

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

George Raya

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Rhonda Rios Kravitz

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

California State University, Sacramento Library

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Rios Kravitz This interview will be video audio recorded and will form part of the Sacramento Movimiento, Chicano and Mexican-American Education Project Oral History, which is archived at the Donald and Beverly Gold, Special Collections and University Archives at CSU US. Today's date is July 26, 2023. At the time of our interview is 1230, and we're interviewing in Sacramento, California. Can you please state your full name and spell it?

[00:00:50]

George Raya George M Raya Giorgetti or a.

[00:00:56]

Rios Kravitz But can you provide your first name, date and.

[00:01:00]

Raya April 23rd, 1949.

[00:01:04]

Rios Kravitz Where were you born?

[00:01:05]

Raya I was born here in Sacramento.

[00:01:07]

Rios Kravitz Where were you raised?

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Raya Well, I was born here, but when I was about three years old, my family moved to Wheatland, which is a farming town north of here, about an hour in Yuba County. And my father didn't like living in the city. He was a country person. So we moved to the country and he went to work on what was called the Golden Gate Bridge. You started as a field, then worked his way to crew boss Matt Foreman and then manager of the rancher. And so from the private family to became

corporate, it went from Golden Gate Hop farm to horse ranch number two, and he became the ranch superintendent. So was a hard worker, worked his way up.

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Rios Kravitz So that was your father. What about your mother?

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Raya My mother was a housewife. Her mother was a business person, had restaurant and bar the Rancho Cafe on Third Street between El and Capital. And so. When. But more about that later. Sure. I remember brothers and sisters. I was one of six, two older sisters, and I won four boys. That was from my parents. First marriage and each when they after the divorce, remarried. And my mother had another daughter. And my father. Another son.

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Rios Kravitz What was your primary language growing up?

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Raya Well, it was English, but the reason was I had my older sister, who's about five years older than me. I guess when they're when they're raising her, they spoke Spanish. But when she started grade school, really, she didn't. Have English that well. So they decided to switch to just English with us, Spanish to themselves. And so I never really learned Spanish.

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Rios Kravitz Can you describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and in the neighborhood that you grew up?

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Raya Well, we were I was the country cousin because most of my family, my father was one of nine and most of the family lived here in Sacramento. And my mother was well, she had other brothers, but they were my grandmother was a gold star mother twice, gold star, mother, maternal grandmother. So in harvest time at the ranch, because I lived on a house branch. They usually would send us kids into town to get out of the way because there's trucks going up and down the farm roads. And so I was raised partly here. I had cousins in East SAC living near McKinley Park. So I would sit with them in the summer and go to McKinley Pool and stuff like. So I had a really nice childhood and also it would stay with my grandmother at her restaurant on Third Street. So it was kind of idyllic because you're out in the country on the 600 acre farm next to the river. So, you know, you go exploring. And I went to school with the same kids from kindergarten to high school. So and when we moved there, the town had about 600 people and we left in about 66. It had about 1400. So it was a really nice small community. Very. Yeah, it was great.

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Rios Kravitz What did you or your family experience any discrimination growing up?

[00:04:47]

Raya Well, not well, not that I was aware of. I remember one time in grade school we had a form, we had it filled out and it said race. And I put Mexican and I told my mother about it. Says, Well, no, honey, actually we're white because Mexicans not race, is it? Oh, okay. And but I remember one of my aunts was a farm labor contractor, lived nights landing near Woodland. I remember going to the movie theater in Woodland, and, you know, so we're waiting for the movie theater to open up. Well, I'm standing right there in line, you know, with everybody else. But I noticed the Latinos were more off to the side. They really they were more shy were I was only one of a handful of Latinos that were permanent residents in Wheatland. So, you know, I got used to an integrated world. And because my family were business people, I just assumed I had a right to everything, you know, first class citizen and all that. So I didn't have a mentality because a lot of Latinos, Chicanos had unfortunately were treated second class. And that that even became evident when my parents divorced in 66 and I went to live with my maternal grandmother here in Sacramento, near SAC High, 37, the Broadway. We development had bought her out. She had properties in what was called West SAC. And so her financial advisor said, Well, invest in Oak Park. So she bought different houses in a four year apartment building. We lived right behind the apartment building in the manager's cottage. But when I started at Saks High, middle of the year in 66, you had to take an aptitude test. And I did very well because we learned we were next to an air base. So we had a lot of federal money for our crop for school because we had the base kids in our school. So I got a very good education being even out there in the country. But, you know, we were was great. Our high school was kind of like a mini college campus. So it was really great. So I scored high, So I was placed in the college prep classes at SAC High because they had a track system and really it was to divide. There's the the races and social classes, basically, because I was only a handful of brown students, Chicano and black students who were in these classes. It's college prep classes. And I had a brother who was a year younger than me. I never saw him at all during high school because the way the tracks were, it kept the races separate. And when I went to my high school reunion, the 50th reunion, I entered the dining hall where it was held. It all came back to me because I graduated in 67 and there are about 50 tables. All of them were. Whites sitting at all the tables except for a small handful. And the ones that those tables were people who had been on sports teams together, football, track, basketball, baseball. And it came back to me. 1967 was the year the Supreme Court said that interracial marriage was okay. It banned prohibit prohibitions against it because it wasn't that long ago we couldn't intermarry. And I go, wow, it really was a racist institution. So that's really, really, really hit me because it's good. It's like stepping back into the era of 1967, looking back a little bit.

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Rios Kravitz So what percent of Latinos were in with them? What was the percent of students in that in your school district?

[00:09:14]

Raya Right.

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Rios Kravitz What was it that would you say at that time?

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Raya Well, we were. Oh, wow. There are never more than like four Latino students in the high school because there are so there are so few families that were permanent residents. But it sat high because we were in the middle of Oak Park. It was a lot of black students and Latino students, probably half or maybe even more than half the students. The school had about 1500, and that was an eye opener for me because of the numbers in a high school that had more people than the town I came from. The halls were huge. And, you know, a.

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Rios Kravitz Well, thank you. What was your earliest memories of events that attracted you to me?

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Raya Well, when my family moved back here to Sacramento, it was the same day the civic Chavez crossed the bridge was finished. Their march from Delano. 1966. March, late March. And I wanted to go down because I was so excited by what was happening. But my grandmother, my maternal grandmother was afraid. Well, because, you know, the police were not nice to the people who were boycotting grapes and stuff like that. So she was afraid of maybe some police violence and she wouldn't let me go. But I remember that really sparked my interest in getting involved because it was it was a real event. All of a sudden, having this huge march to the Capitol and a rally and these Latinos speaking out and getting a lot of media coverage. So there is a lot of pride going on. And around that time in 66, my junior year, I saw a note on the bulletin board in high school that said, if you're interested in helping to organize a conference for high school students to encourage them to go on to college, please meet here. And I went and the older sister, a friend of mine in high school, her name was Elena macias. She'd come back from Peace Corps and she had been working in Colombia. And when she came back, she thought, well, I'm going to continue doing what I'm doing, you know, mentoring people, community organizing. So she was part of the. Chicano social work students sat state and they saw what was going on among the schools because she was a graduate of Sacchi herself, so she knew the track system and all that. So they said, We should encourage you to go to college because they were basically being placed in the woodshop classes and stuff like that. Vocational education, they were not being encouraged to go to four year college. So we organized the conference at SAC State and I got selected by a speaker and. After the conflict, we decided to continue to work. So we started organizing what we called Maya Mexican-American Youth Association in the high schools and then at the college campus level. And it went on, oh, I think to 69, when we got a call from activists in San Jose State that said we're organizing a statewide organization called MECA, and we'd like to have you join with us. And so they sent some of their people to our campus. And I was walking by the library the day of the meeting, and I noticed these guys by the library, big mustaches and army fatigue coats and berets and stuff. So I walked up to the Are you the students from San Jose? How did you know? Well, no one here has a mustache like that, big handlebar Mexican revolutionary mustache. And so we ended up joining them and they invited us down to L.A. because the brownouts had been happening and leaders of the brownouts were being put on trial. And so we went to support them. And that was an exciting trip, too, because

I'd never been into East. L.A., where everything was in Spanish, the signs, the newspapers, and it was like living in Mexico. So it was exciting.

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Rios Kravitz This is question is really related to thinking about back to those experiences. How did other Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Latinos react to the term? Susanna Keegan

[00:13:55]

Raya Well, when, when in high school, like I said, we were using Mexican-American and then in college was when we started hearing the term Chicano and. The majority had no problem with it. There was one person I remember she. She thought it too revolutionary, everything, and she was not happy. But eventually she became one of the biggest activists and very active in county government doing affirmative action and stuff. So people change. So people some people had problems with it. I remember, yeah, there were some people that, you know, so but it they got over it.

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Rios Kravitz Yeah. Have you heard of the. Did you at that time hear the civil rights movement? And if yes, what were your thoughts about it. And could you can make any connections with the movement.

[00:14:57]

Raya Well, like I said, I became aware of the farmworkers movement. And when I started college, we had activists with the grape boycott. One of my best friends was the coordinator here in Sacramento, and he took a group of us to Delano, to the 40 acres, because we were taking care packages and stuff like that. And so it was super because I got in like 67, 69. I met Dolores and Cesar and stuff like that. So we got really plugged into it. And at 60 guesses around 71, 72, I can't remember the year we had a Joe said it was one of our professors that was part of we had a. Student meetings of our group met Gia, well, originally Mya And so we would have our meetings and then we'd go out and socialize and go help this one person, Manuel Perales, who became the campaign manager, kind of got us all involved. And there had not been a member, a Latino member of the city council in Sacramento for a long time. I can't remember since the last century. So it was a big, big deal. And so we worked hard. And he got elected.

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Rios Kravitz You know, thinking back a little bit to that question, the civil rights movement connected to Martin Luther King and others. Did you see that a connection to a movement, though, and that.

[00:16:42]

Raya Well. Yes, because that. It would. Now we say intersectionality, but even back then we saw the similarities in that we're trying to do some of the same things. It was I always found that more difficult because our people were very passive and we're not into marching and. Demonstrating

and stuff like that. So and there is a language problem. So it was very hard to get people involved. There are some drawbacks that we had. Oh, yeah.

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Rios Kravitz Next question. Where are you on the Mexican American Education Project State?

[00:17:35]

Raya Well, I started at Sex State in fall of 68, and I think the project started in 69. I knew I was close friend of the person that developed it. Clark Taylor and a friend of mine from high school was the Secretary Ricardo. So I knew them well. And then in the first class was Hosea Montoya, who happened to been my high school art teacher in Wheatland. A funny story. And then my one of my older sisters was talking to my grandmother about this art teacher she had. And something made her click and said, Ask him if he ever lived in Fowler. And it turned out our family and his family had been neighbors in Fowler when they moved from New Mexico. That's where they lived. And my family, my maternal family came from both sides were from Michoacan, and they came up in the mid teens, escaped the revolution and went to Arizona. And then we lived in Los Angeles. When that Spanish influenza hit, everybody went. You know, it was time to move to the country to get away from crowds. So they moved to Fowler. Eventually they came here to Sacramento. But so it was interesting that. We'd been neighbors years ago.

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Rios Kravitz Did your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the movie?

[00:19:10]

Raya Well, yes. When? We repeat it one more time?

[00:19:16]

Rios Kravitz Sure. Did your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the movement?

[00:19:24]

Raya Well. My my mother one time said that the further she moves on the border, the more Mexican she gets. And when we lived in Wheatland, we were very much involved in the charter association out there. And I remember going to Mexican Flag Day in Marysville. We had a big celebration. So we were very patriotic and considered ourselves Mexican. And like I said, my grandma had a mexican restaurant. So of course there was all that culture. And my grandmother and her sister were were organizers for the big Latino center, the communities and the Mexican-American center and I guess their shareholders. And my aunt was very active with the committee's typical patriotic goal, and that when she died, oh, in the late seventies, I think they actually had an honor guard from the committee. And when they buried her, they put a jar of Mexican soil in the grave so she could be buried back. And I thought that so wonderful. But so I learned activism through my grandparents and and and because we had, like I said, a lot of civic pride.

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Rios Kravitz So that activism really informs your participation in the movement. And you would say.

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Raya Mm hmm. Very much so. Well, because what it developed to me, too, was I wasn't about to accept the stereotypes of what a Mexican-American was. You know, uneducated farm laborers, stuff like that were my family. Some of them had businesses and employees, and my my grandmother and my aunt had staff that worked at the restaurant. And so I thought, well, everybody has people like Don, Jose and Eddie. So I just thought everybody had staff.

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Rios Kravitz Did your involvement in the movie change or change you personally? And if so, how?

[00:21:45]

Raya Well. I guess during high school I was totally integrated. And when I graduated high school, my family here in Sacramento, you know, and back then, like three out of five people worked for the government, either state or federal, city, county. And the attitude back then was graduate, get a job at the state, get married, retire. La la. And my family was in that mentality. And my sister had graduated from high school, gone to heal business college, got her degree in accounting or something, went to work for the state government, and she worked for the state for about three years. And so I wanted to go on to college. I actually got offered a scholarship, but my grandma said no, that I was going to go to [INAUDIBLE] like my sister and then go to work for the state. Well, I did that for a year. You know, I worked one summer for my aunt, who was a labor contractor, and I saved up \$1,000 and paid my tuition to do it. But then the students at SAC State, they they helped organize what was called the Educational Opportunity Program. And it was a pilot project Fall of 68. And I was in the first class. And so we had the pilot project, it's actually and at San Jose, at UC Davis. And then because it was so successful, it went statewide in 69. And so whenever SAC State celebrates the anniversary, we always remind them that it's not the 40th, it's the 41st, because we started a year earlier before that. But it it got me. A free ride to college. I lived on campus at Westbridge and did well. Got involved in student government because we, the Latino students and the other student organizations wanted some influence. The student government had budget money and stuff like that. So we put up candidates and I was one of them. And so I got elected to student Senate as a medical center. Then I won for chairman of the Senate. And so we were able to fund programs we wanted. We gave money to the Educational Opportunity Program, stuff like that. The football team got mad at us because we took \$10,000 that they wanted for lights and there was 100,000. Anyway, we took a lot of money, the football team, and put it in U.P. instead.

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Rios Kravitz What role do you believe that you guys played?

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Raya Well, like I said, I got influenced by Elena Caro, who who took me under her wing and gave me a lot of mentoring. And early on I met people like Dolores Huerta, who was equal to Caesar. And so I, I saw the importance of females within the movement. But usually leadership roles were male because in Metro most of the officers were male, but the women were very active because I remember Isabella Hernandez, who eventually married Jose, said that she was a classmate. And so we had some strong women involved in the movement. And so I've always recognized that.

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Rios Kravitz Why did you personally initiate or help initiate in the movie?

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Raya You talked about my legend. Well, in high school, I helped organize the Maya and and I continue that work at college with Maya, then Mecca. And when I graduated, a friend of mine got me into UC Berkeley to law school. And so I joined the La Raza law students. And then one of my friends, one of my classmates was from San Francisco and in the East Bay we had central to go Oakland and Richmond. Well, he wanted one in San Francisco because they needed it too. So I had been made the director of Boat Hall Community Legal Assistance, which was in charge of all the student legal aid programs. So I went to Sacramento with my mom in San Francisco with my friend in the summer and helped them organized set up there center I got because since I had been elected to student government, so I knew the bureaucracy and budgeting and managing those things, how to organize. So I helped helped start it. And a friend of mine years later said, Oh my God, I'm reading all the papers and your name is all over these. But so that and then. In the early eighties, like 83, 84. I was the San Francisco coordinator for the Mario Blair campaign, who was the first Latino modern Latino to run for governor. And so that was really important because we were organizing Latinos to vote, get involved in politics. And then at the time, too, I was active with the Latino Democratic Club in San Francisco and the MALDEF, Mexican-American Education Legal Defense Fund, the leadership training program. And then. Years later, I moved back to Sacramento in 93, the Bay Area. From 74 to 99, my father took sick, so I came home because they wanted help and I stayed after after he'd passed and I got involved with the what became the Latino Center for Art and Culture. And because I had worked with a lot of nonprofits and I, I knew how to. Publicize them and knowing that the more people knew about them, the better easier it was to raise money. So I was very happy to see how the center has grown from really small to what it is today. So very happy of that. And then recently, a couple years back, we started the Sacramento Community of Sacramento Latino Community Roundtable, because there was an article, in fact, about where were all the elected Latinos were big in population like 26, 27% of the population. But we really didn't have our share of elected officials. So we got involved in that. And that was one of the. And now we have more Latinos elected.

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Rios Kravitz He's listed quite a number of organizations. How would you say they contributed to the movement?

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Raya Well, it was actually when when we had met, it was a way to focus our activity by getting involved in campaigns, be it the grape boycott or helping to elect Latinos to the city council and, you know, elect people statewide also. But so organizing people to get involved in politics, registering people to vote, because if people don't vote, you got no power. And so it was very important. I saw the political part, but I also saw the importance of the culture part, because I remember attending one of the functions that the Latino Center art culture had provided at. They had a Christmas Eve, Christmas season event at the Kress Theater. And I saw how everybody was so overjoyed and really wanted the culture. So that's why I got involved with the Latino Center on Culture and helped promote that because it keeps our culture alive. You really answer this question, I think that you might want to add to it. In the movement to raise your consciousness regarding social, cultural, political issues. Yes. Good. Like I said, when when I. Because I could see how Latinos were. Thought of and treated, you know, the stereotypes at. I just was not accepting that and I knew better. And so it gave me a lot of it straight me plus my my grandmother as a businesswoman in the eight in the forties, she was a tough woman. And I learned a lot from her, you know, really to just go for.

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Rios Kravitz And again, this next question similar to what you were already speaking to, how did these changes impact your personal relationships with your family, with your peers and significant others?

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Raya Well, I know with my family I was the first in my family to go to college. So it did create kind of a barrier as I was the college kid. You know, I lived on campus away from the family. And so I would visit them every so often. But but I could see the division happening. And it kind of continued. But. Every now and then my sister would call and said she would need a political favorite kind of visit because one of my brothers, because he had a criminal record, couldn't enlist in the Army. So she called. Well, can't you fix it? Well, I happen to know an aide to Senator Cranston, so I called him and we arranged it. And another time she called about a member of the family getting parole and was up for parole, which is, Well, can you do something? Well, it just happened at that time. Living in San Francisco knew John Barger, who was head of the L.A. Street Foundation. A friend of mine was one of his big donors. And so I just called him up and said, John, I need your favors as well. Come on down and meet me at the restaurant. And it was really like kind of The Godfather. I said, Well, I have this brother who's up for parole and we want him out, and we can really guarantee that [INAUDIBLE] keep his nose clean. So John wrote the. Parole board a letter. And this was under Jerry Brown had replaced the old parole parole board with liberals and friends of John. And my my family member got parole based John's chancellor, and he was so proud of it because I got a blank copy and my relative got a blank copy and he walked around the prison yard. He was at Folsom for people who could see in there that, Oh my God, so powerful, so influential to get a letter from John. Mark,

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Rios Kravitz How did this attack impact your relationship with Pierce?

[00:33:12]

Raya Well, yeah. Yeah. What there was there was a problem at one time with when I was a freshman because one of one of my classmates in the EOP program was named Albino Chavez, and we became friends. But I remember one day he said, You have too many Anglo friends because some of the people involved in the EOP class, like I said, they. I came from a very integrated family. But some of the ones that I was in class with had had become from very had been ghettoized, basically. And we're not used to. Being integrated and we're not comfortable. And they felt really we should stay together in just one little closed group. Well, and so that was a problem. But, I, I, I developed a lot of leadership skills which allowed me then to give them to the organizations I was working with, because when I was working with the Black Dog campaign, I had been active. With a lot of organization. So I made sure that we weren't active just in the mission, but active in the whole community and had events outside the Mission district. So we weren't just ghettoized because was important to get votes from everybody, not just Latinos.

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Rios Kravitz Can you describe your involvement with the movie and its impact on your career?

[00:34:48]

Raya Well. Going to college. I got in school because the EOP program and that was because I was active with Maya and then going to law school. It was because one of my friends from Maya, Mitch, and like I said, his sister had been the woman that had taken me under her wing. His name was George Macias. And so I got a I started a law education because of the momentum, became part of the La Raza law students and headed up the both our legal community systems because that was Jorge Job. But then he was studying for the bar and they needed someone to take his place. And it was me. And so it. It. Allowed me to get an education and more skills.

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Rios Kravitz You've had an opportunity to talk the impact of the landing on your friends and your family, your personal relationships. What impact did it have on your career?

[00:35:55]

Raya Well. Well, it. Well, I. I decided real early. See, my family, like I said, was raised here, and their attitude was go to work for the state. But to me I, I told my sister she wasn't happy about that when I said, well, that's like, you know, the living dead because it's so bureaucratic and sterile. And I liked working for non-profits. And so I was a movement person, period. And through it, you know, I came out as gay in my sophomore year. And so I toward when I was in college, I started working with we we started we started the first. Gay Student Union Group at Check's Day, and it was in late 69 when we started meeting and organizing. And we we filed papers for all three student groups in 70. And I was in the student said it had a cultural affair. I chaired the committee that all the new groups had to go to. And so I got us. A charter from the student body. But normally the administration approves because if you have certain number of students bylaws and a faculty advisor, you're okay. Anybody? Well, they denied us one because Ronald

Reagan was the governor and we had an acting college president. He won't become the permanent president. So he felt if he approved just gay club, the governor would not get him appointed to be the permanent president. So it was a political decision. Well. We were in the student rights movement at that time and the year before, the college had denied Tom Hayden access to the campus to be a speaker. And we went to court and the court said, no freedom of speech. And so we went to the student government, said, well, this is another student rights issue. And so they agreed to sue the college in our behalf. And I coordinated for the student government. And we want freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. Well, so I went to law school. I was involved with both organizations, the Chicano Students organization, but also helped start the boat Hall, a gay law students group. And eventually that group went on to Sue Packard Pacific Telephone Telegraph because they actually had in their employee handbook they would not employ gay people. So in 77, the court case finally came and the judge said coming out is a political act. So it is speech and you can't discriminate, make a speech. So we won employment rights on that case, and then I became a lobbyist. It's actually it's a feeder school to the capital. And I had got a summer job at the Capitol through a college friend. So I knew how the capital worked. And when I was in the Bay Area, they needed a lobbyist to go to Sacramento to lobby the handful of bills that we had on gay civil rights. And so I went, I did it. And it was great because I knew people. It made it a lot easier. And I was just an outgoing person and it was the same thing. I knew a lot of the stereotypes about gay people. I wasn't accepting them so and so. It made me very effective lobbyists and be one. Got a lot of publicity for it. So I mixed both of them in. When I moved back here, I was one of the few people that self-identified as Latino and as gay. And there are more people now, but not like if you live in the Bay Area, you know.

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Rios Kravitz Can you also speak to how it impacted your community, like here in Sacramento or elsewhere?

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Raya Well, just being active, you know, it was very happy that I was so accepted within the community in general because they recognized some leadership skills and I was willing to say things that other people were too shy or because I had a when I was employed, I retired in. 2014 from the county. I worked for the county for about 16 years, and so I would. We disagree with elected officials and stuff because, you know, I wasn't looking for a point, but I wasn't looking for a job. And so it gave me the time to actually oppose the mayor on. Like when you have this \$0.01 tax increase, sales tax increase and stuff like that where a lot of the. Ambitious Latinos are running, wanting to get involved in politics, wouldn't want to oppose the measure. You know, I was one of the few people that would and and I remember talking to someone from his office and they said, well, we recognize that the reason you were opposing it and we said, well, that's okay, because he's really representing his community. But it yeah, and my forthcoming leadership skills and like when I took on Crocker Art Museum because they didn't have a lot of that, I went there and I looked at their exhibits and I could see that they had a lot of artwork on the walls that represented the black community. But was it the same for the Latino community? I mean, they had like 20 paintings that you could identify that as a black artist because the

subject matter was was a black person. It was a black community scene were for Latinos, it was only two or three. You know, the artwork, some of it was by Latinos, but it was not culturally significant. It was abstract or something like that. So they may have had Latino art. You didn't know it was Latino art looking at it. So it was imagery, you know. That made the difference. And I know some people really didn't like how I took on the museum, but it it had an effect. They they recognized and and they began because they'd never, ever, ever had had an exhibit for the world to go to Air Force it all the years. And so they put one on their schedule. That would happen in a couple of years because it takes a lot of time to organize the exhibits and stuff. But so I saw some movement there calling attention to problems.

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Rios Kravitz You know, you've talked a little bit about Isabel and then Joe. Some of yourself and many of our activists have passed on. Can you identify an individual or individuals that you feel had an impact on the movement? And please explain that.

[00:43:33]

Raya Well, of course, first was Montoya. He was he was my art teacher and it was a very liberating person. He really helped us see the world because when we were our class, he would play all kinds of world music, you know, African singers and stuff like that. So he really opened up the world to us in Wheatland. And when he came here, he became a really major influence, both as an artist and poet and and cultural leader because he was very involved in the Aztec, a dancer movement and stuff like that. And Lucy Montoya, I mean, Cerdan, who was one of my professors at college because he had been in Peace Corps himself, I think he'd been in Guatemala. And when he came back, he got very involved politically organizing the community. And so that really influenced me. Then also Esteban Villa, who was also part of the Air Force, he was a musician. He was very much a cultural figure, not just artist, but musician, and just really a very important. Thank you. You know, looking back at your experience and moving on to other issues that were left unresolved. Well, we're our effort here locally with the Sacramento Community Latino Community Roundtable. There's always infighting and I guess egos get involved. And so, you know, it started out great, but then it fell apart. And so. I see Latinos working more. Together again. Because like I said, we have more Latino elected officials. We have two people on the city council. But I remember a couple of years back on the border, education went to Latino serving on the board. And both of them at the last minute decided not to run for reelection. But it would have made a difference if they had told the community they were not so that we could have organized and put up a substitute candidate. So as it was, we lost two seats on the Board of Education. So that really, really hurt the community because we needed advocates, because you need a person at the table representing you, otherwise you get ignored. So there is still needs to be more community. Unity.

[00:46:18]

Rios Kravitz What do you see as current or future challenges for the general community?

[00:46:27]

Raya Well. It's just that ongoing of getting people to become citizens and register to vote because it's so important. You know, the the opposition is. Combine it with more ways to. Decent role people from the voter rolls and put up all kinds of restrictions, you know, requiring IDs and all kinds of things, making it difficult. I mean, like in Georgia, you can't even give someone standing in line to vote a bottle of water. I mean, and, you know, we're voting on Sundays because people would vote on Sundays and they would take a caravan from churches and stuff. So they put all kinds of blocks in in denying people the vote. So it's there's there's kind of a backlash. And, you know, Trump just let so many people become open about being racist before it was kind of hidden. But then it just came out. You know, what Texas is doing as far as the barrier at the border in the river and stuff like that, and locking children up who cross, you know, it's just horrendous. But so we have to stay vigilant.

[00:48:02]

Rios Kravitz Do you see yourself as staying involved in meeting these challenges? And how?

[00:48:08]

Raya Well, I have a lot of free time now, but I mean, I'm 74 and I'm I am getting kind of that last battle I did with the Crocker Art Museum took a lot of out of me because it was it takes a lot to take on something like a museum. And some people in the community saying, Oh my God, that's not a you know, you should be doing that, but I have a free time. And so I continue to to stay involved. And fortunately, I have a pension and, um. Social Security. So I financially support causes and stuff, so I'm lucky.

[00:48:49]

Rios Kravitz Yeah. That ends our interview. I really want to thank you for your participation in this recorded interview. It will really contribute, we feel, to document, preserve and really archiving critical oral history. So again, thank you. I really want to. I think future generations will really learn and grow from this.

[00:49:14]

Raya Well, you know, I see the difference of where we were and where we are now, but we're we're still underrepresented as far as elected officials. And and so it really takes you know, I'm glad there are things like the young Latina Democratic Club and the Latino Democratic Club and and people like yourself who are involved. Okay? Sure.