

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Irma Rangel

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Theresa Riviera

Date of interview: August 4 2023

Unofficial transcript generated by Panopto captioning services; edited by Savannah Mitchell

California State University, Sacramento Library

[00:00:17]

Riviera Thank you, Irma, for being here today. So this interview will be video and audio recorded and will form part of the Sacramento Movimiento Chicano/Chicana Mexican American Education Project Oral History, which is archived at the Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collection and University Archives at the California State University Sacramento Do you agree to with this recording?

[00:00:52]

Irma Rangel Yes, I agree.

[00:00:54]

Riviera Today's date is August 4th, 2023 and the time is 1:30 and the location is Sacramento, California. Can you please say your full name and spell it?

[00:01:13]

Rangel Okay. My birth name is Irma Delia Pimienta Rangel. So if I spell that, it's I-R-M-A. Delia, D-E-L-I-A. Pimienta, my mother's maiden name, P-I-M-I-E-N-T-A. Rangel, my father is R-A-N-G-E-L. And my performing, performance name that was given to me as a child then I grew into it is Cuicui. And Cuicui is a short version of the name Cuicani, which means Singer or Nahuatl. Cuicui, C-U-I-C-U-I. Cuicani, C-U-I-C-A-N-I.

[00:02:06]

Riviera Thank you. Could you please provide us with your date of birth, the month, the date, and the year?

[00:02:13]

Rangel June 5th, 1954.

[00:02:18]

Riviera Where were you born?

[00:02:19]

Rangel In Los Angeles, Lincoln Heights area.

[00:02:23]

Riviera Where were you raised?

[00:02:26]

Rangel I was raised in Santa Fe Springs and Los Nietos as a child and teenager, also known as Whittier. It's like the west part of Whittier, California. Los Nietos is a small [foreign language]. It's been there before Whittier was Whittier. They have indigenous families, one or two that still live there from way back in the day, like First Nations people still in Los Nietos.

[00:02:57]

Riviera Is it still called that?

[00:02:58]

Rangel Los Nietos, yes.

[00:03:00]

Riviera Thank you. What did your parents do for a living?

[00:03:04]

Rangel They were laborers. They did a variety of jobs. The last jobs they did before they retired and they were retired because they were --

[00:03:16]

Unknown Sorry. Hold on a second.

[00:03:19]

Rangel Timeout. I forgot to turn it off.

[00:03:20]

Unknown I forgot to ask you.

[00:03:21]

Rangel I know. I'm sorry.

[00:03:22]

Riviera I forgot here too.

[00:03:23]

Rangel I'm so sorry.

[00:03:24]

Unknown Okay. Hold the question?

[00:03:25]

Rangel Yeah, we could stop there. Yeah. Okay. Let's see. Oh, here we go.

[00:03:29]

Unknown [Inaudible]. Okay. So when she turns it off, we'll just start with that question. Okay.

[00:03:33]

Rangel I'll just turn the phone off. Yeah. I got these people calling me. I'm a karaoke hostess on Fridays. So they want to know if I'm going to be there because I didn't tell them or they wouldn't have gone. Whoever's going to be there, they'd have nobody and I didn't want to do that to them. So they're calling, "Are you going to be there?" I'm not answering. Okay. Sorry.

[00:03:55]

Unknown So go ahead with that.

[00:03:59]

Riviera What did your parents do for a living?

[00:04:01]

Rangel My parents were laborers. My father's first job as a child was a farm worker. And then when he made his way long story short to Los Angeles, he began working in variety of jobs, factory jobs. And his last job before he was injured was, he was a security guard, like a captain. He worked his way up to be a captain in this company of security services. And my mother did a variety of jobs. Her forte, her strength was seamstress, but she worked in a sewing factory making mattress covers and she was injured as well. So they both retired a little earlier than the age of 65.

[00:04:59]

Riviera How many brothers and sisters do you have?

[00:05:02]

Rangel There were a total of four of us and my two beautiful sisters are in another place. Rest in peace, sisters. I love you. And my brother is still with me.

[00:05:19]

Riviera What was your primary language growing up?

[00:05:23]

Rangel Now that's interesting one because it started off Spanish. And then when we were at the age of going to school, the teachers told my parents, "You can't speak Spanish to them because we only speak English in school." So my father continued speaking English and my mother said, "No,

you always [foreign language]. So she continued to speak to us in Spanish. As a result, we were speaking Spanglish. So we really not rule correct proper English and not correct proper Spanish.

[00:05:57]

Riviera Interesting. Please describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and your neighborhood.

[00:06:09]

Rangel It was pretty normal. I had a happy childhood in my environment. You know, we do what kids do. Run around and jump a lot, laugh, have fun, play games. Pretty much. Yeah.

[00:06:32]

Riviera Did you or your family experience any discrimination?

[00:06:36]

Rangel Yes, we did. Yes, we did. I, in school, in elementary school, my peers would make fun of me because of my color. My parents and the way I spoke English. And as a result, I developed this low self-esteem. I didn't realize that so young that this was discrimination, right? And I don't think they got it either. I think they were like little parrots from whatever they heard from home, you know. And my father was very indigenous looking. So he fought as a warrior his whole life to stand for who he was. As early as the '40s, he bought a book and studied tailoring to make his own zoot suit. And then he got in trouble because when the soldiers came around the LA area and they'd start fighting with the zoot suiters, they would beat them up. Finally, they put him in jail and they said, "You have a choice. Jail or the army." So he went to the service. And then in the 50s when he got out, my mother and him went looking to buy a home for the family and he got a lot of resistance. He was a veteran. So he had that in his pocket to say, "Hey. I'm a veteran so I have the right. So they had no choice but to sell him a house, but it was a struggle. And then finally in the '70s when he was a security guard, we were teenagers by that time, we were having a 4th of July celebration. I'll try to make this part short because I got a lot of stories.

[00:08:25]

Riviera All right.

[00:08:26]

Rangel Anyway, the neighborhood kids, we were out front. We were doing the firework routine. You know, just sparklers and all that stuff. And we were drinking a little beer and you know what teenagers do. And my father came home from work. He still had his outfit on and we were out there and a patrol car rolled up with their lights off and they started to hassle us. So they were going to take two of the guys to the -- teenagers to jail because they found some pot in the car, but it didn't belong to these guys. I said, "We have just borrowed the car to go get some beverages." And we went back and forth like that. My father heard it. He walked out to see, well, what's going on? It was right in front of our house. And the one police officer with that big stick hit the kid on the head and cracked his head. So my father said, "Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey.

You don't need to do that. If you need want to take the boy to jail, take him, but you don't have to hurt him." And they told my dad, "Shut up. Get in your house and mind your own business." And he's still wearing his security outfit. And he goes, "Excuse me, but I'm a citizen." And you know what? That routine and there were about six of us teenagers. And, you know, when you see that happen, of course, you get emotional. So they're saying, "Hey, you know, what you're doing, that's wrong?" And whatever we were saying at the moment, they just opened a police substation in the next city over. So they radioed them. They sent paddy wagons and about 10 police cars. And my father said, "Come in the house, you and your brother and your friend." There was just a neighbor friend. He wasn't from the area, but he was just like, what do I do? And then the teenager across the street, the mother came out and she only spoke Spanish. So she was wondering, well [foreign language] You know. So my father explained to her, "Go in your house because, you know, there's something going to happen here and I don't know what it's going to be." So she started to go in the house and her stern son was yelling at the police because they were taking his friends. So then when the -- we went in the house. We had a big sliding glass door. And my mother, my father, my brother and I are looking out at the street. We are like in shock. There's like a group of police with their billy sticks, whatever. I don't know what they call them. Nightsticks. And they come -- one of them that's in the street points to our house and points to the house across the street. So a group of them come charging to our house and they start beating on the glass sliding door. And my dad says, "Hey." Like, what are you doing? You know. And he opens the glass door and he says, "You don't have to beat on the glass, can I help you?" And they grabbed him. They took him out and they started beating on him. And then they took the teenager across the street and I think they took a total of four people, my father and three of the teenagers in the neighborhood. Then they came in our house and they pushed my mom on the couch and they pushed me and my brother like move in. They started like looking around like for drugs, I guess. I don't know. Started tearing things, you know, apart in the -- that part of the house. Anyway, a few minutes later, a police officer comes to the -- into the house and says, "Can you please get me some towels? Your father is bleeding pretty badly." So I went and got the towels. There's a big puddle of blood right at the door. And next thing you know, my father is gone. We don't know what happened. So everything calmed down. It was 4th of July. I kept calling the police station. They didn't even have him registered in jail. Maybe that was a weekend. Maybe a day or two later, they made contact with us and said, "Yes, he's here." So when they let him out and he told us the story, he says, "They drove me around. They didn't know what to do with me because I was bleeding so much. Finally, they just took me somewhere." They bandaged him up and then they booked him. He ended up with 27 stitches on his head in the '70s. So since that time, of course, we were traumatized. They were hassling us. They'd come around. That's when they just started using helicopters. They'd shine the light on our house. They would come by our house with their lights off. This happened for at least a good two years. And we gathered the community and we created a petition, you know, against the police brutality in our neighborhood. So we caused a lot of attention, which was good because it's our neighborhood, it's peaceful. Because they build this police station, all of a sudden it's like, okay, where are they? You know, let's go get them. And so my father did sue, but our family sued. But the first, we were suing the -- I don't know exactly what happened, but the two police that instigated everything are out of the picture. They transferred them to another state. They killed one of them. It was like that. We got a lawyer. The first lawyer was not

all honest and he claimed bankruptcy. And then the second lawyer, we were awarded the money, but he said, "There's no money to be found. You were awarded money, but I don't know where to get it from. It's doesn't exist." So that was like our experience with the discrimination and police brutality.

[00:14:45]

Riviera What were your earliest memories of events that attracted you to Movimiento?

[00:14:51]

Rangel My older sister went to college. She went to Cal State Long Beach in '69. And she became friends with the students and she joined the MEChA group and became more aware of situations that were going on. You know, she told her story about the police brutality at our home and other small events that we went through in life. So she was becoming aware and educated of what role was she going to play in the community. So the moratorium roles rolls in all the gathering. And she ended up going with a group of students to the moratorium. And I remember her talking about it and some of the stuff that happened. So it's just -- it was a process that was in movement for me at a young age without really immature, young. Really knowing what's really going on here? I still didn't quite get it, but ---- to be continued.

[00:16:06]

Riviera How did the other Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Latinos react to the term Chicana Chicano?

[00:16:17]

Rangel Well, there were those that became aware and educated that, you know what? This is wrong. We have rights too. You know, we're not accepted here. We're not accepted there. Then we're going to accept ourselves where we're at. So Chicano became a symbol of pride. It was like a self-identity that in Mexico [foreign language]. Here in the US were wetbacks. You know, that was pretty much what was going on. And then those people who wanted to be Americans, it was derogatory. They didn't want to be identified as Chicano. So that's --

[00:17:02]

Riviera All right. Had you heard of the Civil Rights Movement at that time? If so, what were your thoughts about it?

[00:17:15]

Rangel I was a child, but I remember my parents would watch some of the events on TV or listen and I remember John F. Kennedy was very supportive at the time. And Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. Martin Luther King had a lot of awesome inspirational words. And my parents just lit up like a flame and got inspired by it. And Cesar Chavez, you know, my father had his experience as a child being a farm worker. His father brought the family from Guanajuato during the Mexican Revolution and they migrated to Texas. It was a rural area near Houston, but they called it Wharton County. And they lived like on a Hacienda Rancheria, where they housed the farm workers and their families. So they ended up there. My father didn't know that he was US

citizen back then, but he was already picking cotton at age five and six. He could barely lift the sack.

[00:18:43]

Riviera Were you in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:18:49]

Rangel Was I what?

[00:18:51]

Riviera Were you in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:18:54]

Rangel Let's see. Let me get -- yes, I was in -- I was involved. This is my impact or let's see. Where are we?

[00:19:05]

Riviera Number 4.

[00:19:06]

Rangel Number 4. Okay. I jumped. Oh, no, I was not. I was not.

[00:19:10]

Riviera We're going to go to move to [inaudible].

[00:19:13]

Rangel Okay.

[00:19:14]

Riviera For education and in your culture, did your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the Movimiento?

[00:19:29]

Rangel Yes. Okay. This is where, if you don't mind, I'm going to look at my notes here because I kind of have a lot to say. Yes. Once my awareness became clear and I understood the importance of my heritage and my culture I was -- my passion was blazing, blazing with wanting to do something, to know my self-identity. I wanted to learn all about my history and I had this desire to understand myself, my family, my roots, my people. So from there, after I went through those experiences, I knew I had to continue forward. So I started attending college classes in high school. And one of the classes I took was called Minority Groups in America. And that just really lifted the veil, like, whoa, you know, all of the history of the peoples that have come to the United States and there were a lot of similar stories regarding oppression, and poverty, and hardships, and struggles. And it angered me because I was in shock of all that had taken place

for this country to develop, you know, on the backs, and sweats, and tears, and blood of migrants from all over. It wasn't just our gente. We are First Nation. We were here already, you know. And I was proud to say, "Wow, this is me. This is who I am. I am a Chicana. I'm a Mexican American. I'm a Native person. I'm indigenous." You know. And so I was just -- my mind, my awareness, my full being was just lit up with a desire to just keep learning. Let's see. With that, in '72, my sister and I were invited to go on a pilgrimage, a spiritual pilgrimage. The indigenous people of the United States created this pilgrimage for the need to bring unity amongst the tribes. And they started to see and understand that Mexicans were also indigenous because we were, again, kept ignorant who we were and our roots. So one of our neighbors said, "They're having this pilgrimage. It's going to be in Arizona at the Hopi Reservation. You want to go?" And I said, "Yeah, I want to go." And my sister said, "Can I go?" And he said, "Yeah." So we went to Hopi land and it just took us to another level of understanding and wanting to really be part of our ancestry, our life, our bloodline of indigenous people. There were tribes there from many places. They were following their cars and going from one reservation to another. So, this particular place was in Hopi land, which is in Arizona. And it was the most fascinating, beautiful experience that really set one of the experiences that put me on the path. And it was a beautiful time of unification of all the tribes and everybody sharing their stories of -- their creation stories according to their oral traditions in history that was passed on to them. And I remember vividly this one image, we would get up in the morning and we'd greet the sun. We would offer prayers, and sage, and then we would get together, and they would make the meal. There was probably about 200 people there. And then we would -- after we would eat, we would sit together in a huge circle. Then they would like take turns, like who would like to share today about your culture and your history? So then people would take turns. And then in the evening after dinner, they would build this huge bonfire. It was huge. Like I'd say maybe 8 by 8 feet huge. And I remember this one beautiful image, where they were playing the drum and singing. And there's a lot of people and we were dancing around the fire with that certain rhythm like that. So it's kind of like a fast two-step. And I just remember looking at the silhouettes against the hills that seemed like giants because of just the way the fire projected them. And that fire -- it burned into my memory. It was so beautiful to see all the silhouettes of people dancing in harmony together and I was just in awe to see the shadows and then the fire blazing like high. So that stayed in my soul, in my spirit. In that, we met students that were part of a university that just been developed called DQU in Davis, California. So the day that the friend that drove us there, you know, we got to go back, was Sunday night. My sister comes to me and she says, "I'm staying. You just tell mom and dad that I stayed with friends." And I said, "Okay." So I returned home. She stayed for two weeks. She stayed on the caravan for two weeks. Wherever they ended up going, I don't know. She came back home and she says, "I'm going to be a student at DQU. And my father says, DQU. What's DQU? And she says, "It's a university." I think she told him it's a college. And he said, "You can't go by yourself." And I said, "Tell them I'll go with you." She goes, "Well, I'll take my sister." And he goes, "Well, if you're going to take your sister, you can go." And then she says, "Do you think we could use one of your cars? So you let us use a small car." So we went off to DQU and that was a totally different adventure. We learned a lot. There were, again, tribes, students. I was only 18. My sister was 20. From all over and they were trying to develop an institution for Native American and Chicano, higher education. And it just had been on its feet, maybe two years. And they occupied this land that was government land. It

was a former communication base that was just abandoned 648 acres. So the students from Davis, the Native Americans, and the Chicanos, they occupied the land. And the government said, "Okay. What do you want? What do you want?" "We want our own institution." "Okay. You got 13 years to get your accreditation as a junior college level." So community people, educators got together and created a board and utilized like the programs that were available for students. We were housed there. There were beautiful classes that were offered, including ceremonial sweat lodge, the understanding of the spiritual aspect of the indigenous person. There was folklorico. There was teatro. So let me see. Am I going off on a tangent? No. Okay. So, anyway, there was a lot going on when I was 18.

[00:28:28]

Riviera Could you tell me what DQU mean?

[00:28:30]

Rangel DQU stands for -- the, the D is for Deganawidah, which the indigenous people from that tribe didn't want to use the name outright because they -- for them it was almost disrespectful. So they wanted to stay with the D. Q for Quetzalcoatl, which symbolized our gente from the Mishika Nation, the, Mexicans. So then they kept it at DQU. And said, "If you need to explain it, you explain it, but we're not going to post it anywhere the full name." You know, of course, in case. Of course, they had to. So I received an AA degree from there, my sister and I. And four of my siblings we all attended the school there. And there were a lot of hardships. A lot of misunderstandings. The elements that come in from the outside, it was all there, you know. But for me personally, it was just a humongous learning experience from all the beautiful things that our people have to the ugliness. It was all there.

[00:29:48]

Riviera Is it still existing?

[00:29:50]

Rangel It still exists, but it's now geared towards a tribal school. So in my understanding, it's people who are from actual, like, I think registered, you know, tribes. I don't know very many about the Chicano students anymore that like may be attending there.

[00:30:19]

Riviera We're going to personal impact of Movimiento. Did your involvement in the Movimiento change your personality? And if so -- number 8.

[00:30:30]

Rangel Again, I felt empowered. I began to develop my voice to represent mi gente. and I felt like I had a purpose. You know, I was very serious about this. You know, my whole life revolved that this is what I want to do. Let's see. So again, it was a veil that was lifted so that I could see clearly now the lies or the misunderstanding, or misled, or not educated with a full picture. And it developed for me a strong sense of identity. And again, feelings of pride and love for my community. Love, real love and support.

[00:31:34]

Riviera They're going to the role of the woman in the Movimiento. What role do you believe that Chicana has played in Movimiento?

[00:31:43]

Rangel A very significant support system. The woman, the Chicana. For me, the female, male, it represented balance in the struggle. The male couldn't do it without the female and vice versa, you know. And, you know, for example, like we had to take on positions that we probably didn't even know. We had it in us to do like organizing or problem solving leadership, administrative, teachers. And finally, I truly believe that the women played the role of the heart. The men were the face, the woman was the heart. And we nurtured the inner needs of the Movimiento such as emotional and spiritual healing.

[00:32:34]

Riviera Thank you. Going to the role and/or contribution to the Movimiento, what did you personally initiate or help initiate in the Movimiento?

[00:32:51]

Rangel That's a loaded one. [Laughter] I personally initiated the expansion and existence of the Mexican indigenous cultural traditions through teatro, music, Danza, Dance, and indigenous ceremony. And I'm an advocate as a performing artist, culturalist and, vocalist. I vocalize. I teach voice. I'm a voice coach. And the focus, which is the next question. [Laughter] What were some of the organizations in which you were involved? [Laughter] Okay. Sacramento. Here we come. Here it is. Okay, again. So when I ended up here because I went to DQU in Davis, California, there were some of the artists from Sacramento that would go to DQU and take these posters of events. This was in 1973-ish around there. Of events were happening here in town. So we really didn't know anybody. I mean, we're from LA, right? In Sacramento, but we became friends with, you know, specific individuals. So then we knew there was a real, active community here, you know, especially the artists. So, that's in the mix that'll be coming, but one of the thing I call organization is, I was the student and worked with an Angelbertha Cobb, I call her Mama Cobb, who was a Danza for Amalia Hernandez for the big company in Mexico, Mexico City. She danced for per bit. Learned a lot of skills regarding folklórico, an indigenous dancing. She was a teacher at DQU. So she took me under her wing and I became part of her dance group. So for me, that's like an organization. She is the one that planted the seed to give me the courage to become a vocalist because I didn't mind being a dancer because I was wearing a costume and I was being a dancer. I didn't mind being an actress because I was behind a role or a character. But when it came to being a vocalist to sing in front of public, I was very shy because it was just -- it's me singing to you. And I started at DQU in the hallways and I had a really pretty resonance and echo in the hallway and nobody was around. I look around, "Nobody's around." So I start singing whatever came to my mind. And the students would say, "Hey. You sound pretty good." And then I would go, "Were you listening?" So she knew and she was helping me learn the song [inaudible], because I liked it, and it was popular, and I grew up listening to all those boletos from my parents. They would have these weekend parties and they would be blasting the music

and the kids would be running around wild while they'd be dancing wild. So that was in the mix, right? So I learned it. And one occasion we came here to Sacramento and the dance group performed at this nightclub at the time, which was kind of out in the outskirts called La Cabania. And it was a Mexican Chicano hangout, right? So there was a fundraiser there and she took the group and we danced. And after we danced, there was a small band, Mexican music. So they took a break. And then the band comes back and we're sitting there and my dance teacher, we're at the table, she's sitting where you're at and I'm here and the band is behind us. And I say -- and in Spanish, they say -- [Foreign Language] You know, I'm like, oh, good. I get to see some professional. Hear professional singers, you know. I was all excited, you know. And then the first name they called was me. [Laughter] [Foreign language] and people are clapping and I'm like and my teacher looks at me. Goes, "If you want to be a singer, prove it." And they're clapping and she says, "Get up there." So I'm like, I get up on the stage and I'm in half in shock, right? And the leader looks at me and goes, "[Foreign language]." And I said, "[Foreign language]?" And he says, "[Foreign language]." Like, what key? And I said, "[Foreign language]." and then he goes, "Chachoz, he played a little bit of it." And he goes, "[Foreign language]." And I sang a little bit of it. He goes, "Okay. [Foreign language]." And I said, "[foreign language], when do I start?" And he goes, "[Foreign language]." So he does this to guitar and I sang this song. I got through. I don't know how I remembered it. I was in -- my knees were shaking and my lips were quivering. [Laughter] So then I finish, and people clap, and I go sit down. And I'm looking at her like, how dare you or how could you? You know. And she smiles at me. She goes, "Welcome to the world of entertainment." [Laughter] So I go back home that night at DQU, right? And I'm laying in the -- you know, in my bed. I got my hands like this. And I'm like. I had this big old smile on my face from ear to ear and I was just so excited that I sang in public. [Laughter] Oh, my God. So, I'm telling you, that's one of my little stories. So, then from there, she formed together with another teacher who came to teach theater. There are all these awesome people who were professors or teachers. Some of them retired and they gravitated to DQU. They wanted to continue teaching and sharing. So there was another gentleman who was in theater, but it was more of like a serious theater, you know. And then there was another gentleman who came and it was street theater. So they combined their efforts and we created, you know, some nights where we performed the theater. And, of course, we performed some of the Teatro Campesino, [inaudible]. And that time, we heard that there was going to be this first time ever huge festival in Mexico City, [foreign language]. They called it. And I'm sorry to say, I can't remember [foreign language] or something. And she said, "I want us to go, I want the dance group." And some of the students were going to create a nice theater piece with a message representing DQU. And then I said, "Yeah. I want to go." So she says, "Okay, but I got to figure something out how we're going to get there." So she asked the administration if they could front her one month pay in advance. And she took that money and she bought our tickets. And so we worked and we worked on the obit. I was bilingual. And the day came. I don't even quite remember, but we got a ride or we took a bus to Mexicali. And then we jumped on this train. There was teatro groups from all over the United States, from Canada, from Central and South America. Hundreds of people at this -- I think I was 19 by that time. So, yeah. So it was just an awesome, beautiful experience. Teatro Campesino was there. All of the teatros were there. We were all on this train. And there was first class and second class. Well, I was on the second class, where you're sitting on your bench and you could see like -- in between the boards, you could see the still

rails, right? And then the first class, while that was totally different, well, we took over the train and we were running back and forth and they were playing the music, you know, because we were all performers and we had something to say that we were all activists, you know. It was awesome. It was for two weeks. So I had the honor of being one of the opening ceremony groups. And we performed right at the foot of Teotihuacan, the Pyramid of the Sun. And we shared our obra. And then from there, there were workshops. And every night, we would go and see some performance. And then the next day, we would discuss it. So it was just awesome. And then the closing, again, we ended up taking buses, buses to the pyramid called Tajin and Veracruz. And we would stay with the families and we would do our Obra for like maybe six neighbors. And then another group would be with six other neighbors over there. And we did -- I had the honor of working with Andres Segura, who was very much involved in the Danza, but it was -- they called this aspect of the Danza as Concheros. And they used the armadillo shell to create the music with -- it's a guitar. And there would sing some of like the hymns in Spanish because the downside is a blend, a mixture of Catholic and indigenous religion ceremony, spirituality, however wants to be named. So, I had the honor to attend his workshops. And those who danced with him, we did the ceremony at the pyramid in Tajin. And so, geez, here I am 20 years old and I'm dancing in front of the pyramids. [Foreign language]. [Laughter] Even went and drank pulque. It was okay. But the pulque was funny because we were all excited, you know, right? [Foreign Language] So we're walking down the streets in Mexico City and we find this pulqueria. So, you know, there's male and female. So we're going to walk in with the guys. And then they said, "No, no, no, no." [Foreign Language] And we're like, okay, [foreign language]. So the only way we could see our friends is there was this brick, the window. I mean, the wall was a brick wall. And we were looking in where the men were here waving, but we had to drink the pulque on the women's side and the men on the men's side.

[00:44:58]

Riviera What is pulque?

[00:45:00]

Rangel Pulque is like a fermented maguey that they make tequila out of, but it's a certain part of it. It's almost like the guavas. Like aloe vera. It's that kind of like gel-like.

[00:45:18]

Riviera Okay.

[00:45:18]

Rangel Yeah. That's a texture of it. And then they'll put like a flavoring to it or you have it natural. So in Mexico City, yes, they have pulquerias. And you get a buzz. [laughter] You get a little buzz from it. It's a mild buzz. It's kind of like sake. I don't know if you've ever had sake, but, you know, it's not a hardcore mezcal, or tequila, or aguardiente. That was in the mix, which is like drinking alcohol, rubbing alcohol. So that's one of my little, you know, adventures there. So, let's see. Where am I now with this? Okay, good. Gee [foreign language] at DQU. Okay. So then after DQU, the other organization, I graduated. Left, DQU. I went back to LA. I just didn't feel fulfilled yet. And my brother had a little Volkswagen, a lowrider Volkswagen. My sister, him, and I one

weekend we jumped in the Volkswagen. We came back to Sacramento and my sister met three of the artists from the Royal Chicano Air Force, the RCAF. Louie de Foot. I don't know if you've ever heard of Luis Gonzalez. He was a poet, silkscreen artist. Rudy Cuellar. Oh, I can't remember who else. But anyway, we came and we stayed the night at Luis's. He had a house that he was staying, his family's house, and we crashed there. And the next morning, my sister and I -- I don't know where my brother went, but my sister and I said, "Let's go walking." It was in the morning. "Okay. Yeah. Let's go see what this town is about." So we're walking up the street on one side of the street just talking, walking, and there's these two guys on the other side of the street. They're just walking and talking. And they start saying, "Hey." You know, I go, "Are they talking to us?" You know, my sister we're giggling. And then we just said, "Hey, back." And then they said, "What's your name?" And we're all, "What's your name?" We're all shy. I was what? About 20? So we ended up in the middle of the street. There are no cars coming. It was just not early morning, you know. One of them said, "Well, my name is Freddie." Freddie Rodriguez. The other one is, "I'm Chuy." Which was Jesus Ortiz. And, you know, we shook hands. And then they said, "What are you doing here? Where are you from?" We said, "We're from LA." And they said, "Okay." And then Freddie says, "Yeah. I'm a singer. We got a band going." And my sister says, "Well, we're singers too." And like, "I'm." Because she was more confident, you know. She was a little older than me. Probably by 40 days. After the 40 days, boom. [Laughter] So we just hit it off, the two guys and the two sisters. And they said, "Hey. How long are you guys going to be here?" And we said, "Just for the weekend, a couple of days." And he said, "Well, we're going to take you to town and we'll just show you, you know, what's going on and there's some music." And we said, "Okay." So they introduced -- started to introducing us to the Chacanava and Sacramento. And they were in their 20s. We were all in our 20s. So we leave, we go back to LA, and we tell our parents, "We're moving to Sacramento." [Laughter] "We're going to be in a band." [Laughter] So my brother says, "I want to go too." He was the driver. We came back. I was getting ready to go to school at Sac State. So I received some money. Took the money. Put it for a rental, you know, on a flat. So the three of us moved in there and the guy said, "Okay. We're going to have rehearsal." So I don't remember where our -- I think we had it in our flat. They didn't even have a place to rehearse. So we started exchanging like, do you know this? Can you sing this? You know, this -- I knew nothing. I just had the desire. Yeah. I knew nothing about key or rhythm. Nothing. You know, I just wanted to be in the mix. So we formed a band. And then we started meeting more of the gente in the community that were involved in the community projects for the children, and for the seniors, and just for the people. And then we started meeting more of the RCAF members. And then I was going -- started going to school. So I would say Montoya was one of my professors, Este Laviya. And then I met Sam Rios, who at the time was the director of the Chicano Studies. And they were just really gracious. Took us under their wing and started nurturing us. And then we got involved with the United Farm Workers Movement and met some of the people who were more focused there. So we just became part of the team. And we would make lunches or food when the farm workers came to town for the protest or whatever the pilgrimage, whatever they were doing at the capital. So when we were first a band, then when we met the people involved with United Farm Workers, they said, "You need a place to rehearse." And Freddie said, "Yeah." Because he was the one that was from the town. So, where we were living the flat like maybe six house down was this huge warehouse

that was the United Farm Workers like offices. And they had a huge warehouse in the back. So we would start practicing there.

[00:51:19]

Riviera Oh, nice.

[00:51:20]

Rangel So when we started, they said, "Well, what are you guys called?" We said, "We don't know." And then somebody came up with the idea with let's put it in the newspaper and say, "Caption, can you name this band? And if you can, we'll play for you for free." [Laughter] Well, nobody came. Finally, somebody from the Farm Workers Movement said, "Yeah. We got a name for you, the Farm Workers Band." So we became the Farm Workers Band and we would travel to where the events were. We made Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, my sister Gloria Rangel, rest in peace. Who was the lead singer? It was Freddie Rodriguez, Gloria Rangel. And I was like more the background singer because I was so kind of shy. Well, my sister became Cesar's foot massager when he would walk, you know, which was a beautiful thing. She just had these gifted hands. So she would massage his feet. And then a beautiful highlight of Cesar Chavez is, we surprised -- they had a big surprise party for him in Tehachapi, where the headquarters was this kind of -- I think it's in maybe Bakersfield County or somewhere that way. We drove all the way down there from Sacramento, the band, and we were the band for the surprise party. And then I think we just turned around and drove all the way back, I can't remember, but it was very exciting, and fun, and an honor. He was so happy that we were there for his party and the people did this for him. It was beautiful. So then from there, we became then the RCAF band because we started doing all these events for the activities, for the community. So it was like we were evolving. And then we got very much involved in the cultural affairs. So these are all like different organizations here that I was part of. So the cultural affairs was this beautiful committee that we would take like a traditional cultural event and then we would expand it. You know, for example, we had this beautiful spring event. Like for springtime, we wanted to do something to honor the spring. So we created this Fiesta. We called it Fiesta De Colores. And we would bring the kids from -- Mama Cobb worked at an elementary school and she would organize the kids to dance. We would dance around a maple with the ribbons. We would do that or we would hold hands and create like a serpent around a circle. Like we had a center place. A lot of this took place in Southside Park, if you're familiar with Southside. Yeah. And we would learn dances from Mama Cobb. And then we would kind of create a little bit of -- you know, add a little something. And we just all wanted to be in touch, in tune with our indigenous side, you know, of our people or gente. So we would make these -- made these huipils. This white. I don't know if you know the huipilli. It's like this, but maybe a little bigger. And then they had like printed designs that the RCAF printed, maybe the Huelga eagle, you know, and the kids would be wearing the huipillis with ribbons streaming down. And then we would take it a step further and we'd have a center where we would all meet in the center in the park and we would have blankets that were facing four directions. And then we would bring flowers and we would -- in a certain time of the ceremony, this was ceremony, giving thanks to Mother Earth and the season of the spring and all the beauty that comes at the springtime, the flowers and the new vegetation. And then at a certain time, we would take the flowers and we would pass them out to the audience, you

know, as paying respect and thank you for joining us, right? Beautiful. We had magical moments. Magical moments. That was one beautiful event I remember that we would do. And there was another one and I must share this one. Again, it was professors, and doctors, and community people, and the artists who would come together and we would put our input. People would say, "You know, I had this idea. What if we do this? We'll incorporate our indigenous some of the things we learned here, and the Mexicano stuff, and create a Chicano style too." So on one event, we created something. It was called Xilonen. Xilonen was in the summertime and I'm hoping I'm getting my facts straight on this, but Xilonen was when you would pay respect to a woman, a young girl coming of age. And so on this one particular summer, I believe it was Rudy Cuellar came up with the idea with, hey, let's build a pyramid. Let's build a pyramid out of wood and let's go take it to, I think it's called Via Park. Was that the name of that, Via park? It was another name, but I think they renamed it. I don't know what it's called now. So the RCAF built a pyramid out of wood, painted it and dozens of us carried it down the street to the park. And we had our ceremony there for the young lady that was placed on top of the pyramid. I mean, a magical, beautiful. The beauty of it is everybody had a role and everybody was respectful. I mean, sure, you have, you know, situations with maybe a little argument here or there, but, you know, we got to smooth this out. Forget the cheese man. Forget the Nvidia. This is the vision. Let's do this. And that was another beautiful memory that I have from, you know -- and that was part of the -- when I was with the organization of the Royal Chicano Air Force.

[00:58:09]

Riviera You mentioned the Royal Chicano Air Force. What are the acronyms? What does that mean?

[00:58:13]

Rangel RCAF?

[00:58:14]

Riviera Mm-hmm.

[00:58:14]

Rangel Royal Chicano Air Force.

[00:58:16]

Riviera Thank you.

[00:58:17]

Rangel Yeah. And Thomas might give a little bit more about this information, but the story I remember is the art. They were art collective through -- I don't know. In the beginning, maybe four guys or so. And Jose Montoya was one of -- back then, they were the generals, right? That's the terms that were used. Somebody had a Jeep and there was this parade in the street. I don't know if it's the 16th of September. Again, I don't know the details what's stayed in my head and they decided to join the parade. So there were in the Jeep, the RCAF in the parade. [Laughter] I wasn't there, but I heard. You would hear the stories from them, you know, and we would just --

we would laugh, and cry, and enjoy. And, you know, it was -- it shaped and molded me for my journey. You know, these beautiful human beings, the artistas, the muralists, you know, and others. The teachers, you know, Mama Cobb, who by the way, is still with us. She'll be 91 in October. And I'm going to go visit her before I go back to LA. So let me see. Let me see what else I can share. Well, in all that, I did receive my AA degree from DQU. I did receive a BA degree in Chicano Ethic Studies from California State University of Sacramento. And I did receive an AA degree from Sacramento City College in case DQU was not accepted. All this was important for me. I don't know. I mean, I don't even -- at the time, I didn't question a lot of stuff. I was just moving forward with on this journey that I was being pulled to walk, to run, to dance, to crawl on this journey. And because again, back to the Movimiento, I was in movement. So that was in Sacramento. Now I'm switching over to the contributions, my contributions in LA. So I must've left here around 1978 I think. More or less, '78, '79. And when I decided to pull out of -- after RCAF Band, it became Freddie's Band. I was with it for a while. No, look at my time. Oh, I'm okay?

[01:01:11]

Riviera Yeah.

[01:01:11]

Rangel Okay. Remember, you're supposed to go like this. Okay. I'll make this one short. So then the last name of our band, the band was called Freddie's Band. We continued doing many events for the community. Every type of celebration or whether it was a divorce, or a funeral, or baptismal, or we'd go to the prisons and share our music. You know, Freddie's Band, we went to Preston. We went to Folsom. They went to Vacaville. I didn't go that time. There was another one in near Stockton. I can't remember of it, but some people liked us and they said, "Would you like to donate your music time to, you know, our community that is incarcerated?" And we said, "Sure, yes." So then we went that direction too. So I was getting ready to come back, go south to LA, and my sister and Freddie they continued and they created -- my sister was very influenced by her experience at DQU. And there was someone there who created this concept or a title for a Chicano who was into their indigenous roots. And he called him a Xic-Indio. Like Chicano, Indio, Xic-Indio. So being the fact that Freddie and my sister were involved in entertainment, they created an opera called Xic-Indio. It was when the video first started coming out. So they have a very rough draft of it that they recorded one of the shows. Both Freddie and my sister have passed on. Actually, most of the members or might be one or two left, including myself, but I went to LA. So tomorrow I'm going to meet with one of the musicians from here who's documenting what he could of Xic-Indio production of the opera. So my sister and Jed Martin -- I think Bernie also another musician, I can't think of his last name right now, they wrote some of the songs for the piece. And so there's a song that my sister sings like in the opening of the play. And so they asked me if I would record it. And I said, "Absolutely." So I'm honored. This is a special weekend for me. So tomorrow I'm going in the studio to record the song [foreign language]. And, again, they want to archive it as well from the '70s.

[01:04:05]

Riviera Yeah.

[01:04:06]

Rangel Yeah. So let me jump to LA. So my contribution to LA, I'll zip through it because I know we're running out of time. I was part of the first Azteca dance group in Los Angeles under the direction of Florencio Yescas. He came from Mexico City. He was a Danzante. He did the formal dancing with Amalia Hernandez as well. He stuck with his Danza Azteca. He came to the United States. He based himself in Los Angeles and started spreading the seeds of Danza. And I was one of his students in the -- one of the first Danzate groups here in Los Angeles. Esplendor Azteca was the group. They also came here, Esplendor Azteca, through Mama Cobb on Alberta Cobb. So there was a nice connection of the danzantes that the seeds were spread. And Mama Cobb she took the reins and helped to spread the seeds of Danza Azteca here. And then from there, we formed an all-female Chicano group, ceremonial dance troupe called Flores De Aslan, under the direction of Josefina Gayalo. And it was a combination of Danza Azteca, modern and ballet mixed together. And our purpose was to bring prayer into movement. So we would create [inaudible]. My mother and I would put them together. We would all design them together. And my mom was a seamstress. I became a seamstress fashionista. And so we would make athraez. And then Josefina would create a theme of a song and find some beautiful music. And we would create a story through Danza. So my contributions, my role in the Movimiento then from Sacramento and I went back to LA, I wanted to keep learning. And I already had many friends in Los Angeles that were entertainers. And I said, "You know what? I need to grow. I need to learn more." Because here I felt like with the -- I got more interested in wanting to refine my skills as a vocalist performer. I did everything, but that seemed to pull at my heartstrings. So I went back to LA and I met Chicano musicians there. And they were -- a lot of them were like taking off to other higher levels of professionalism. And I learned a lot just being around them. I had a boyfriend at the time that was a master drummer and he worked with a group, Tierra and El Chicano. And he introduced me to all these people. So they became my friends. So I continued as an advocate of our Movimiento and the importance of who we are. The music that I would perform was bilingual. It was our Boleros, our Rancheras, Salsa. And then, you know, the top 40 cover tunes all mixed. And then I was starting to just scratch the surface of my original songs. So in all that, in LA, I -- Let me just finish the Danza. I also worked with my brother's group Danzate Ocelotl from San Diego. He had a group for 30 years and he would invite me to come and we would -- it was more of an educational. It wasn't so much Ceremonia, yes, but not real hard [foreign language]. It was more to teach the educational aspect of Danza. And then finally, Miguel Delgado Dance Foundation. Miguel Delgado was very instrumental for me -- in introducing me to the actors and the ones in film. And one day I was singing with a popular group that I became part of [foreign language] in the '80s, early, like 1980. And Miguel saw me performing and he goes, "Hey. I just want you to know my name is Miguel and we're doing -- I'm a choreographer and I'm helping to scout out performers for Teatro Campesino. And we have this project coming up. Would you like to go for an interview?" And I said, "Yes. So I went and I got accepted. I had to leave the band for a while. They didn't like that, but I brought my sister. She was still alive. And I said, "Will you sub for me?" And she said, "Sure." It all worked out. So then I became part of Teatro Campesino circle. And we went on to create this project course under the direction of Luis Valdez called Corridos. So his vision was to take the Corridos we all knew and he picked about a dozen of them. And we brought this story to life on stage. So anyone who was on the stage, he trained us. He had a choreographer, an actor, and a singer. So

it was like the power of a pyramid. The three points. And he groomed us be fluid in each area of performance. I was a singer. That was my forte. They brought out more of the actress in me. They brought out more of the dancer. They refined everybody's skills. It got to the point where he produced this production and we went to San Francisco. It hit big. Won a lot of awards. Ended up in San Diego. It hit big there. We came to LA. It didn't hit as big, which was like very surprising. We thought, wow, we were going to still be on stage right now, but that just wasn't meant to be, but that was a beautiful experience of being with Teatro Campesino as well, but thanks to Miguel Delgado. Rest in peace. Okay. So then back to here. So I worked with musicians such as El Chicano, Khalifas, the Midnighters, Ruben Guevara, Los Angeles Mambo All-Stars, and many more. And I'm at the point where I've recorded two CDs and I'm going to be working on my third one for next year. Next year, I'll be 70. So I figured, you know what? That would be a great gift to give to myself and then from myself to my community, you know, before I lose my voice because nobody knows when that's going to happen. You know, we're all lined up for when our number' is going to be picked. Geez. Okay. So let me see. So next.

[01:11:25]

Riviera The recognition of moving into activists that have passed off.

[01:11:31]

Rangel Oh, this is real important for me because my beautiful brother, Armano Roberto, Dr. Cintli Rodriguez just passed away on Monday, July 31st. He was prolific as a writer, as an activist, as a professor to educate our community, to become educated human beings on higher levels. He wrote books, columns, poetry. He became a professor at the University of Arizona. His works, you can find his books on Amazon. You can find a lot of articles on him online. And just this whole week, the community who knew him, who he touched and inspired through his role and his -- the person he was and his writings and what he believed in, they're all creating fires and bringing stories to the fire and prayers. I had honor to do a fire for him on Wednesday. It was just a few of us, but we did it in the fashion that he believes in, which was an indigenous way to pray. We had the fire. We shared to each direction, to the creator, to Mother Earth, to guide his spirit in the four days. Yesterday was the fourth day as he moves forward. And we asked for the blessings of the elements and we asked for the blessings of the children. It was very important to him. He wrote books for children to be proud of your color and your identity and your beautiful history and culture that goes back thousands of years. He was a great example to the youth. You know, law writers. He was part of a law writer magazine at one time. He was a journalist. The camera, he got beat up badly by the police. He won the case. He took over \$200,000 and created a magazine for Layente. He was just so dedicated to our community in the Movimiento. He was a beautiful, respectful man to the women of our community. We all loved him. And finally, to the ancestors, to our elders, you know, we are the same age, but I don't feel like it, but I don't act like it, but I don't care. I'm happy to be who I am. So I am just -- right now I'm sad in my heart that I'm going to miss him. But, of course, it was his time to move forward. And we're honoring him as that warrior. He called a yoki like that spirit warrior who spread his knowledge, his love for a gente. And from all our eras of -- he did research and found maps that basically had written information that our group -- some of our tribes, the Aztecas, came from the southwest and down to Mexico City. He actually found these old maps. I don't know where,

but you can find it, looking up Roberto, Dr. Cintli. Cintli means corn. And he really did some in-depth research on Maiz, the sacredness of Maiz. We are people of the corn. We are made of corn. I was inspired on my second music project to write a song called Somos Hechoz de Maiz, because the corn is our sustenance. All of the [inaudible] from thousands of years ago, he did all this research and brought it to surface. Look, look at all the beauty. Look at all the knowledge. Look what we have. Why should we put a stop and bam our curriculum for European centric history? Or we have history that goes back thousands of years as well. And we're happy and proud to share it, especially to the future generations. And on that note, I am thankful to be here. [foreign language]. And whoever listens to this, just knock it. Have the passion to keep moving forward. You have it in your heart and you want to be the flame for our generations to come. Go for it. Do it. Do it. [Foreign Language] [Laughter] I would like to share and gift, whoever's listening to this, a song that was inspired and came to me for you to receive it. It's called We Are So Blessed. It's in English and Nahuatl. And you'll understand the English lyrics. Nahuatl is basically saying, "Thank you creator for the blessings that you bestowed on us. Thank you." [Foreign Language] [Singing] [Foreign Language]

[01:19:41]

Riviera Thank you. Perfect.