Morales Yes, yes. When I was in high school and we heard about the kids walking out of the schools in L.A., and we knew about the Chicano, so we would ask our parents about it and they were like, "Don't say that word. It's a bad word. It means, you know, some [speaking foreign language], that's unimportant and you leave by the wayside. And so we thought, okay. Then you go to school or you go to -- in our -- in our realm of friendships and college, then we would go, no, Chicano is about empowerment, about us having a voice. You don't -- you would see it. You'd go everywhere. There was nobody who looked like us working in positions of power or even clerks at the stores. No, you know, it's like there's really no good job opportunities for people who look like us, you know, and so we saw it, we saw it, we knew it.

[00:20:19]

Carrillo The larger part, the larger movement in this country was the civil rights movement that had its parallel histories, confrontation and redefinition, all those things came with the Chicano. Do you remember anything about the – were you aware of the civil rights movement?

[00:20:47]

Morales Yeah, yeah, I was. My parents would watch the news every night and they loved Martin Luther King. They loved, you know, the Kennedys, and we had, like everybody else, a picture [inaudible], you know, so -- and they just thought, you know, Martin Luther King was a great man. So yeah, I was aware of that, uh-huh.

[00:21:07]

Carrillo So your parents didn't like the term "Chicano" and "Chicana." The larger Mexican community maybe shared that view. So there's this transformation that is going on. You're beginning to use the term?

[00:21:29]

Morales You know, I began -- I think it was my freshman year in college. There was Teatro Campesino came to town, to the campus, on the quad, and they did their Teatro Campesino about, you know, the plight of the farmworkers and, you know, the beatings, the police and all of that, and they were -- they would call themselves "Chicanos," and I thought, I identify with that. That speaks to me. So I tried then to get involved with [inaudible] and become, you know, friends with some of the kids who were more active. Christina [inaudible], Robert Dafoya [phonetic]. Joe Cerna [phonetic] was one of the teachers on campus, and so I kind of sought out opportunities to go hear them speak.

[00:22:13]

Carrillo Prior to that, you had identified yourself as what?

[00:22:16]

Morales Mexican American, Mexican American.

[00:22:22]

Carrillo Do you remember other people, not just your parents, but other people having a reaction to it positively or negatively?

[00:22:29]

Morales To the term "Chicano"? Just that my family didn't want us to be associated with that name at all, and my cousins, they pretty much thought they were Mexican American, and they didn't speak any Spanish, and they didn't really see -- they just wanted to be baseball players, and they didn't have any kind of social, you know, consciousness about things. They just, you know, it did not speak to them. But I think going to college, to me, it did do a lot for me. And then my sister started working at the state capitol and the Chicano Caucus was kind of a nascent legislative caucus, and so she really strongly identified with all the work that they were doing to help the farmworkers and the poor.

[00:23:21]

Carrillo Did you see or do you see connections between the civil rights movement and the Chicano movement?

[00:23:30]

Morales Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, yeah. I don't think we had a -- we didn't have early on as great or as -- we didn't have leaders who were big spokesperson like Martin Luther King until, of course, you know, the walkouts in L.A., and you had those teachers, you know, locally in that area, speaking and talk -- speaking to the students and telling them, you know, demand bilingual education, demand a bicultural education, let's get a better education so we're not going straight to, you know, from school to drop-outs and then going to prison. But then Cesar Chavez came along and Luis Valdez, so I think those became kind of our icons and we got more attention and I think we started to get more things done, or at least more attention, if any, if not right away, any good results.

[00:24:32]

Carrillo You attended CSU Sacramento.

[00:24:35]

Morales Yes, uh-huh.

[00:24:36]

Carrillo Did you attend City College first?

[00:24:38]

Morales I did not. I went straight --

[00:24:40]

Carrillo High school into --

[00:24:42]

Morales Yes.

[00:24:45]

Carrillo Were you in the Mexican American Education Project in college?

[00:24:49]

Morales I was not. I was not an ELP either, but I knew a lot of the kids there.

[00:24:56]

Carrillo So you were not a fellow in the program. Were you Felito [phonetic]?

[00:25:00]

Morales I was not, I was not.

Carrillo Were you aware of the Mexican American Project?

[00:25:07]

Morales I was not aware of the Mexican -- I was aware of ELP. I was aware of Sam -- I was at Sam Drees [phonetic], so Sam, oh, and Isabelle, you know, was also in the director of the ELP program, but I knew them just in passing.

[00:25:34]

Carrillo This is a question I should have preceded it with something else, I think. It had to do with your education on culture. Did you take any cultural anthropology classes? Did you learn about culture in the --

[00:25:52]

Morales Yes.

[00:25:53]

Carrillo The academic.

[00:25:54]

Morales Yes, in the college setting, I did. I did take, you know, courses that exposed me not only to, you know, the Mexican culture, but, you know, the cultures of Egypt and, you know, throughout the world, yes, absolutely, to get an appreciation of that, and music.

[00:26:09]

Carrillo How did that affect your understanding of the Chicano movement, about the role of Mexicans or Chicanos in the society? Did it lend itself to you having clear understanding you are now getting about yourself and others and peoplehood?

[00:26:35]

Morales Absolutely, when you learn about other cultures and the history that is written, you know, it's always the, of course, the winners who change and distort the true history of what really happened, and I think that it opened my eyes as to how people will abuse and rob a culture of all of their accomplishments and making theirs and just felt that this world can be so unfair and so abusive, but I thought that always -- I always went back to my roots, to Mexico, to see how the Spanish came and took all of our riches, you know, and enslaved our indigenous peoples and abused them and thought that this is something that every dominant culture will try to do to the next generation and somehow that we need to appeal to our better spirits, better consciousness across the board, across all cultures to be better human beings and not to repeat that horrendous history of abuse, you know, from time immemorial.

[00:27:50]

Carrillo Do you want to comment on how your earliest manifestations or your earliest self was affected by El Movimiento. So if it's unclear on that question, I'm sort of making up the question, but your consciousness, who you are -- you said something earlier, which is really the source of the question, of that's who I want to be, when you saw El Teatro Campesino and you said, "I identify

with that. That's me, that's" – were you learning something about yourself, is basically what I'm asking.

[00:28:36]

Morales Yeah.

[00:28:36]

Carrillo Were you going through a transformation that you didn't quite comprehend?

[00:28:40]

Morales Yeah.

[00:28:42]

Carrillo Can you talk about that a little bit, that change?

[00:28:45]

Morales Yeah, you know, sometimes when you're a kid and you just feel like everything closes in on you, you don't have any ability to change things, you just feel that you wish you -- you look out the window, you wish you could fly, and when I saw El Teatro Campesino and I saw the efforts that they were doing, I was going, these people are flying. They're making a change. They're going beyond, you know, their humble beginnings, and they're helping to make a change for the better. The people are working in the fields. It's hot, it's -- there's pesticides, there's, you know, terrible things going on, and they're making everybody aware, and they're saying, "Stop being quiet. Don't take it. Let's make a change." And I think that that spoke to me, and I thought, what could -- what can I do? And I think I was looking for a way to help and I didn't know, so I volunteered for La Raza Bookstore and I thought, okay, books, ideas. This is a good way to kind of educate people and make -- effectuate change. And then my girlfriend, Judy Romo, sister of Teded Romo, was working as a volunteer on this show called "Progresso," and she had been doing it for a few years, and she said, "I'm going to go on vacation. I need -- can you go take my place?" I said, "I have no clue how to do what you're doing." It's being in front of a camera. I said -- she goes, "You get a script. Just do it." She said, "You speak English and Spanish. You can do it. We need more Spanish-speaking people on the show." So I was given a script, put in front of the camera, and then I did it for two weeks, and I said, "Okay, thank God that's over." It's kind of hard to do because I was nervous about it, and they said, "No, we like you on camera. We want you to stay," and I stayed for five years, and it was a great opportunity, and I thought, this is where I got to really got to, you know, to interview legislators, Luis Valdez, the local Reynita [phonetic] from the first Fiestas Patrias, you know, community announcements about what's happening in the neighborhood and in Sacramento and Modesto, all the towns around here. So I found that very empowering, empowering, and at the same time that I'm doing that show, I'm kind of graduating from college, and I had been involved with Mitch [phonetic] and all the efforts there to support the farmworkers and local campus, you know, things to get, you know, more classes that spoke to us and more Latino staff,

or Chicano staff, and then, well, where did I go from there? Oh, I applied at the capitol to work at the state capitol, and I started working for Assemblyman Peter Chacon, who is the father of bilingual education, bilingual, bicultural education, AB-1329, which he co-authored with -- I think it was the Chacon-Moscone bill, so that -- and that was a legislation that had passed, and bilingual education was really taking off and it was having to be kind of amended and revisited continually at the state capitol because you always had the Republicans and other people who didn't think that was a good idea, that you should transition those kids right away into English, and bilingual, bicultural teachers were just kind of an employment kind of thing, and I felt strongly that it was not. It was giving kids a voice and it was giving kids an education more than anything so that they wouldn't fall by the wayside, get bored with school and drop out, and it was really helping. But then you saw -- and then I worked for that and the amendments, and I worked with Richard Alatorre, who at that time was a really great loud voice for the Chicano movement, Richard Alatorre, Art Torres. There was just a handful of Latinos, and I met other really important people there at the capitol that made a difference in education. Our good friend, Bill Chavez, I don't know if you know him, he was great about, you know, trying to make sure that we got funds to our community to educate our kids to try to stop that dropout rate and the pipeline to prison. So I met a lot of good people.

[00:33:01]

Carrillo I'm going to stick a little bit with transformation ideas because I'm interested, and the questions are rooted in the concept of that process of being who you are and where people come from, and then, you know, something happens in life. Here it's we're talking about the Chicano movement, and things -- all of a sudden the world changes. Everything is altered and you're seeing things differently. So I'm going to stick with that.

[00:33:41]

Morales Okay, yeah, yeah.

[00:33:43]

Carrillo To go back to the ballot for political in high school and the idea of introducing into this very traditional Mexican art form the reality of Mexicans in the United States, who call themselves "Chicanos," inserted into a ballot for political presentation. I only want to go back to that's pretty remarkable moment that your sister and the other dancers introduced on the stage for an audience that would never have expected that, right? So can you say something else more, fill in what it took to do that?

[00:34:31]

Morales Oh, it took hours and hours of commitment. I mean, my sister Irma was like a sponge. We would go every once in a while to Mexico and they would say, "Well, you know, what do you want to do in the time that we have? You can take" -- Irma said, "Please, can I go to a dance class?" And Irma would just have to see things like once and she would just learn it, and she learned, and in her mind, she would choreograph all these

things. So when she came back, she was a really demanding choreographer. I mean, I think Irma could have gotten far if she had found a profession in that, and we would practice every day after school, hours and hours, and it spoke to us, and you hear the lyrics of the songs and the beat of the music, that some of it sometimes is a little bit pre-Columbian, some Spanish, sometimes it's all a new sound, and you feel it in your heart. I mean, you can't dance La Negra from Jalisco without feeling, you know, like you're -- or do Nortena dances and not feel uplifted and kind of feel the whole, you know, be reminded of the revolution and the stories that you heard. I mean, I grew up hearing so many stories from my mom and my grandmother and they would kind of come alive through the music. My dad -- you know, feeling empowered by this music. I remember my dad would tell us that he'd sometimes work really hard in the fields, him and his brother, and then they'd come -- go into town for something or other and they would be walking back, and today's payday, and what are we going to do with this check, and, oh, my goodness, send it back to Mexico, to mom, and this and that, and then they'd see the bus of immigration, customs come and picking up all their fellow, you know, workers. You know, sometimes they'd get lucky and be the ones that weren't picked up because they had gone to town and missed the bus that took everybody back. But in terms of, you know, feeling the moment of passion for the Chicano movement and all of that, I think it, yeah, it was through the dance. It was also through the plight of my brother, seeing my brother, kind of this wonderful, young, happy kid, be kind of absorbed by the gang culture and the drug culture and there was no real help for him. There was no real way out, and I thought, well, if there's something that I can do when I grow up, and the Chicano movement, I think, spoke to me in that way, that we need better education, and then as you get older and you find out about addiction and that sort of thing, well, we need to do something about that. And I think when I met the man who would become my husband, Jim Gonzalez, I met him at the state capitol. We went on one date, and we went rafting here in Sacramento, and we talked about our aspiration, what kind of life if, you know, do you see for your future, and I said, "I see a life where I want to always fight for social justice. I would think that's very important. Whatever I do, I want to make sure that I do that," and he says, "Well, you could do it now with bilingual education." I said, "Yeah, but what else can we do?" You know, you just feel sometimes so insignificant, and he was doing other things, and we said, "Well, if we ever get together, let's continue to work for that, for social justice, have that at the forefront of our relationship." So he proposed to me on that one date, and so I said yes, and ever since then, we've always sought out social justice opportunities. We've done many different jobs, but I think -- we've been working now together for almost 25 years in our business. We have a consulting businesses. It's political strategy, public policy, and we've worked on drug treatment versus incarceration, Proposition 36, we've worked on the Prop 63, the mental health initiative that a lot of us in our families have mental -- people with mental health issues and not enough resources, especially if you're poor, especially if you're a minority community. So those propositions did pass. We also worked on the medical rights, one that was the cannabis, medical marijuana, and that we felt very strongly about because marijuana was very prevalent in our community and it was always demonized, but it's actually brought a lot of benefit for

people who are ill. So we worked on that proposition. We also worked on a proposition, I think it was 62, to reverse the death penalty. We were not successful with that. With most of the propositions we worked on, we were successful. We were worked on Proposition 7, I think it was in 2007, that was a solar a clean energy initiative. We wanted to slow down climate change and help people do more solar, and we were up -- PG&E dropped $40 million against the campaign that we were in at that time. So, and then Jim became at one point in San Francisco the supervisor for the city and county of San Francisco, and Bush came to visit. I want to say it was 2008. Bush was running for president, and Dolores Huerta was out there protesting, and the cops kind of moving them to the site, and they ruptured her ribs and her spleen, and it made it -- everybody said it's an accident, you know, it just happened. They weren't really, you know, seeking her out, but when you see the film and some of the films the network -- wasn't a network. It was a local reporter, camera, caught it, and they were just really zeroing in on her and had the baton, just almost killed her. So Jim was a supervisor and he called for an investigation, so did the mayor, everybody, and the chief of police at that time, Jordan, said it was all an accident, you know, it was just "Sorry, guys, but it was all an accident." So Jim says, "I want to see the file of that cop who did that," and Jordan sent over the file, clean file, nothing there. Guy was a good cop. And Jim pressed it, and somebody else in the police department came forward to Jim and said, "It's a dirty cop. They cleaned his file. He's really violent and abusive and he's got a history." So Jim went to Frank Jordan and said, "You have to make good by Dolores Huerta. This guy is a dirty cop. You hid something." I don't know if I'm talking out of school here. Maybe, you know, it's – but it's so many years later. Well, they did kind of, you know, fess up, and Dolores sued the city, and they did have to -- I don't know how much they paid, but they did have to make good by her. But, you know, a lot of the pressure was to say, you know, this the city of San Francisco, we're a liberal city, we don't do things like that. Let's just say that it was an accident and let it, you know, so I think in our lives, Jim and I have always kind of tried to seek out opportunities in our work and things that we do for social justice. I've served as vice president of the Mexican Cultural Center of Northern California where we promote the culture of Mexico and every, you know, opportunity we can to work with schools and some of the traditional things like the Reina Fiestas Patrias pageant where you take a bunch of young ladies and you teach them how to do good public speaking, how to present themselves and that sort of thing. I always thought that was a little superfluous. I didn't really like the whole pageant thing, but what I've seen is that it does teach some important skills to those young women that they wouldn't have otherwise, you know, for public speaking, learning about their culture, and getting a scholarship at the end of the thing for college. So we also work a lot with something called "Sienna Migos" [phonetic]. It's a program which is a wonderful non-profit that works with the Mexican consulate, and we give out -- we've given out, I don't even know, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships for this area for kids to go on to college. So, and the Mexican consulate, you know, to their credit, helps a lot to set up all of the interviews, the essay review, all the community comes together to review the essays annually, and we do a big fair, college fair. We invite all the colleges, UC Davis, and even colleges from Mexico to come in, and we have

over 1,000 students, I think, attend that. So I know we haven't had the big, you know, Chicano movement kind of experience, but I think it was because of Father Kenny that was able to kind of give us a little bit better, easier access to education, but I think also that I owe whatever activism I do have, thanks to his mentorship. Oh, and let me tell you one thing that I've always been very proud of. When my daughter turned 15, we took her to Our Lady of Guadalupe to do her quinceanera mass. The priest that was there was the legionnaire, Irish priest who was there. So bizarre, very interesting confessions, all the kids afterwards, I don't want -- can't talk about confession, but that was a weird confession. I said, "Don't talk about it. Just do your prayers," but after like the third or fourth kid came to me and said, "That was a weird confession," I said, "I'm sorry, we're probably going to burn in hell, but what did he ask you?" There were all of these very sexual, you know, questions, do you touch your privates, do you ever have sleepovers, do you touch their privates, and making all these kids, you know, just focus in on that, so I was really upset. So I went to the church and I said, "I want to meet with the priest and say something very delicate that I need," and they said, "Oh, no, no go talk to the Latino representative, a layman. He'll talk to you," and I said, "It's a very delicate matter. It has to do with confession." Well, when you're Mexican, the guy's, you know, Latino, go talk to him. So I said, "I want to talk to a priest." So I would not budge from the diocese and they never saw me. So I did what I learned in organizing with Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. We did an ironing board brigade. You know, we were trained by Fred Ross and other things that we had done, and we set up ironing boards in front of Our Lady of Guadalupe church every day, saying -- with a little postcard saying, "This church, this new pastor has gotten rid of La Guadalupana." So if you don't know who they are, they're the ladies who used to make every Sunday the tamales and the breakfast and everything. He closed all of those people out, all the elders, everything had a lock now. Nobody could come and go. And I researched this Legionnaires of Christ. They had the rumors, heavy rumors in Mexico and Italy about the abuse of boys. So I said, "This, there's one in our midst." So I started a whole campaign where people would sign and we would protest, and I went to the cathedral and I protested once in front of Bishop Wiegand, and he came up to us furious, to me and my friend Norma Menos [phonetic]. He goes, "You guys are no longer Mexican. You guys speak English. Go to another church. Leave that church alone. It'll be fine." And I said, "You've got a wolf in that midst." I said, "You're responsible." So we took on the church, and we had a big write-up and music review with Our Lady of Guadalupe was on the cover about our efforts to try to get rid of this, what we thought was a pedophile, and we eventually succeeded, but he was just uprooted and sent to Mexico to another parish. But I think I was not afraid of the church. I think I was not afraid. I was happy to organize and try to protect, you know, the least, the innocent amongst us. So I've got kind of a quiet personality, but I'm not afraid. That's one of the things that I've learned thanks to the movement, I think, that you've got to speak up.

[00:46:53]

Carrillo I want to ask you more about the role of women in the Movimiento. You've said a lot of things about yourself and other women. You want to add something to what you believe has been the role of Chicanos in the Movimiento?

[00:47:15]

Morales Well, I think the Chicano movement has been dominated by male voices, even, you know, very quiet male voices, like the powerful quiet voices of Cesar Chavez, but a woman who had worked alongside him and was phenomenal, and is phenomenal to this day, is Dolores Huerta. She is 93 years old and she believes that every moment is a good moment to teach people to self-empower, to vote, to make a change in their neighborhood, if they don't have sidewalks, if they have bad drinking water. So she is always organizing, especially with the youth. That is very important for her, and to get out to vote, and her voice is also a quiet voice, and her message has been [speaking foreign language], but she is trying to -- or not "is trying to." She will build a center in Bakersfield, in downtown Bakersfield. She's amassed the resources to build the Dolores Huerta Peace and Justice Cultural Center of the foundation, and what she wants to do is incorporate the organizing skills and the culture so the kids know where they came from, are proud of who they are, can express their voice through art, through poetry, through songs, through paintings, and this center is a long time in coming, and it will be built, I think, by the year 2024. So I just want to applaud and thank Dolores Huerta for the example that she has given us women because a lot of times we think we can't do anything. Who am I? I'm only one person. But she says, "You are the one person who could go out there and make sure that your school lunches are quality lunches, that it's not just a bunch of junk food getting where all your kids are going to grow up to be diabetic," and that's the problem that we're having right now, too, is that a lot of our people, a lot of our Chicanos, a lot of our youth is getting -- becoming diabetic way too early, you know, and what it is that they're eating just a bunch of junk food, and I think that she is helping to effectuate change at every level, trying to make sure that we get good quality education and teaching parents and students that they have a voice and they can go to the city council and protest things when things are out of line and the power of our vote to make sure that we all register to vote.

[00:49:55]

Carrillo When you look back to all your activities, all the organizations you were involved with, your experiences with different organizations, can you -- are there some organizations that you think really contributed to the Chicano movement here in Sacramento?

[00:50:26]

Morales Oh, my gosh, yes.

[00:50:28]

Carrillo You might have already mentioned them, I'm sorry.

[00:50:30]

Morales I don't think I did, but I'm extremely grateful to El Concilio. El Concilio was a phenomenal organization that provided resources to not only the show like Progresso to get the word out in the media and tell our stories which were not being told and the overall general media, also the resources that they brought to bear for health services for senior services. A lot of the seniors found community there, so I'm very grateful to El Concilio. They were a great, a great resource for us in the Chicano movement.

[00:51:14]

Carrillo How did the movement change your, if it did, change your personal relationships with either family, peers, or significant others in the community?

[00:51:31]

Morales I think it taught me to not – for me personally, the Chicano movement, I come from a very traditional family where you weren't supposed to, you know, you're just supposed to grow up and find a good husband and get married and that's it, so I challenged a lot of those traditional values with my own family, and they thought, you know, that I was being a little bit too libertina [phonetic], you know, that I was not adhering to their Catholic strict values. So, and I went on to college, and I went and did my own thing. They would say, "You can't go to the movies, you know, with a boy," and I would say, "There's nothing wrong with that," you know. "I'm going to go," and they would be, like, furious. I mean, like, they were going to beat me if I went out the door and went in the car was some boy, and I would say, "I know who I am," and I think the Chicano movement gave me that self-assuredness. I know who I am, I'm not doing anything bad, and I'm going, and so I think also it made me feel like I needed to connect with other people who were like-minded and always knew that -- for example, I grew up with and going to school with Francis Godinez. Francis Godinez ends up marrying [inaudible], and then I end up not having the job, but then I heard that this organization called MALDEF needed a fundraiser, so then I get Paul Rodriguez from L.A. to come and perform for -- and I said, "Okay, who can do these great invitations? Oh, you know, Freddy from the RCAF," the whole -- and it would be you guys were always a resource for me and I always felt like I wasn't alone in anything that I did, that I had the Chicano movement, you know, with me, empowering me, had the artistic -- the talents that I didn't have, I had them within my Chicano community, so I didn't feel like I was alone in any effort I undertook. I felt that, you know, El Hispano, that RCAF were always going to be with me. I didn't feel alone.

[00:53:31]

Carrillo Now, a number of activists have died, have passed on. Can you identify any individual or individuals that are no longer with us that had an impact?

[00:53:47]

Morales Oh, my God, of course, yes. Joe Cerna, Isabelle Cerna, they were amazing. They were giants in our community.

[00:53:56]

Carrillo And explain why you chose those two.

[00:54:00]

Morales Well, Isabelle because she was at Sac State and all the kids who were maybe struggling to succeed academically, she would make sure that she would pull them in and have the resources and the counseling and the -- shore them up so that they could succeed, because you didn't have anybody at home who could help you with those term papers or with that difficult time you were going through, but she made sure that she would pool those resources, and she was great at Sac State. And then Joe Cerna, you know, a great teacher, a great mentor, and he was great for the city of Sacramento. You know, he's just a great resource and a great voice and a man who wouldn't put up with the mediocrity for our community.

[00:54:51]

Carrillo [inaudible] two, I --

[00:54:51]

Morales Yeah, I didn't -- oh, oh, my goodness, let's see, Bill Chavez was another one of my -- another giant. He was probably in the background. Nobody really knew who Bill Chavez outside of the legislative world, but he did so much for K through 12 education, and Bill got cancer early on. He was raised pretty much in the fields, I think, close to Salinas, so he and his sister developed cancer early on and it took Bill way too young, and his two boys -- he is survived by his two boys. That's all I can, you know, think of right now. I mean, for me, Luis Valdez was also a great voice and a great inspiration for the Chicano movement.

[00:55:41]

Carrillo But he hasn't passed on.

[00:55:42]

Morales Oh, he hasn't passed, no, no. Luis is still with us. I just took a picture with him a couple of weeks ago.

[00:55:48]

Carrillo Finally, let's spend some time on what we haven't resolved through the Chicano movement.

[00:55:56]

Morales Oh, Jose Montoya, I want to say Jose Montoya. Oh, my God, I loved him. He was great. He was always wonderful to me. I loved his poetry. I loved his personality and his art, so his murals. Yeah, sorry.

[00:56:11]

Carrillo [Inaudible] an extra minute.

[00:56:14]

Morales Thank you.

[00:56:17]

Carrillo Anyway, the final part of this is what we haven't resolved, what was left unresolved by the Chicano movement, and is the Chicano movement over? Is it a thing of the past? Is it still present? Is it evident? And what is it that we need to address that we haven't addressed or resolved?

[00:56:48]

Morales I think the Chicano movement is still alive in the seeds that I think we've planted with those in our communities, with me and my children. I know that the immigration issue is a really hard one. We continue to have all of these very difficult, you know, cases of men, women, and children coming over, and my son did a movie called "Shattered" on the immigration issue where you have a lot of -- the families were taken into the customs, jails, and their children were taken from them and put into the foster care system never to be reunited with their families again. So in 2012, my son, because he's close to our family, knows how we work so hard on a lot of these issues, made a small movie called "Shattered" to kind of exemplify what happens with that, with the families are completely torn apart, and that film got admitted into the United Nations archives, but it's just -- that's one of the big things that we need to continue to protect. Our community is just torn apart and made to start from scratch at every turn, and I think that we need to -- the Chicano movement seeds need to continue to be alive to fight those kinds of things, and I think -- that's why I think Dolores Huerta's planned center is going to continue to have a physical place where you can go and organize and address those issues. But I think there's a lot of us who've went and work in the Chicano movement who still are around today who hopefully planted those seeds and they'll continue to grow. I know my daughter is -- another daughter is an actress and she's out there picketing right now with SAG-AFTRA, and she's been trying to -- she's been an actress in Hollywood for like 15 years now, and she sees, you know, that the Hollywood is not ready yet for a lot of Latino interaction, so she -- they get to feel the sting of the racism and all of that, and they have to make sure that they're around to make the next generation maybe, you know, have more doors open and available to them for their talent, not for their color of their skin.

[00:59:13]

Carrillo And your own personal involvement, will that continue?

[00:59:17]

Morales Mine? Yeah, it will continue. I mean, I'm working with Dolores Huerta today to try to make sure that she gets that center built, and I still work with an organization, Sienna

Migos, and the Mexican Cultural Center of Northern California, and actively work to get our kids educated and get scholarships.