

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Elisa Rocha Bupara

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Dr. Lorena V. Marquez

Date of interview: August 18 2023

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

California State University, Sacramento Library

[00:00:16]

Marquez Okay. This interview will be video-audio recorded and on the part of the Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Project Oral History, which is archived at the Donald and Beverly Girth Special Collections and University Archives at California State University Sacramento. Do you agree to this recording?

[00:00:43]

Elisa Rocha Bupara Yes.

[00:00:45]

Marquez Today is Friday, August 18th, 2023, 11:39 a.m. We are at the California Arts Council in Sacramento, California. If you could please state your full name and spell it, including any accents.

[00:01:04]

Rocha Bupara Okay. It's Elisa, E-L-I-S-A, Rocha, R-O-C-H-A, Bupara, B as in boy, U, P as in Paul, A-R-A.

[00:01:15]

Marquez Thank you. Can you please provide your birth date, including your month, date, and year?

[00:01:20]

Rocha Bupara August 17th, 1954.

[00:01:23]

Marquez Where were you born?

[00:01:24]

Rocha Bupara I was born in Lockhart, Texas. It's a small town just south of Austin, in Texas. Our home base was Laredo. My father was from Laredo.

[00:01:35]

Marquez Can you tell me a little bit of where you were raised and what your parents did for a living?

[00:01:43]

Rocha Bupara Okay. I was raised in Sacramento. At 10th and D streets, to a neighborhood that's known as Alkali Flats. And my mom and dad, they were farm workers, to begin with. And that's why I have brothers and sisters that were born all over the state and all over the country. But my mother was born in Sacramento. And so, we ended up leaving Texas and coming to Sacramento. And we lived in a fourplex unit at 10th and D Street, Alkali Flats. And my mother was a homemaker. And my father was a farm worker. And my mother also helped with the farm working aspect of life as well. And we -- my father eventually graduated to -- he didn't have any education, he had a third-grade education, but he moved on from farm worker to janitor. And he was a janitor with Aerojet at first, and then he worked as a janitor for Mercy Hospital, and he retired from there.

[00:02:52]

Marquez So, you said that your mother also helped with farm working, can you explain what you mean by that?

[00:02:57]

Rocha Bupara Well, I mean, when my father was working in his job, then on weekends, we would go to the fields in and around Sacramento. And on weekends, when my mother and my father were both there, we would, you know, get up really early in the morning and she would pack us lunch and we would grab hats and stuff, and we'd just drive out to whichever field we were assigned to work that day. So, she worked as a farm worker as well. That's what I meant.

[00:03:23]

Marques Yeah. That's great. So, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

[00:03:29]

Rocha Bupara We were 11. Now, I know, my poor mom. Yeah, we were 11. And now we are -- well, there's eight of us surviving brothers and sisters. Do you want to know their names?

[00:03:40]

Marquez Sure.

[00:03:41]

Rocha Bupara Okay. There's a lot though. Okay. Well, Adela is the oldest and she was born in Laredo. And then Salvador, my brother, Chavi, we called him Chavi Salvador he was second but he's passed away. And then my brother Valentin, he lives in Nebraska. And then me, and then after that was Vicky and she was born in Texas also. And after Vicky comes Tony, and he passed away. And then my sister Celia, and she lives in Denver. And then after Celi comes Maria del Socorro Coco, she passed away. And then after her is my sister

Amada, my brother Ricky, and then my sister Teresa. I think that's all 11. I hope I didn't miss anybody.

[00:04:31]

Marquez So, what was the primary language used at home?

[00:04:35]

Rocha Bupara Well, my mother even though she was born in Sacramento, when she was very small, they took her to live in Mexico, my grandparents took her to live in Mexico so she always spoke Spanish. She never fully really learned English. And so, we had to speak Spanish for her benefit. But because we lived here, you know, in Sacramento and we went to schools here and everything, I would say that we spoke both languages equally.

[00:05:02]

Marquez At home?

[00:05:03]

Rocha Bupara At home. Yeah, and my youngest sisters, because my mom passed away when they were very young, they never really did learn Spanish. They could get by and stuff but they don't really speak it as fluently as I do and my older siblings did when we were in our home when my mom was alive.

[00:05:20]

Marquez And do you know what year your mom was born?

[00:05:24]

Rocha Bupara Oh, my goodness. Probably -- I don't know off the top of my head, but no, I couldn't tell you. I'd be just picking an arbitrary number.

[00:05:36]

Marquez Yeah, I was just wondering if she was part of the Mexican Revolution exodus. And so, nineteen-teens.

[00:05:45]

Rocha Bupara No, I don't think so. No, I don't think so.

[00:05:50]

Marquez Describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and your neighborhood. So, you talked about Alkali Flats, what school did you go to?

[00:06:00]

Rocha Bupara Yes. Well, the neighborhood was wonderful. Everybody knew each other and it was full of kids. We were always out on the street, playing all day and all night until, you know,

the wee hours, until our father, you know -- he used to say if we're not home at dinner time, "come calle". Because we were always out on the street. Come calle if we weren't home at time. So, but it was a great environment and everybody knew each other. And it was like I lived in this fourplex and there was all the neighbors, there was Maria la de arriba, Maria la chaparra, Maria la de abajo. That's how we all knew each other. My dad would reference the guy around the corner whom we called Bisar, you know, go get Bisar, or whatever. And we went to first Washington Elementary School. And then I went there just for until fourth grade from -- I was supposed to be in kindergarten but the first day of school I cried so much that the teachers felt sorry for me and they figured out that I had a brother who's a year older than me, Valentin, a year older than me who was in first grade. So, they said take her over there. And so they put me with him in his class, and we stayed together from there until the rest of the school, you know, I skipped kindergarten and just started with him. And he and I were classmates until eighth grade. So, we went to Washington from first through fourth, and then we moved over to St. Joseph, St. Joseph's Elementary School, which is now where the parking lot across -- the juror's parking lot right across the street from the courthouse. That used to be a parochial school. And the Father at the time was Father Hall. And I remember when he came to our house, he knocked on the door, my dad let him in. And he said, "Your kids belong in Catholic school. Your kids belong in St. Joseph." And my father said, "Well, you know, we can't afford to pay." And Father said, "That's not a problem. Bring them anyway." And so, we all went to St. Joseph. And I think that happened throughout the whole neighborhood. He was just going door to door recruiting people because everybody who lived in my street ended up at St. Joseph so that was the end of Washington. And we stayed at St. Joseph from fourth grade until eighth grade. And then from eighth grade, my dad by then was able to buy a house, he bought a house in Oak Park and we moved to Oak Park. And my ninth grade was spent at Peter Lassen Junior High, which is no longer there. I think it's West Campus now. But I went to school there and then Sac High. But my childhood, it was just, we had this very, really tight-knit extended family. My grandparents were very -- we were very attached to my grandparents and, you know, all my aunts and uncles, and we would gather at my grandmother's house for just about every weekend and every celebration. And there was always music and my grandfather was a mariachi, he played the violin. And all of my aunts and uncles, they sang and they played instruments, they were all singers. My mother had the most beautiful voice. I remember when my father was going to work at Mercy, and my mom used to make him his lunch and it would be in the morning, you know, 4 o'clock in the morning, she would have the radio on Spanish language full blast waking everybody up while she's making his lunch and stuff. But we just grew up around music. And she used to love to sing and she would sing along with all the songs on the radio and stuff. But, you know, the cermeses, our Lady of Guadalupe, and there was this place called the Centro Mexicano where they used to have the Mexican soldier statue. And every Sunday, after church that's where everybody would end up. Everybody from the community would end up over there, again, with music and dancing and food and it was just a really beautiful childhood. And I miss it, I really miss that.

Marquez Do you know the name of the mariachi that your grandfather -- ?

[00:10:04]

Rocha Bupara My grandfather's mariachi they were called Zacatecas, El Mariachi Zacatecas. And his name was Juan Avalos. He was very famous in the Mexican circles as a musician. And everybody knew him as Don Juanito. And they used to play, like I said, at, you know, a church and all the nightclubs and the weddings and gatherings and stuff. And all my aunts and uncles also became singers. And my uncle Manuel and my brother Salvador, Chavi, they were in a band called Los Uniques de Sacramento. And then later they changed their name to Los Primeros. And that side of my family is Avalos. My mother's side of the family is Avalos. So, they were pretty well known because of their musical talent. Yeah.

[00:10:51]

Marquez You mentioned Washington Elementary, I know that the school closes down in '68 through '71. Was that the period where you were there or were you-- ?

[00:11:01]

Rocha Bupara No, by then, I was already at St. Joseph. Yeah, it was just my first four years that I spent at Washington Elementary School.

[00:11:11]

Marquez Did you or your family experience any discrimination growing up?

[00:11:16]

Rocha Bupara Oh, yes. Oh, yeah, all the time. Yeah. I have this one incident that I tell people over and over again. Because my mother never spoke English very well, I was always the one who used to go with her to all her doctor's appointments. You know, even the LA Times did a story on this phenomenon which was all these little kids who had to be interpreters for their parents. My dad was at work so it was always -- it fell to me for some reason. And I remember one time my grandmother and my mother, we were on the bus going to the hospital to one of her appointments and we were all at the front of the bus, it was my grandmother, my mother, and then me. And I remember that they were having such a wonderful conversation, you know, my mom and my grandmother. And, you know, they're happy and laughing and stuff. And this lady comes from the back of the bus and she goes right up to them and she started screaming at my mother. "We speak English in this country. We don't speak that blah, blah, blah." And it traumatized me. It really did. I was shocked. And I guess the most hurtful thing of all, it makes me sad even right now to think about it, the look on my mother's face. She was just like, you know, shocked and really hurt. You could see that she was really hurt. And she didn't say anything. They didn't say anything the rest of the trip. So, that stayed with me, you know. I've never gotten over that. But I mean, you know, that's just one example. But there were a lot of other instances like that that just really, you know, stayed with me and I thought about how unfair and how unwelcoming and, you know, and I always

crack up because, you know, we live in California, you know, we live in Sacramento, these people don't understand the connection we had, this was Mexico. And they have the nerve to, you know, attack us. And, you know, with the political environment that we have now, you know, ever since Trump, you know, foreigners aren't welcome, you know, people are -- you know, feel like they're not hearing and all the bad guys are the Mexicans, it's always the Mexicans that, you know, get vilified. We're, you know, the bad guys and stuff. And it's just not, you know, not true. But, yeah, and I'm so afraid that we're going back in that direction. We're going backward instead of forward. But, you know, we do the best we can.

[00:13:43]

Marquez Yeah. The irony that your mom was born in Sacramento and you were born in Texas, so you have two generations and yet there's no distinction.

[00:13:55]

Rocha Bupara No, absolutely not. They see my brown skin and, you know, my brown eyes and they conclude that I'm, you know, not from here or that I don't belong here. And even my grandparents were born in -- my grandmother Teodora, she was born in Sacramento also. And my grandmother Ines, on my father's side, she was always part of Texas before it was anything but -- you know, it was an independent state, it wasn't even a state, it was just an independent territory of Mexico. So, she was born there. It wasn't like we were actually born in, you know, geographic, physical Mexico at all. Yeah.

[00:14:33]

Marquez Thank you for sharing that. We're going to move into the Chicano Movement.

[00:14:38]

Rocha Bupara Yes.

[00:14:38]

Marquez What are your earliest memories of the events that attracted you to the Movimiento?

[00:14:44]

Rocha Bupara Okay. Well, I guess the first one I'd have to say was when I was 12 years old when Cesar Chavez did his first march from Delano. And I remember my mom who was an avid radio listener, I think I said that before, she always had the radio on. And so, she was following the progress of the march on the radio. And on one particular weekend, I believe it was a Sunday, they were giving constant updates. I could still hear the DJ's voice, you know, "Nuestro gente viene y estan en Stockton Boulevard", or you know, whatever, and by the hour. And for some reason, something clicked in my mom and she went and got my dad and she said, we have to go. We have to go, be a part of this. And we all got loaded into our Plymouth station wagon and my dad drove to where the marchers were. And, you know, we all jumped out and walked a little bit of ways with the marchers. And it was all inspired by my mother, you know, who she always felt like, you know, she

believed in social justice for everybody and she really was proud of her culture and her heritage. And she really supported Cesar Chavez. And so, that was probably my first and best memory because it was my mother. And I thank her because I am the way I am today, I'm a social activist and so is my son, I'm so proud of him, because -- and I always say it was because of my mother. And he always says it's because of his mother. But, you know, all the social justice causes I truly believe in. And I, you know, also support the politicians that support us and, you know, that can relate to us. So, I was also -- had about 14, I was moved by Bobby Kennedy. You know, Bobby Kennedy was -- and I remember every house had -- I don't know what you call those but they look like carpets and black velvet and they have pictures of, you know, the president. Every household that I knew had one of those and we had one too. And I don't remember --

[00:16:48]

Marquez John F. Kennedy?

[00:16:49]

Rocha Bupara John F. Kennedy. But I remember Bobby Kennedy because I was at St. Joseph and I was about 13 or 14. And his connection to Cesar Chavez and his support of Cesar Chavez, and everything that he spoke about social justice really touched me. It really just connected. And so, at 13 or 14, every day after school, I would walk from St. Joseph to the Kennedy headquarters, I believe it was on K Street, and I would gather up all these brochures and materials and then I'd go door to door, knock, knock, knock, you know, "Please vote for Bobby. Vote for Bobby." You know, and here I am 13 years old. Back then you could do things like that. I don't know how safe it would be anymore for kids to do that. But I was able to do that. And one of my friends, Dora, she used to do it too. We would go gather up whatever we could and, you know, go and try to help with whatever cause happened to be what we believed in. But then it was Bobby's campaign. And his connection to the movement and the Movimiento. So, I was inspired by my mother and by Bobby Kennedy.

[00:17:57]

Marquez So, were you part of a campaign that like Viva Bobby? I don't know --

[00:18:04]

Rocha Bupara Oh, yeah.

[00:18:04]

Marquez Viva Kennedy campaign, right? The brothers. But do you remember if it was like -- if there was like headquarters?

[00:18:11]

Rocha Bupara Well, there was a headquarters and people -- I used to walk there every day. And I would gather up the materials. And nobody said you couldn't do this. And nobody said no. They were like, "Help yourself. Go spread the message." You know. And so I did. So,

yeah, I felt like I was part of that movement. And so was my friend. And it was heartbreaking when Bobby was assassinated. I mean, it really hurt me, you know, because I thought he was our hope, he was going to be the guy who was going to set things straight. And I remember -- here's another thing that I remember. Can I say it even though it's going to seem odd to you? It goes like this, "Rioting and violence have scarred our cities for four consecutive summers. Centuries of deprivation and discrimination have ripened into frustration." Those are the opening lines of a speech that I took from Bobby Kennedy's train during the Whistle Stop tour in 1968 here at the train station, right before he went to Los Angeles. And I remember asking -- somehow we got upon the platform where Bobby was speaking. And I think it was because we were being pushed forward in this massive humanity, we were being pushed forward, and then Bobby said something to one of his aides. And he reaches over and pulls up my friend, Dora. He pulls her up over the railing. And I was such a tomboy, you know, I wasn't going to wait for them to pull me up, I jumped up. I jumped and I climbed over there. And I was standing there waving at everybody, you know, while Bobby is waving at everybody too. And I have spent my life looking for that photo. Somebody's got to have a photo of me and Dora and Bobby Kennedy there. So, but, you know, he inspired me, and to this day, I feel like I'm the activist that I am because of him and because of my mother, because of Cesar Chavez.

[00:20:02]

Marquez So, when he's assassinated, what's going through your young mind?

[00:20:08]

Rocha Bupara Oh, well, it was in the middle of the night, you know, I'm sure everybody sees the footage and my brother Chavi was playing with the band at the Reno Club. And I remember he came home early, and normally they stayed until, you know, 2 o'clock when the nightclub shuts down. But his band was playing and I remember the commotion when he came in the door and he's yelling, you know, "They killed him. They killed Bobby Kennedy." And, you know, my mom and dad, we all jumped out of bed and, of course, I was like I said devastated. And, you know, we turn on the radio, I mean, the TV, and sure enough, they're showing that Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated. Yeah, it was horrible. It was terrible. And, you know, I'm looking for people like him still, you know, that I could really support. Some candidates have come close. And I do continue to work for whatever -- like I said earlier, whatever candidate. I make phone calls and do phone banks. And for Obama and his first campaign, I took my son to the Capitol and we were making phone calls for the campaign. And after it was over with, I went up to the guy who was done and I said, "How else can I help?" And he says, "Well, do you speak Spanish?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "You're going to Denver." I said, "Okay." So, they flew me to Denver. Actually, I think I paid for Denver. But they put me up in some doctor's house. And I was there for like a couple of nights. And the same thing, going door to door, trying to get people to vote for Obama, his first time around. Yeah.

[00:21:44]

Marquez Do you remember what the definition was in the '60s of the term Chicana or Chicano? And how did folks react to that?

[00:21:54]

Rocha Bupara Yeah. I never minded Chicano, Chicanismo, I never minded that term. I know that my elders, like my grandfather, they didn't care for it. And I never really understood why. I guess they associated it with radicalism. But I never had a problem with it. And I was part of the Chicano movement at Sac High. I remember we used to have these race riots and we would have walk-outs and demonstrations and stuff. And I think at some point we were effective because we ended up with an African American principal, his name was Adolphus McGee. And then they appointed a vice president Roberto Acuña who's Mexican, and then we had a dean who was from Hawaii. So, the diversity that we were asking for happened. And I don't know if it was as a direct result of our campaigns, you know, our walk-outs and our demonstrations and stuff. But I feel like we had a small hand in that. And then, you know, bringing in classes and courses that were more relevant to our culture, which like they're trying to erase now, which is ridiculous. Yeah.

[00:23:04]

Marquez So, tell me a little bit of what you did at Sac High. You have mentioned some of the walk-outs.

[00:23:14]

Rocha Bupara Yes. Yeah. Well, I was a member of the MEChA Club and the Maya Club. And we were very proud of our heritage and our culture. And I actually participated in some of the plays and the different cultural events like we had Cinco de Mayo festivities. And I also was a dancer, I danced at Baile Folclorico for several years. But I was a part of this show that we used to put on, it was assemblies really for the rest of the school to appreciate our culture. And so, we had this great big production. And all of my classmates, all of my friends from MEChA and Maya were a part of it. And I remember that I got the role of Juana Gallo. And I don't know if you know who she is, but she's supposed to be a Mexican revolutionary who was side by side with Pancho Villa. So, I got to play Juana Gallo. And I remember that that show -- I don't know why we ended up performing that at school but also at the memorial auditorium, it was this huge -- I don't know what event it was but we were part of it, and we put on that show. And I remember my grandmother was in the audience because she called me the next day and told me that she really enjoyed the play and that she laughed at my role as Juana Gallo. Which I think that was appropriate because, like I said, I was such a tomboy. And I had to jump around the stage and do these dances and stuff. But it was a lot of fun. And let's see what else did I do at Sac High. You know, I was a pretty good student. I got good grades and everything. But I was heavily involved in all our, you know, the Maya and the MEChA and all the -- I played soccer even. So, yeah, that's kind of what it was like at Sac High.

[00:25:09]

Marquez Have you heard of the civil rights movement at the time? It sounds like you have, right?

[00:25:13]

Rocha Bupara Well, absolutely, yes.

[00:25:14]

Marquez What were your thoughts about it and could you identify or connect the civil rights movement to the Chicano movement?

[00:25:22]

Rocha Bupara Yes, absolutely. I think we are one in the same, in my book. You know, we're all fighting for equal justice, equal rights. We're fighting for, you know, for our rights. And I totally, totally -- I mean, I go to the Black Lives Matter demonstrations now, you know, because I still feel strongly that we need to be supportive of each other and to help each other up. But we're really basically fighting for the same thing. And so, on civil rights, I mean, my husband, he talks about what one of his greatest moments in his life and he had heard that Martin Luther King Jr. was going to be speaking at Sac State. And, you know, he's like I have to be there. And somehow he did manage to get there. And he got there at the time where Martin Luther King was coming off the stage and he looked straight at my husband and they shook hands. And that's one of my husband's, you know, greatest -- what he really values a moment in his life, something that happened to him. And so, he's also very supportive. It's just something that's in our family, you know, we just, you know, we just do what we can, you know, fight for justice and, yeah, I do think that I'm totally supportive of civil rights and equal rights and for women as well. And for the LGBTQ community. Any of those communities that people are trying to erase, you know, that they have no validity, that's when I, you know, say forget it. I mean, I wear my T-shirt, I read banned books and, you know, whatever I can to show people that I am, you know, totally in support of, you know, these different communities that are trying to always be marginalized by the people in power.

[00:27:07]

Marquez Yeah. Were you part of the Mexican-American Education Project?

[00:27:13]

Rocha Bupara I believe I was. I think I enrolled in some courses.

[00:27:16]

Marquez So, the Mexican American Education Project was after you get your BA or -- it's like a Master's program.

[00:27:25]

Rocha Bupara Oh, yeah. No, I wasn't a part of that.

[00:27:27]

Marquez It ran from '65 to '70 or '66 to '70.

[00:27:33]

Rocha Bupara Okay. Yeah.

[00:27:35]

Marquez At Sac State. That's okay. We'll skip that.

[00:27:42]

Rocha Bupara Can I say something? I left Sacramento in '76. My husband had earned -- had just graduated from the George Law School, and he had earned a fellowship to Georgetown and got a job with the Justice Department. So, and '76 is when I left. I went with him. He moved to Washington DC, I went with him. And we were there for several years. And then he got transferred to the Department of Justice at the United States Attorney's Office in San Francisco. So, then we moved there. So, I spent some time -- after I left Sacramento, I was gone for a while before I finally made it back like around in 1994 when my son was born. That's when I ended up back in Sacramento. So, missed, you know, some of the stuff that was going on, you know, with the Movimiento and stuff at that time.

[00:28:35]

Marquez Okay. So, you didn't go to college here?

[00:28:38]

Rocha Bupara I did go to Sac State for a little bit. I went to Sacramento City College also for a little bit. But I ended up getting my degree in journalism from San Francisco State University.

[00:28:49]

Marquez When you guys came back.

[00:28:50]

Rocha Bupara Yes. Yes, yeah.

[00:28:51]

Marquez That's great. Do you know what year that is?

[00:28:54]

Rocha Bupara When I graduated?

[00:28:55]

Marquez From San Francisco State.

[00:28:56]

Rocha Bupara Probably 1987, '86, '87, something like that. It took me longer than most because, you know, I was enrolled here, enrolled there, and wherever I moved that's when I would go

to school. And then I always worked full-time. So, I always went to school part-time. And so, it was a big accomplishment for me and the first in my family. I know a lot of people say that, but it's true, you know, to graduate from college or to even go to college. And now, I am so proud that, you know, the next generation, my nieces and nephews and my son, everybody, it's just like automatic, you go to college, which is a good thing.

[00:29:31]

Marquez Yes, it is. Could you tell me if your knowledge of cultural issues influenced your involvement or participation in the Movimiento?

[00:29:42]

Rocha Bupara Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes. Here's the story that I'm sure it's okay for me to tell it. But when I was a little girl, my mom used to make us burritos for lunch, and I remember being ashamed of the burritos in elementary school. I would never eat it. And I remember I wrote a column about it for the Modesto Bee when I was working there. I wrote and I called it the Sin of My Youth because I recognize now how terrible it was because here was the situation, I was working as a reporter for the Modesto Bee and I was given the assignment to go to Livingston, it's a little town just south of there to do a story on farm workers. And so, you know, the way I write it in the story here, I am cruising down Highway 99, listening to Linda Ronstadt's Canciones de Mi Padre and thinking in my head about the farm workers and when my family were farm workers and what it all means to me today. And then so, I was reflecting on this whole situation and the burritos and how ashamed I was because I didn't have baloney sandwiches or white bread, peanut butter. And now we know how bad all that stuff is. But back then, that's what all the White people had and that's what I wanted, you know, I didn't want my burrito. And I talk about it in the column, I talk about how in San Francisco when I worked there, there was a place called Pepitos. And the best thing that they did was make a burrito and here's everybody standing in line to pay \$10 for a burrito that I so readily threw away, you know, the whole irony of that all thing. But, yes, I was aware of, you know, the cultural aspects of my "raza" and my, you know, our fight for justice and everything. So, yeah, and, you know, involved in music and in, you know, other cultural events, and participated in all, you know, whatever, marches and stuff. So, anyway.

[00:31:45]

Marquez Were you made fun of when you were a kid about bringing the burrito? Did somebody make a comment? Do you know what that was about?

[00:31:53]

Rocha Bupara Probably. Probably somebody did and that's why I was embarrassed, you know. But about that column, you know, it ran on Cinco de Mayo. And it was picked up all over the country because they put it out on the wires and I remember for the next two weeks, I was getting calls from people all over the country that were saying, "I can relate to that." You know, I did this. Somebody called me from Detroit and the guy said, "Man, you really touched me because I used to do the same thing." So, it wasn't, you know -- I

think people made us feel ashamed, yeah, and as kids, you know, you just -- you don't really know better, you know. And I think that was part of the problem. But now, you know, heck man, everybody wants burritos, everybody wants tamales. Everybody is part of our culture. We're the ones that, you know, everybody is trying to have a little part of it, you know.

[00:32:49]

Marquez Yeah. Do you think that the Chicano Movement changed you personally?

[00:33:01]

Rocha Bupara Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think it made me a stronger person. It made me more of an independent thinker. And, you know, I don't want -- I'm not ashamed of the burritos anymore, you know. I think I've grown very much to be very proud of my heritage, my culture. And I think it did change me. And I did participate a little bit in that first march from Cesar Chavez. And then they had like another one 10 years later or something, I took my son there, let's go and, you know, be a part of this thing. And yeah, it makes me more aware and more conscious of the fact that we have to fight for our rights. And, you know, we can't just let, you know, this new thinking, you know, overwhelm us to the point where, you know, they're trying to erase us again. Yeah, it did change me in a positive way.

[00:33:54]

Marquez When do you think that click happened for you?

[00:33:59]

Rocha Bupara Very young. I think it happened to me very young, probably the first time my mom said, "Let's go get in this car." And let's go, you know, demonstrate and be, you know, part of this. It's little things throughout my life, you know, like the incidents at Sac High where we would have the walk-outs and the demonstrations, you know, on the streets, and all that, Bobby Kennedy, that whole thing I think that it was just something that was in me just waiting to spring forward. And I think it did happen at a very early age.

[00:34:31]

Marquez Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit what you believe -- what role you believe Chicanas played in the movement?

[00:34:39]

Rocha Bupara Well, I do remember that Chicanas were front and center, you know. And I remember attending some meetings and stuff, they were like Brown Berets meetings and demonstrations and stuff, and there were always women that were there, you know, as parts of the -- I'm not sure what their titles were, if they had titles or not, but I always remember women being very active and being very assertive and a part. I believe that Soldado that I talked about earlier, that came about with women. I think it was women who spearheaded that because they were trying to find a way to honor their sons who

had been lost in the war. And so, yeah, I always felt that women had a role to play in every aspect of life and the Chicano Movement was no different.

[00:35:34]

Marquez Did you personally help initiate anything, any organizations in the movement -- I know you talked about your involvement at Sac High, you mentioned Maya and MEChA. Can you just expand a little bit more on that?

[00:35:53]

Rocha Bupara On my involvement in those clubs --

[00:35:56]

Marquez In those organizations, yeah.

[00:35:58]

Rocha Bupara Well, I was an active member. I was a participating member, you know, threw out ideas. And I might have even been elected at some point, you know. I remember being the president of some club, I remember. And, you know, the captain of the soccer team. And, you know, different things like that. But I'm not sure what else I can say about that.

[00:36:25]

Marquez And your parents supported you.

[00:36:28]

Rocha Bupara Yeah, well, my mom did pass away very young. She was 41 in '71. It was a year before my final year of high school that she passed away. And, you know, we all -- my older sister and myself, we all took turns helping out, you know, after my mom passed away with the little ones because the youngest one was five years old. And it was hard. It was really hard but I think all that experience also made us even more connected. I mean, I was just -- we were all together the other day playing Loteria of all things, which we do on a regular basis. But it's a lot of fun, you know, and we still do that. And I think the closeness there. Somebody asked me that, not too long ago, because they see on Facebook and stuff, we're always getting together with my family and my siblings. And we're always doing something. And, you know, somebody always posts about it. And one of my relatives asked, "What is it about you guys? How do you stay connected?" And I honestly think that part of it had to do with my mom passing away so young, you know, that we all still stay as close as we are.

[00:37:35]

Marquez Yeah, experiencing that loss.

[00:37:37]

Rocha Bupara Yeah.

[00:37:38]

Marquez At such a young age.

[00:37:40]

Rocha Bupara And being, you know, being mothers. We had to play, you know, we had to play that role of making sure that the little ones had their lunches and, you know, that their hairs were combed and stuff like that. All of that has to contribute to, you know, the person that I turned out to be. And my other brothers and sisters as well.

[00:38:10]

Marquez Do you think the Movimiento affected your relationship with your family or your peers or your significant others?

[00:38:19]

Rocha Bupara Yeah, I think it affected it in a very positive way. I mean, no one ever said, "Oh, what a terrible thing you're doing." Everybody was always supportive. And my husband also, you know, he grew up in a household of 18 kids for some reason or another. Their mothers passed away and they all went to live with the grandmother, the grandmother and the grandfather and my husband was a part of that. And we're all just, you know, we're all just -- that all just contributes to, you know, what we believe today, you know, about everything. But anyway.

[00:38:56]

Marquez So, your husband had a similar experience.

[00:39:00]

Rocha Bupara Yes, he did.

[00:39:01]

Marquez You found each other.

[00:39:02]

Rocha Bupara Yes, we did. Yes, yeah.

[00:39:04]

Marquez Do you think the Movimiento had an impact on your career? You mentioned being a journalist.

[00:39:13]

Rocha Bupara Oh, yes. Yes, absolutely, it did. And, yes, I used to write about -- like I said, I was writing a column and it was about farm workers and, you know, I used to choose the topics of what I wanted to write about. But I always felt like I could make a difference, you know. And I remember covering city council meetings in Turlock. And I would sit there, you

know, with my notebook and, you know, people would come to talk about whatever the issue was. But I remember being so proud of the farm workers in the Stanislaus County area who would come in and testify, you know, before the city council, you know, with their broken English and they would talk about -- I remember one guy in particular, he was talking about we're just asking for, you know, housing. We just want reasonable housing. We want reasonable pay. And I remember he said to the city council, you know, "You take your kids to Disneyland, I take my kids to McDonald's." They play in those little playthings that they have outside. He said, "Esta es nuestra Disneylandia." And that stayed with me. So, that inspired me to go write other columns about the different things that, you know, were happening in our community that affected our people. So, yeah, and all in a positive way. I mean, I was -- another funny story. I had to do a story at Stan State, they were doing a Cinco de Mayo celebration and my byline then was Elisa Rocha. And Rocha is also a Portuguese name, Rocha. And there's a million Rochas in Portugal. And so, my story was front page in the Modesto Bee and with my byline, Elisa Rocha and it was about the Cinco de Mayo celebration at Stan State. And the next day I got a phone call from a woman who was so angry. She says, "You Portuguese" -- the b-word -- "you Portuguese B, you da-da-da-da." Can I say that? I don't know if I can say that word or not.

[00:41:20]

Marquez I think we can roll with it.

[00:41:22]

Rocha Bupara Yeah, she said, "You goddamn Portuguese bitch, what are you doing writing -- ?" And I was cracking up because I'm like, I'm Mexican. You got the wrong Portuguese B. That was another example of discrimination where people just felt like, I don't know, they're entitled, they feel like they're entitled to call and disrupt your world and your life and your whatever for no reason, just because my name and I was writing about Cinco de Mayo. Yeah.

[00:41:52]

Marquez You said Stan State and just to make sure that's Stanislaus?

[00:41:55]

Rocha Bupara Yeah, Stanislaus.

[00:41:56]

Marquez Not Sac State.

[00:41:56]

Rocha Bupara No, that was Stan State, yeah, because I was working at the Modesto Bee at the time. Yeah.

[00:42:00]

Marquez Okay. I just wanted to clarify that. How would you say that the Movimiento impacted community life here in Sacramento?

[00:42:11]

Rocha Bupara The Movimiento? Well, I mean, it unified everybody. We know we all centered around a cause and, you know, there were a lot more community events and cultural events that happened I think as a result of us needing places to get together and to, you know, share community and festival. I think it was a positive impact, you know, on the community to -- the Movimiento.

[00:42:41]

Marquez Is there any way you'd like to identify any individual who had an impact on you and the Movimiento and helped? You've mentioned maybe some of your friends.

[00:42:55]

Rocha Bupara Yeah. Well, Dora, you know, she was -- Dora Gallego, she was my good friend and we still talk. But all my girlfriends from high school like Kris Mora, you know, she was a big part of my life and continues to be a big part of my life. There's also my neighbor, his name was Dias. He did one of these interviews. Ramon. Ramon.

[00:43:25]

Marquez I interviewed him, yes.

[00:43:26]

Rocha Bupara He was very involved in all this stuff all the time. And to this day, I mean, you know, he would call me and my husband and say, "Hey, I'm doing this presentation for kids at UC Davis, you know, about Cesar Chavez and all this stuff." So, you know, I admire that. I really like when people can get up there and share, you know, whatever their experiences are to pass it onto the next generation and to keep that alive, you know. So, that people don't forget. I think Ramon is another one that I think was -- I mean, my hat's off to him because of what he does and he continues to do it.

[00:44:02]

Marquez Okay. Looking back at your experiences in the Movimiento, are there any issues that you felt were left unsolved?

[00:44:12]

Rocha Bupara Well, not unsolved but I don't think anything has ever really been fully addressed. Like I said, we were successful in getting more classes that had to do with, you know, who we are, our culture, our raza, you know, ethnic studies classes and stuff. And like I said, we had that change with the three individuals that were brought on. So, yeah, I think so.

[00:44:37]

Marquez What do you think are the current and future challenges for the Chicano community?

[00:44:47]

Rocha Bupara Oh, my goodness. Well, it's like we're back to square one in a lot of ways, you know, with the things that are happening politically in this country. It's a huge, huge setback. So, I think that the challenge remains for us to all come together and to continue to fight, you know. And I think everybody has to do their part, they have to vote, they have to be involved. You can contribute your time or your finances if you can. There is still a lot to be done. We're nowhere near where we want to be. So, we have to continue to fight these – you know, for these causes that we all believe in to strengthen and better our community. There was one other thing that I wanted to say. When I was -- that story about my mom and getting in the car and going to the Marcha for Cesar Chavez. At that time, there was this song that was written about that, about the Marcha, it was by Lalo Guerrero and it was called El Corrido de Delano. And they played that a lot, you know, a couple of years later. And I never knew the name of it, and I never knew who sang it, but it was always in the back of my head. And then somebody told me that it was Lalo Guerrero. So, when I used to work for the state agency, we had a subcontract with the UFW to provide outreach to the Latino communities. And one of the organizations that was involved with that, we had a meeting, and I remember telling that story to the person who was the head of this agency. And she went back and took it to the UFW and she told them my story about the song, and we knew only the author. And it turns out that Cesar Chavez's son reached out to Lalo Guerrero's son who happened to live in Palm Springs and said, "Hey, is there such a song?" Because they weren't even aware that there was this song. And sure enough, they ended up getting the song and I remember getting an email that said, "Expect very shortly." It was from one of the UFW officials. "Expect this song very soon in the mail." And I got the song. And I love it, and I love the lyrics. And a lot of times I think it's so relevant to the stuff that's going on today. That song is inspiring. And there's a line in there that says, "Se trata de un pueblo trabajador y decente." And that's, you know, that's it right there. That's all we're trying to do. We're hard workers. We are just asking for fair treatment and decency. And we're proud of what we do and who we are, you know. And I love the song, by the way. It's a great song. I still listen to it today.

[00:47:40]

Marquez Thank you for sharing that. Do you see yourself continuing to be involved?

[00:47:47]

Rocha Bupara Oh, forever. Yes, I definitely, yeah. I'm the kind of person that really can't sit still. After I retired from the state, I went back to school and got a songwriting certificate. And I got an AA in French. And right now, I'm enrolled in two other classes at City College starting in the fall. Because I can't -- you know, I can't sit still. And the stuff that I'm learning like this next semester I'm taking a digital design class that will help me with, you know, campaigns and stuff if I want to, you know, make posters and things like that about any movement. But, yeah, I'm going to continue to be involved. I'm just -- I don't see how I

cannot, you know, I think it's my duty really to continue to fight for justice and for what's right for everybody. It's equal treatment, decency, just, you know, kindness and compassion. And, yeah, I'll fight for that forever.