The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Neptaly "Tati" Aguilera

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Stefany Montoya and Yuliy Tsymbal
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Transcription by Johnny Le Date and Technitype Transcripts

Tsymbal Can you say your full name?

[00:00:09]

Aguilera Neptaly "Tati" Aguilera.

Tsymbal And what's your date of birth?

[00:00:13]

Aguilera May 17th, 1950.

Tsymbal Could you please provide your marital status?

[00:00:20]

Aguilera I'm married.

Tsymbal Do you have any children?

[00:00:22]

Aguilera I do. I have two boys. Both are college graduates.

Montoya Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:33]

Aguilera I was born in Sacramento, California, Mercy Hospital, just down the street on J Street, but I was raised in Roseville.

Montoya What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:46]

Aguilera My mom was a housemaker and my father worked for the railroad for forty-five years.

Montoya And did you have brothers and sisters?

[00:00:56]

Aguilera I do. I have four brothers and sisters; two brothers and two sisters.

Montoya In regards to your child and youth, would you like to share some of your experiences and what your family was about and just your neighborhood in general?

[00:01:14]

Aguilera Absolutely. We were raised in Roseville. At that time, it was a very small town, probably around 6,000 to 8,000. We were very fortunate that my dad had a permanent full-time job working for the railroad, so we lived out probably on the nicer side of Roseville with my brothers and sisters. My mother was very community-minded and my father had a full-time job, and we worked all the time. I have an older sister, who's now seventy-two, but basically took care of us while my mother and father worked. We are very close-knit to this day. We get together for all our birthdays. We get together almost on all holidays.

All five of us are college graduates because our parents emphasized education so much, and we are lucky. All three brothers were student body presidents, which is fairly unique, at different times at Roseville High School. We all played sports. We

were all very academically suited to go to college fresh out of high school. As I mentioned, all five of us are college graduates.

Tsymbal Were you a Fellow or Felito?

[00:02:42]

Aguilera I was never a Fellow, but I had done internships.

Tsymbal Were you involved actively in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:02:54]

Aguilera I don't know if it's called the Mexican American Education Project, but all through my life, my mother and father were very active in Mexican American organizations, and so we attended a lot of events where education was always emphasized.

When I graduated from high school, I was accepted to UC Davis, but to be honest with you, I was not interested really in going to Davis. I was more interested in playing basketball, so I went to Sierra Community College, where I played basketball for two years.

Montoya What were some of those organizations that your parents were involved?

[00:03:33]

Aguilera Let's see. They belonged to the Mexican American Tardeada Association, The Mexican American Foundation, and several church-related organizations.

Montoya Moving on to something different, how did your study of cultural anthropology or just your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement in the Chicano Movement?

[00:04:11]

Aguilera Well, because my mother and father came from Mexico at a very young age, my dad came to the United States when he was only ten years old and bounced around all over California. Then he sent for my mother and they landed in Roseville because my dad found a part-time job working for the railroad.

My mom was very community-minded, so she always wanted us to be sensitive to Latino—at that time, Mexican—issues, be involved in the community, and the one thing that she always emphasized is, "Remember where you came from and always help your community," whereas my father, he was fiscally more responsible, and I always remember what he said, he would say, "Any fool can spend money, but it takes a smart person to save it for a rainy day." So that's what started us even in high school; we started one of the first Mexican American Clubs in our sophomore year.

Montoya What were the goals of that club?

[00:05:29]

Aguilera To strive to do better in school, to be active in school, and to go on to college.

Montoya Do you remember how many people you had in the club?

[00:05:42]

Aguilera Yes, I do, I do. We had probably about thirty, forty people. When I went to high school, I went to Roseville High School. There was only one high school. Now I think there's about four or five. It was a fairly large school and there were a lot of Latinos, so when I went to high school, 1964 through 1968, Latinos were very well academically, were top athletes, and were involved in the student body, so that was not an issue for us when we went to high school.

Tsymbal What are some of your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Chicano Movement?

[00:06:36]

Aguilera Probably as a senior, I attended a *tardeada* at UC Davis from friends that got accepted to go to UC Davis, and they were wrestlers. They were like All-League wrestlers. I remember their names, keep in touch with them: Rodrigo Hara and Paulna Reverte. They were All-State high school wrestlers and they got accepted to go to UC Davis in their senior year. So just before being accepted, they had invited many of the Latino students from the Latino/Mexican American Club to go to UC Davis to a Chicano, at that time, *tardeada*, which is, you know, is getting together the people. What I remember most about that is they had the group Los Lobos, which weren't as famous as they are now, playing. They had families, they had children. It was a very nice cultural event on a very nice campus, and for many of us, we had *never* ever been to a college campus, ever. So that's what kind of started it.

Montoya Would you say it was like the ambiance of it all and just like being with people who were like you in a place that emanated Mexican culture?

[00:08:05]

Aguilera Absolutely. To see others like me, at my same age and students striving to want to do better, but not knowing how or where or who, because our parents were not knowledgeable, had not gone to college, and for us to even be in a town like Davis, we didn't even really know where Davis was, but yet we were there. We were told it was a university. We hadn't really been to Davis. Yes, absolutely, it was an inspiring changed-our-lives moment.

Tsymbal Do you think it motivated you to pursue a career in Davis?

[00:08:48]

Aguilera Absolutely. I mentioned that I got accepted to Davis, but I didn't go. I had two other friends—actually, three other friends, Latinos, who ended up going to Davis their freshmen year, so because they went, I was able to go visit them. I got to see they lived in the dorms, they got free food, you know, there was a lot of activities, all that stuff. I had never been to a university or college, not even Sierra College at that time. Personally, I knew that I wasn't quite ready. I don't think I could have moved away from home and gone through all the changes like they did and been successful. So I wasn't ready. I was not ready to go to UC Davis, even though I got accepted to go.

Tsymbal How do you think people during this time reacted to the term *Chicano*?

[00:09:49]

Aguilera We loved it. For us, it was a motivating factor, the Chicano Movimiento, the Movement. At the time, it was mostly Mexicans. It was not people

from South America or any other major countries. It was mostly Chicanos. Not that we were not receptive to that. At that time, that was the term.

But even though my brothers and sisters were very keen on *Chicano*, the term *Chicano* and the *Chicano Movement*, my parents were not. My father did not like the term. He thought it meant something else. It took a while, many years, to convince him that the Chicano Movement was a change, not just a bad name.

Montoya Would you say that was because of just like a different time and the constructs behind Mexican culture?

[00:10:47]

Aguilera Right. I think our parents were raised in poverty, uneducated and unexposed especially to the educational system. So my father, I think, had a third-grade education, and my mother, maybe a fourth-grade education. They crossed the border many times without papers, became citizens later. All they knew was work. So to them, the Chicano Movement at the time, they could see it coming, but they were more concerned that it would be troublesome, that it would distract from our education goals. So, yeah, it was different for them, but it had to do more for how they were raised and what they had to do. They had to raise five children on a limited income. I would ask my dad, "How come you don't have credit?"

He goes, "They don't allow Mexicans to have credit. You either have to have cash or you don't get it. Period." So, yeah, it was very different, it was different times, but they eventually came around.

Tsymbal When did you think that was that they began to assimilate with the term?

[00:12:03]

Aguilera I would say probably around—let's see. I graduated in 1968 from high school and I went to UC Davis about a year and a half later, around '69, but during that time '68 to '69, there was a lot of things. There was the Chicano Moratorium, there was a lot of protests and different things going on. So right around then is when they probably started to hear the term more often and be more familiar with it, and then, you know, with five brothers and sisters kind of say, "Hey, you know, we're part of the Movement. We need to change things. Dad, you're out of tune with what's going on," and that kind of stuff.

Montoya Could you elaborate a little bit more on, like, what you mentioned on the Chicano Moratorium and what exactly that was?

[00:12:53]

Aguilera Okay. In 1969 and '70, as a result of the Vietnam War, many of the Latinos were being recruited, and even in many eyes of the Chicano community, were being funneled to go into this service. And you probably are aware that many of people that were in the service were overwhelmingly Latino. Latinos have the most Medal of Honor medals, we had the most deaths, and we had a high recruitment.

So the Chicano Moratorium, which happened in East L.A. at Baldwin and Belvedere Park, the heart of the Chicano area movement at that time, was to protest the number of Latinos going into the military. There's two sides to that story. College students at that time in the Chicano Movement saw it as a deterrent in the killing of Latinos. Others, like the American GI Forum, which is one of the oldest Latino organizations, saw it as a way out, of getting Latinos, if they weren't going into

college, they would go into the military, and that would be a way for them to get out. Unfortunately, we had a high number of people dying in the Vietnam War.

Tsymbal And during this, did you hear of the Civil Rights Movement?

[00:14:35]

Aguilera Oh, absolutely.

Montoya How familiar were you with it?

[00:14:37]

Aguilera Very familiar. 1964, the Civil Rights Act was signed by [Lyndon B.] Johnson, which changed the attitudes and mandated not necessarily affirmative action, but that college doors and others things be open to people of color. I am a recipient of that, I feel. Had it not been for the Civil Rights Movement in 1964, when I first started as a freshman, all the way through 1968, I probably wouldn't have been given the opportunity to apply and get accepted to UC Davis, and many of my counterparts, Latinos, Africans Americans and others, same thing.

I tell this story about my going to college. In those days, I came under a program called Urban Crisis, so they were out recruiting Latinos, African Americans. As I mentioned, I was student body president of my class and I'd already been accepted, but I didn't think I was ready to go. Plus, I had other interests, playing sports and what have you. But my commitment was there, very involved. I think the Civil Rights Movement made an impact on everybody, everybody, not only for education, but employment, all of those things.

Montoya Did your own involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally?

[00:16:19]

Aguilera Absolutely it did. I went from a young eighteen-year-old student graduating from Roseville High School to, I would, say an activist in 1968 through '69, having taken Chicano Studies by then, met with other Latinos who were involved. I never really traveled that much until I got out of high school, so I got to travel up and down the state with other concerned Latinos. We went to protests; we went to San Francisco State; we went to Berkeley; we went to UCLA; we went to Logan Heights; we went to Hollywood; we went to Logan Heights in San Diego; we went to UC Riverside, places that we'd never been to, and it all was a result of the Chicano Movement at that time, protests, concerns. Every place we went, people had open arms. We slept on floors, outside, tents, all of that.

We were all talking about wanting to change the system, getting more Latinos, making it more expansive. Getting things done by any means was kind of the term. Then participating in protests, all of that. Then along with that at the same time, the Cesar Chavez grape boycott came along. So we were in college at that time, so not only was the Chicano Movement coming on, the UFW and all of its activities were coming along, and we were able to work together to make that happen.

So we got to meet Cesar Chavez for the first time, we got to meet Delores Huerta, and we'll talk a little bit. I got to meet people like Irene Tovar, and we'll talk a little about that later. Let's see. Ed Roybal, Tom Bradley, a lot of politicians who were supportive of the Movement back then. Those were in our college days, only to find out after I graduated that many of these people were appointed by Jerry Brown in his first term, and we'll talk a little bit about that. So, yes, the Chicano Movement

exposed me to so much of California and the Movement that was going on at the time.

Tsymbal At that time, did you feel like your personal contribution was having an effect in the midst of this mass organized protest?

[00:19:12]

Aguilera Absolutely, very involved in organizing, doing protesting, establishment of things like third world newspapers, newsletters, having the *tardeada*, doing Youth Conference, making presentations of how to get involved, the grape boycott, the Chicano Moratorium, the Brown Berets, all that.

Tsymbal Do you feel that the role that Chicanas played during the Movement was very significant at the time?

[00:19:52]

Aguilera Latinas? Chicanas? Absolutely. I would say that from the time I graduated from high school in 1968, all the way through '72 and even to today, Latinas played a major role. One, in many cases, they are much brighter, smarter, and more involved, much more articulate, and more focused than many of the guys. While the guys were more interested in what I consider wine, women, and song, having a good time, partying, playing cards, whatever, the women were organizing, Latinas specifically, studying, getting things done. When I went to college, I mean, even though I was a MEChA president at UC Davis, I was probably one of maybe eight presidents, many of which, I would say maybe seven, eight out of ten were women. Latinas led the organizations on my campus at UC Davis during that time.

Montoya This goes to kind of bounce off what you were saying, but what did you personally initiate or help initiate that you think made an impact in the Movimiento, and like what kind of organizations were you involved in and do you think helped the Movement?

[00:21:25]

Aguilera Because I get along really well with both people of color and non-people of color, because I played sports and active in politics, I ran for the student body both my freshman and sophomore years at college, so I was class president. In order to be elected, I had to know people other than Chicanos. But that really helped me when I got to Davis, because we had the Mexican American Club. It was just more of that. So we had not only a MEChA, we had a Chicano pre-law organization, we had CHE, Chicano and Health Education. We helped start a community clinic. We volunteered in various things. I was involved in Mini-Corps—I don't know if you know what Mini-Corps is—during my college days, where we actually slept in migrant camps and worked with migrant families during the summer and we were, like, student teachers.

I don't know if that answered your question.

Montoya Yes. Do you want to elaborate on what Mini-Corps—is that what you said?

[00:22:48]

Aguilera Mini-Corps is a state program where students—and at that time and mostly Chicano students—interned and got paid during the summer in between their college days, and were hired to work as, like, teacher assistants in migrant camps

throughout the state of California. So we were recruited, many of us from MEChA at UC Davis, to work at the migrant camps in Salinas, Geyserville up by Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, Sebastopol. We didn't live in their homes; we lived in the migrant camps, where people would come in and out. The students, we taught their children who lived in the camps with us. So even though we were like maybe less than twenty miles away from the ocean—we talk about this all the time—many of the young students had never been to the ocean, and we always used to crack up because we would say, "Many of your teachers," who was us, "we've never been to the ocean either." [laughs] So we got to do a lot of good things.

But there were many times that we would have to skip our class because the parents were saying, "We need our children to go pick grapes," or peaches or whatever, so the Mini-Corps people pitched in. We would go do the picking, because many of us came from that kind of background, so it was nothing to go out and help and do whatever, to help relieve the students from having to do that, their children. That was part of the Mini-Corps. They still have it today, and that was during probably '69, '70. They still have a Mini -Corps program, and you'll find that many college students back in that day worked part-time. It was one of the few programs that paid. [laughs]

Montoya Sounds like you were involved in a lot of programs that still exist today and are still flourishing. Why do you think that's the case that these programs continue to strive in their efforts?

[00:25:00]

Aguilera Mainly because I think people like myself and others support those programs. We see that there's a great need for Latinos and people of color to continue contributing to their community.

I believe that someone reached out to me as a high school freshman and said, "You know, Tati, you might be a good candidate for college."

And so I'll always remember that I'm having this discussion with my parents, and they're saying, "College? Are you kidding? It costs too much," whatever, whatever.

I said, "No, Dad, they're going to pay for it. They're going to help pay for it."

He said, "Well, don't believe everything they say." But as it turned, it turned out well.

I honestly feel that as the older generation now, like Senon [Valadez] [laughs], it is our obligation, it is our pleasure, and it is our honor to give back to our community, and I'll tell you how. When I graduated from UC Davis in 1972 with a degree in psychology, I had no idea of what I was going to do, but I knew one thing, it had to be something that would give back to my community.

Lucky for me—and I may be jumping ahead here, so stop me if you like—I got into state government at the capital. I tell this story to many people. I was born in Sacramento, raised in Roseville, but it was not until my junior, senior year that I knew that Sacramento was the capital of California. I never knew and had never been downtown, but I had been to West Sacramento to pick tomatoes, I had been to Lodi and Los Campos and that area to pick grapes, I been out to Auburn to pick peaches and tangerines and other things, but I never knew until almost my freshman year in

college that Sacramento was the capital of California, and had never been there, because that wasn't what our parents were about. They were about working. That's what we did.

So, anyway, when I graduated in 1972, because of the MEChA organization that I was once the chairperson of, we had a graduating class probably about twenty-five Latinos who graduated from UC Davis, which is a major accomplishment. So we had one of the first Chicano graduation ceremonies just for us.

Most of us ended up working for the state of California. We had *no* idea what we were getting into, but the one thing we noticed when we got there, there weren't many of us. We started our own—instead of calling it MEChA, we called it our own organization and we called it CAFE, the California Chicano Advocates for Employment. I say this, I said it earlier, at that time there was probably less than 3,000 Latinos in all of state government. Forty years later, we have over 50,000 Latinos.

When I started back then, I started when Ronald Reagan was the governor, but shortly after that, Governor Brown—this Governor Brown—became the governor in 1975 through 1984. So we were just starting, and where we started at was the State Personnel Board, which ran the Civil Service System. But the one thing that we learned when we got there, a few us Latinos, is there was no other people of color.

So what changed the world for us when we started CAFE, our goal was to get more Chicanos into state government. That was our goal. But when Governor Brown came in, he was, like, a revolutionary governor. They call him "Moonbeam" at the time. He was single, he dated Linda Ronstadt, who was a singer. But the most

important thing he did is he appointed Latinos, Chicanos to government jobs where there'd never been at the very top.

So where we worked, it was called the State Personnel Board, and it ran the Civil Service System for the state of California. And what the governor did is he appointed a lady name Irene Tovar from Pacoima in the San Fernando Valley, and in one instant, she became the president of the Civil Service System for the state of California. We had met Irene in our MEChA days, boycotting and going to the Chicano Moratorium. So here's a lady we met in college, she graduated from Cal State Northridge, who now became a governor's appointee over the Civil Service System, a Latina advocate to the max, from the hood, from the *barrio*. She gets appointed. First thing she does, she comes into the beautiful state building, sixth floor, big office like this, where the executive director has a nice office like this, and says to this white guy, executive director, very conservative Republican from the Ronald Reagan days, and says, "Where are all the Chicanos?"

So the guy says, "Let me find them." So he rounded up a few of us.

We go and meet with Irene Tovar. We remember her from the days past. She says "Where are all the Latinos?"

Then this older conservative executive director says, "I'm sorry, Irene, but you're not allowed to speak to these people individually."

And being the Latina aggressive progressive that she was, she said, "I'm sorry, the person that I do *not* want to talk to is *you*. So I'd like you to leave the room and I'll talk to these folks."

And he was, like, appalled, totally appalled. And we were scared because we thought we would get fired. And she asked us, "Where are all the Latinos, all the Chicanos?"

And we said, "This is it, man. This is all you got."

She goes, "This is going to change. I guarantee it." And it did.

So that's kind of a product of my college involvement to see it, but little did we know back then that that was going to happen.

So Governor Brown then appointed not only her, he appointed Mario Bledo [phonetic] as the agency Secretary for Health and Human Services, which is the largest agency in the state. He appointed Herman Sillas as the director of DMV, Department of Motor Vehicles. You know why that's significant? Herman Sillas is an attorney and was the first chairperson of the Chicano/Latino Caucus of the Democratic Party. So that's very significant, and I'll tell you, all that happened in the late sixties, seventies.

Okay, I'm sorry. I got off track. Go ahead.

Montoya No, go ahead. Elaborate on that.

[00:33:09]

Aguilera Okay. So Herman Sillas came in. He was appointed the director of DMV, Department of Motor Vehicles, which was a department of about 10,000 employees, and you know how everybody has to go to the DMV office, right? But he was also very politically in tune, just like Irene was at the State Personnel Board, and one of first things he did was he implemented the Bilingual Services Program. So Irene Tovar, president of the State Personnel Board, Herman Sillas, the director of

DMV, got together with Latinos, CAFE, and said, "We need to fix this. There are no persons in the state who get paid to speak Spanish or any language to the community out there."

So together they sponsored a bill, along with CAFE, called the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Bill. That was in the seventies. Today when you go to a DMV office or you go to any office, EDD or whatever, they have to have someone in that office they can speak your language, doesn't matter whether it's Hmong, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Sign Language. And those people get paid extra to provide that. There's 8,700 bilingual-certified individuals, and there's another 75 that aren't certified but are getting ready to certify. That's a big number compared to zero back then. That allows people of color, people who speak different languages to get hired for the language they serve.

Just one last thing. Because CAFE is oriented toward the state, when you look at the state of California organization chart, it's the governor and then across organization chart it has all the elected people. So, for instance, Alex Padilla just got elected as Secretary of State, first statewide Latino to be hired *ever*. And then you've got the Secretary of State, you've got the Board of Equalization, all of those. But all of those boxes at the very, very top report to one organization chart. You know who that is? That's the people of California. The people of California are 38 percent Latino, almost 60 percent people of color. So all these state departments and agencies, 200 state employees, including myself, who do we work for? We work for the people of California.

If the people of California demographic has changed the way it is, then state government has to change to reflect those people, not because we want to be segregated or anything like that; it's about providing service to that community. How can the state of California provide healthcare in the Central Valley, where majority of migrant workers, Latino, Asians, Filipinos work, and the state be responsive without knowing how that community works, lives, and reflect it? So state government has to reflect that population or it doesn't serve. It can't. It doesn't understand it.

When I first started with state, it was mandatory as a college graduate I had to wear a white shirt, a tie, sports coat, shoes, of course, all that. But one of the things that was required, I had to go out and do public speaking. I *hated* it. I didn't want to do it, but we had to do it. You know where we had to go? We had to go to Kiwanis; we had to go to Lions; we had to go to 20-30; we had to go to school districts; Toastmasters, all that, to give presentations about the state of California.

Today I reverse that, and as manager, as I progress through state, I tell my peers, after working forty years for the state, I said, "Okay. In my day, we had to go to this presentation so we could be sensitive to our stakeholders, the people we serve. Today you should go to East L.A. and speak to the La Clínica de la Raza. Tomorrow, you're going to go to Logan Heights to speak to the Latino Chamber of Commerce. Tomorrow, you're going to go to the Latino school board and make your presentation."

And most of my peers, the older non-minority folks, don't want to do it. They don't want to go out there. So I said, "Okay, then let's bring those people in here." Well, they don't want that either. They don't want "those people" coming here.

I describe state government like this. People who work for the state have good jobs. They come and work in a building in the capital that's twenty stories high. They park right underneath the building; they've got their own parking space. They take the valet elevator upstairs. They've got a beautiful that overlooks the Capitol. They come in at 9:00, they go on break at 9:30, take a long lunch break. At 2:30, they go on break, and then they go home and go play golf or whatever they're going to do.

Okay. Now, we were taught that when we make a decision about Medi-Cal, healthcare, DMV, employment, you have to know who the stakeholders are. You cannot make a decision about the community that the state of California serves if you don't know the community. So it's easier for a person who doesn't know our community to say, "Oh, we're going to cut $20 million in the Medi-Cal Program that serves undocumented workers, for early pregnancies."

So my response for those people, "Do you know that community? Have you spoken to them? Do you know who the stakeholders are? Have you been out to the local hospitals? What have you done to prepare? And if you haven't done that, then you're making a decision to cut $20 million of services to a community you don't even know? You haven't researched it. You're just taking a big wild guess and saying that's where you want to cut it. So that doesn't work for me. I would never approve anything like that, and shame on you for not doing your homework. So either you move and let a Latino or person of color who's willing to make and do all that research or you hire someone of color that can help you make that kind of decision." That's the difference that we have now today.

Tsymbal You've already answered a bit of this question, and you can feel free to elaborate on it if you please, but there's some other elements to it too. Did the Movimiento raise your consciousness along social, cultural, and political lines? [00:40:39]

Aguilera Absolutely. The Movimiento taught me to be more receptive of gay individuals, because to that date, up to about '69, '70, I've never been exposed to lesbians, gays, transgender, any of that, but part of the Movimiento exposed that to us. Also the Movimiento exposed us to Native Americans and many of their issues. We were part of a group that took over D-QU, which was a military National Guard installation in conjunction with the Native American organizations. We also had to work with African Americans, who were just as underrepresented as we were. So, yes, it exposed us to a lot of other groups that we probably wouldn't have been as sensitive about. And to this day, I belong to a coalition of civil rights groups made up of Native Americans, Latinos, gays, Asians, Blacks, veterans, and we work together on common issues.

Montoya What do you think some of these common issues are besides the underrepresentation? Several?

[00:42:08]

Aguilera Oh, lots. Many, many, many. First let's take it on a political end. We recently assisted with Eric Guerra being elected to city council for the city of Sacramento. He's the first Latino to be elected to the city council in twenty years. It's in District 6, which is kind of Oak Park, so we had to work the African American

community and the gay community, who already has representation in the city council. So in that area, we had to work with those folks.

Also, I don't know if you were aware of this, in education in Sacramento today, in Greater Sacramento, we have nineteen Latino school board members. Nineteen. That's an *incredible* number. In Elk Grove alone, we have three. Elk Grove is the fourth-largest school district in California, *fourth*-largest school district. We have three Latinos on that school board; incredible number.

Tonight, if you guys get a chance, we're sponsoring an event at SEIU headquarters, which is on the corner of 13th and S, where we are going to have four Latino superintendents of schools. There's actually six in the area. So when I talk about the nineteen school board members all over in the Sacramento area, when they got elected, they, in turn, started working with other coalitions, people of color, women and other groups, to start changing the superintendents of schools, and it's happening. For us to have four, it's an incredible number. Actually six. So that's on the education.

In employment, oh, my gosh, we went from 3,000 or 4,000 to over 50,000. Latinos represent the largest number for Latinos in state government, period. In unions, SEIU union is one of the largest unions in California. It represents close to 200,000 employees. The president is black. A Latina is vice president, Margarita Maldonado. It is the unions who give out money for people to run in office. That's on the union.

On the politics side, we have twenty-six Latino and Latina legislators, Assembly and Senate members, the largest bloc over at the Capitol. Because we have

over the largest bloc, we're able to pass legislation that provides healthcare services to undocumented individuals. Would *never* happen five years ago. We're able to provide scholarships to DREAM and anchor individuals. We're able to do so many things because we're so involved on all different areas.

I mentioned the school boards. Over 900 Latinos school board members throughout the state of California, which are able to then hire these school board superintendents, right? And remember that from first grade to twelfth, 50 percent, right now, of all students are Latino.

Okay. So those are just some of areas that we're seeing *huge* gains.

Tsymbal As you were becoming more aware, consciously aware of these different groups and how they relate to yours, did any of these changes impact your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:46:34]

Aguilera Absolutely. I was the first to go to college at UC Davis, right? So of course all my brothers and sisters went to UC Davis, right? I was the first to get into state government. Guess what. All my brothers and sisters, but just not my brother and sisters, *primos*, cousins, aunts, you name it, friends, we learned the system the hard way because they wouldn't accept us, so we had to learn it. So now we are, in turn—because so much of what happens is word of mouth. How do you know how to get a job? Well, if you know how to get that job, you'll help others gets a job. And that's what we do. CAFE is all about getting new people into state government, not necessarily Latinos, young individuals who are willing to be a change in state government. That's what it's about.

Montoya It seems like it's a snowball effect. You think that's still going? [00:47:41]

Aguilera Absolutely. I'll name you some of the organizations back when I was going to college that we helped start, were just in the beginning. AMAE, Association of Mexican American Educators, AMAE. CABE, California Association of Bilingual Education. Those two organizations probably represent close to 20,000 teachers, and they started back in the seventies. Most people don't know this, CABE puts on an annual conference. They probably get 10,000 teachers, student aides, teachers' aides, community workers, mostly Latinos. When they had their conference here at the Convention Center, the whole Convention Center was running, all the hotels were sold out and all the restaurants, but people don't realize that because it is not a well-known organization.

In addition to those two, you've got CAFE de California, Chicano Advocates for Employment, CAFE de California. You've got AMAE, CABE, right? You've got the Latino School Board Association. You've got the Latino Administrators Association.

You've the American GI Forum, which concentrates on veterans, and I've got to tell you a story about that. Because so many Latinos went into the service during in the Vietnam War back in the sixties, seventies, now that they're out and they started working, you probably have seen a VFW Hall, Veterans of Foreign War, okay, and those were built by the federal government, and they were built to have a place where the veterans could get together. In the old days, they were run by non-minority people. Today, many of those are run by Latinos.

There's a Veterans of Foreign War Hall on Stockton Boulevard. It's got a big cannon in front of it, and it's real close to the UCD Med Center. It's got a kitchen, super big kitchen, it's got a gym, it's got a bar, which is an issue with many of us, and it's got a big hall. The board of directors of that place is run by Latinos. What does that mean to us? That means veterans can go there. But our concentration is about getting veterans healthcare, deal with health issues, how to get jobs, and other things. So the American GI Forum, which is one of the oldest Latino organizations in the nation, is now starting to get more.

All of these organizations got their start back in our old college days when Senon and I were just starting out. These organizations used to fight, but now there's more working—we still have our differences, but we're working much more together. The Mexican American Political Association, MAPA. The Chicano/Latino Capitol Association. Remember I talked about the twenty-six Latino legislators at the Capitol? Well, when they came in the office, guess what. Guess what they hired. They hired a lot of Latinos. So Latinos represent the biggest staff, but that's not the key thing. Latinos are in key jobs on how to get a bill in and out, how to get a budget, how to get whatever. And once you learn that, that keeps forever. You learn that forever.

My son is part of that group. He works at the Capitol. His job is to get bills passed through the Capitol, and if there's a problem, how to get out it, how to adjust it, and all of that. So those twenty-six Latino legislators have hired Latinos. Many of us tend to hire people in our likeness, but not to the exclusion, hopefully, of others. That's the one thing I've learned.

And then the last one is the Chicano/Latino Caucus of the California Democratic. I was the executive director for about eight years. I learned many things. The one thing I learned and the people shared with me is that in the Democratic Party, if Latinos raise a million dollars, we can't give it to Latino candidates; it goes to the party. The party decides where that money's going to go. So let's say we have a candidate that the Latino Caucus wants to endorse. We can't even endorse that person unless the party gives us okay. We can't even give them money.

Richard Palanca [phonetic], who was the highest-level legislator at the Capitol, is now retired, but was from Pasadena, told us one time, "There's a pecking order in the Democratic Party for them to endorse you and then run." And he says to us, "If we had to wait on the Democratic Party to anoint us to run for office, we would be nowhere. So we have to do it on our own. We have to raise our own money."

I live in the Greenhaven area. I don't know if you know where that is. It's a fairly affluent area. I've lived there since 1975. My home is paid off, right? My wife is a UCD [unclear] Latina, very high. We both left state service, retired now from fairly high-level jobs. When Eric Guerra decided to run in District 6, right, we got CAFE members to donate $100 apiece. Okay. So we got ten people to get ten more people to donate $100. You know how much that is? That's $10,000. So then we invited Eric to one of our homes and said, "Here's $10,000 worth of checks. You don't live in our district, but we're committed to get a Latino to that thing." And I honestly feel that it is our job as Latino elders to help others make a difference in our

community, period. Someone helped us out back then. Now it's our turn to give back in every way we can.

Okay, go ahead.

Montoya You've kind of already talked about this, but if you want to elaborate, you're more than welcome to do so. What would you say were the impacts of your involvement with the Movimiento in your career? I know that it seems like that was extremely vital to what you were doing, what you ended up doing.

[00:55:28]

Aguilera The Movimiento was critical to my education and exposure to the Latino Movement and made a lifetime change. CAFE de California Latino State Employees started as part of the Movimiento. If I had not been in the Movimiento prior to that, we would have never started CAFE. If I hadn't been involved in MEChA, never started.

We took CAFE and we went to go visit Cesar Chavez in La Paz, which is in Bakersfield, and we broke bread with Cesar, many of the state workers, in La Paz, which is his headquarters for the United Farm workers, and we said, "Cesar, we're organizing ourselves, but we have no way of knowing how to do it. We're just a bunch of young guys, men and women, that want to organize Latinos."

And his advice to us was, "One, get yourself organized, learn the system, but develop a revenue so that you can make a difference, because by being organized, you can generate people or you can generate money." So we took that very hard, and that came from Dolores Huerta and Cesar.

So when we can back from La Paz, fresh out of college but just starting our state jobs, we teamed up with SEIU, which is the largest union, and so CAFE de California, in order to be a member with CAFE State Worker, we have payroll deduction. So what that means is when I get my check, the state controller who pays me my check takes $10 a month out of my check to go to CAFE de California. So as CAFE, that's very important because we have this financial base. If we didn't have that, I would have to find the guy and say, "I need your dues." This way we don't have to find him. We get it every month.

That allows us—and I'll give you an example—to give $1,000 to the Latina Foundation in San Francisco. It allows us to give $1,000-plus to Eric Guerra. It gives us an opportunity to give $1,000 to La Familia Counseling Center. It gives us an opportunity to give $1,000 to Sol Collective. It gives us an opportunity to raise money for issues that are important in our community just like the *gabachos* do it. We don't need to go and say, "Mother, may I? Can I have some money?" We have our own money and we're willing to give it for those causes. So that's what the Movimiento—it had a *huge* influence in everything I did from those years.

Montoya And now looking back at your experience in the Movimiento, are there any issues that you think are left unresolved?

[00:58:47]

Aguilera Oh, there's many. There's many. Even though we still have a high number of individuals not graduating from high school, and that's a big issue, even though we have many more Latinos graduating than we have dropouts, but I get a lot

of this where I work, people tell me, "Oh, Tati, you guys don't even fuckin'—you guys can't even graduate."

I said, "Well, that's bullshit. We represent 50 percent of all students, and the glass is either half full or half empty. You're looking at it half empty. Half full means that the other half or more than half are graduating." Not only that—and I just looked at these numbers—we have 10 UC campuses, 23 CSU campuses, and 114 or 119 community colleges. We have more Latinos in all the campuses than we've ever had. UC Davis is almost at 20 percent. Even Berkeley is at 18 percent, UCLA at 22, UC Riverside, even a higher number. If you look at the CSU, the state colleges, places like Cal State Fresno, which has its first Chicano/Latino president of the college, is about 50 percent Latino. UC Merced, which is exactly why it was created, is probably almost 40, 50 percent Latino. So the number of students involved and going to school is *way* huge. And community college, we're probably almost 50 percent of all community colleges, about 450,000 students.

So all of the work we did, that Senon and I and many others did, stressing education is having *huge* payoffs, because we know if you have that education, it'll allow you to have a lot of flexibility in your life. You'll be making more money and you're more likely to have a partner that has a double income and allow you to make even more of a difference, a financial difference.

[01:01:12]

Tsymbal How do you believe that the Movimiento impacted community life here in Sacramento?

[01:01:22]

Aguilera It had a huge impact. I think back in the day when Joe Serna, who was a professor at UC Davis, it allowed him to get elected to the Planning Board first, and then to the city council and then mayor, which allowed Cesar Chavez Park to be created, allowed schools to be named. The Royal Chicano Air Force exposed art to the community. I don't know if you know this, but the artwork from the Royal Chicano and the murals are located throughout the state, including state buildings. When they do their murals, it talks about our history, our Movement, the Movimiento.

We talked about the bilingual. In my early days, you were punished for speaking Spanish. Today, you're paid to speak Spanish. Back in the day, if you took a *burrito* to school, you were chastised and criticized. Today, every, every—what do they call McDonald's? They call them fast food places. They all sell—guess what—*burritos*, *chili*, hot sauce. Why? Why? Because they want to reach out to the Latino community. So, yeah, it's having an effect.

The four superintendents, the six superintendents wouldn't be here as a result if it wasn't for the Movimiento. The nineteen school board members would not be here. The chairperson of the Board of Supervisors is Phil Serna. Joe Serna was Phil Serna's father, and he sits on the city council.

One other thing I want to check about, I current sit on the Sacramento County Grand Jury. The Sacramento County Grand Jury is composed of nineteen people who meet in private at the courthouse and investigate, issue subpoenas and indictments all in private. And if you know anything about the grand juries nationwide, they're the ones when a police officer shoots a person of color, like in Ferguson and other places,

it's the grand jury who decides whether to indict the police officer or not. In many areas, they don't.

I would not be on the grand jury if it hadn't been for a former CAFE member who worked for the state attorney, who was an attorney, Judge Dave De Alba, who appointed me to be on the grand jury. Why did he do that? Because he knew that grand juries weren't sensitive to a lot of our issues. Having me in the grand jury in a private room with nineteen other people who are mostly elderly white makes a big difference, because I'm not going to let them talk about our community and make decisions that I don't agree with, period. If I see an injustice, I'm going to raise it and I'm going to have it addressed, and I'm not going to take no for an answer. It's just the way it is, you know. Having me on the grand jury, that would not even be possible if wasn't for the Movimiento. So we're saying many, many, many things.

One other thing I want to mention, under the Sacramento Unified School District—many people don't know this—there's a charter school. It's called the Language Academy of Sacramento. It's got about 800 students. It's right next to UC Davis off of 49th Street, off of Stockton Boulevard. That school completely teaches students in Spanish only. My granddaughter goes to that school. It's a beautiful thing to see, teachers, students all speaking Spanish. It goes from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade. It's called the Language Academy of Sacramento.

My son's daughter goes to school there. He's a UC Santa Cruz graduate. He's not married, but the mother of the child is a UC Berkeley graduate. They had our granddaughter. They both wanted to have our granddaughter learn Spanish from the

ground up. So it does cost, but it's worth the money to have her go to school and speak Spanish as her first language, because we feel she'll learn English anyway.

So, yeah, the Movimiento has meant everything to me. It's made a huge difference to my life.

Tsymbal And does this school meet daily or is it like a weekend school?

[01:06:38]

Aguilera No, it's a total 8:00-to-5:00 everyday school. When my son first was telling me about it, I said, "Oh, son, it's probably some hole in the wall. I wouldn't recommend it. They're probably not academic," whatever.

He says "Dad, you're out to lunch. Go look."

So he took me out there. It is a beautiful, *huge* school tucked away amongst all those buildings at UC Davis Med Center, and if you've been in that area, on the right side, you've got the Shriners, you've got the UC Med Center, you've got the cancer—all of that. They're really building. And even though it's in Oak Park, that school is a very nice school, very, very, very fairly up to date. It's not like a hole in the wall kind of thing, not at all. It's like any modern elementary school.

Montoya Moving on to something a little bit different, as you may know, many of the individuals involved in the Movimiento have passed. Can you think of any individual who has passed and what their impact and their significance within the Movement?

[01:07:54]

Aguilera Yes, number one in Sacramento area would be Joe Serna—he has passed—and his wife. They had a huge influence on many of the Latino community

and people going to school. He organized and got many of us to get involved in electing people. When he passed as the mayor of the city of Sacramento, we suffered a kind of a setback in being involved in politics, and it made a difference until more recently.

Another person who passed was Lorenzo Patiño, who was a judge. Not too many people know this, but you know the county courthouse on H and Fifth Street? It was going to be named after him, and at the last minute, they changed it and they named the county jail for him. So we thought that was a slap in the face to us.

But if you look in the building and you go down I Street on the other side of the city council, where the city hall is at, it's called the Lorenzo Patiño Building. He was a judge who was very active in our community, helped people of color. He was a UC Davis graduate, law school, and helped a lot of people on different issues, everything, and was just in his prime as being appointed one of the first Latino judges in the area and passed, died of leukemia.

I want to mention one other organization that is really, really critical, one I forgot to mention, and that is the California Chamber of Commerce. They are a statewide organization, and almost 70 percent of all new businesses are Latino-owned businesses, and the chamber has a statewide network. If you've ever attended a statewide chamber of commerce—I attended a statewide Latino conference in San Jose, probably 8,000 Latino businesspersons.

As part of that, I want to tell you there's a building right off of Alhambra and you'll see it. It says—oh, my god. G_____. I can't think of the guy's name. They own the building and you'll see it right off the freeway, and it's right down by Alhambra,

around T Street. The owner of that building is a Latino CPA who was the past president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He's his own CPA and he probably has one of the largest Latino businesses in the state.

Another person, Latina, is the Vanir—Dorene—I can't think of her last name [Dominguez], but it'll come to me. She's the owner of Vanir, V-a-n-i-r, companies. She comes from San Bernardino, and she's helping build the hotel that'll be a part of the stadium. She's also a Latina who started from the bottom, part of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and built this up.

One last thing I want to mention, two weeks ago, three weeks ago, CAFE, along with La Raza Lawyers Association, which is a statewide organization of lawyers, held an event, a historic event at the Secretary of State's Office. The director is Alex Padilla. I mentioned him. He's the first Latino to be elected to a statewide office. In there, Secretary of State, where the state museum is at, we had a reception and had a sit-down discussion and audience kind of thing for Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar. You probably don't know who he is. He is the new California Supreme Court justice. But his story is so unique. He's forty-two years old. He is a Stanford, Harvard, Yale presidential appointee that Governor Brown appointed to the California Supreme Court.

What's unique about him is that he was born in Mexico, crossed the border every day to go to school, wasn't even a citizen, got his education here, and, of course, got the education that he got, and got himself appointed to—it is a historic appointment, there's no question about it, and to have someone like him.

But what Governor Brown did in addition to that, he appointed the first African American female to the California Supreme Court, not the first, but the third Latino Supreme Court justice, and an Asian. And then, of course, the Supreme Court justice is Filipina. So we have representation at the highest level. And to have him come to Sacramento—because he's located in San Francisco—and tell his story to all of us and say, "I crossed that border just like your parents did. I worked the fields just like you did. I went to get an education not even knowing where I was going." One thing led to another, and it was our parents who instilled to us, "*Mijo*, go to college. *Mijo,* work," *si se puede* and all of that. Those are critical things, and to hear more of that, it's very inspirational for people of color to see people of color succeed. The message that I pass on to others is if I could do it at my age back then, you can do it with all of our support and make a difference.

Are we close to time? If we are, that's okay.

Tsymbal We have fifteen more.

[01:15:18]

Aguilera Okay. One thing. I have two boys. They're four years apart. When they were in eighth grade, we had it a real difficult decision, my wife and I—we were both college graduates—whether they would go to Jesuit High School, which is a private boys' high school, or whether they would go to John F. Kennedy High School, which was a very highly-regarded high school at the time in our neighborhood. But because we wanted no distractions for our sons and we wanted them to succeed and to be competitive, we wanted them to go to Jesuit High School, even though it was way across town in Fair Oaks.

So they said, “No, Dad, we really want to stay with our friends in the neighborhood and go to high school.”

And we said, “Okay, let us think about this.” And we struck a deal. We said, “Okay, we’ll let you go to Kennedy High School, where your friends and everybody’s at, but you have to go to Jesuit High School in the summer and you have to do all four years. If you don’t go, then we’ll take you out of Kennedy and we’ll take you over there.”

So we get into Kennedy High school, and, of course, my wife and I, concerned about our sons, were involved in the PTA and what have you. So we started—because we right away saw my son had brought to our house—we lived not too far from there—a few Latino friends. Then about three weeks later, the same group came back minus a couple students.

So I asked him, “What happened to Javier and this other person?”

And they said, “They dropped out.”

I said, “How could they drop out? They’re only freshmen. How could they possibly have dropped out?”

So I called the school and I said, “What happened to Javier? I’m just curious.”

He said, “They dropped out.”

I said, “They’re too young to even think about dropping out. How could they drop out?”

So anyway, as a result, I met a Latina secretary. She said, “Tati, what we need here is a Latino Parent Advisory Group.”

I said, “Not a problem.” I ended up being the chairperson of the MEChA Parent Advisory Group at John F. Kennedy High School. We were able to take those two students and get them back, okay? They had a lot of family issues. What most people don’t know is that John F. Kennedy, which is an affluent area, most of the Latinos did not come from our area. They came from the Meadowview area and had to be bused in, so many of the families at John F. Kennedy were not crazy about having those people bused in.

We worked all four years with those students, professors, and got speakers and all that other stuff. So during those years, we did it, of course, because our two sons were going there, but the biggest payoff for us is that we had the highest number of Latinos graduate from that high school. We had the highest number of Latinos go to the UC system, CSU, the fewest number going to community college, because they were all accepted there. It was just a wonderful thing to see when they graduated.

But I’ve got to tell you this story. The MEChA Parent Advisory Group took a group of Latino students from John F. Kennedy over to Grant High School for a Latino Youth Conference. In one of the workshops, one of the instructors was talking about the SAT exams to get into college, ACT, SAT. So she asked the students, “How many of you know what SAT stands for?”

So one of our freshmen, one of the kids that dropped out and we got back, said, “I know, I know.”

And the lady goes, “Okay, *mijo*, tell us what SAT stands for.”

And his response was, “It stands for Saturday.”

So she says, “That’s exactly why you’re here. It stands for Scholastic Aptitude Test, and it’s the test that you’re going to have to take to get into college.”

He goes, “Yeah, I kind of knew that too.”

But the bottom line was what it signaled to all of us is that we had a lot more to do with our students and exposing them to get them ready. When people talk about A-through-F college requirements to get in, or A-through-G, extra classes, extra credit and all of that, they don’t have a clue. When you talk to a group of students, which I’ve done many, many times, and you talk to them about college and where to go, it’s hard for them to relate, because many of the students—Kennedy High School is only about fifteen miles from here, or less. They’ve never been to a city college, which is only less than ten miles. They’ve never been to a CSU, which is Sac State. They’ve never been to a community college, which is this one and Los Rios, Cosumnes, and they’ve never been to UC Davis. So how can you preach to them, “College is important” if they can’t relate to it?

So what do you have to do? You have to take them. You have to take them. You have to expose them. I took a group of students to UC Santa Cruz. The reason we went to UC Santa Cruz, because the guy says, “We’ll pay for the bus.”

I said, “What? You’re the first one that says you’ll pay for the bus.”

He says, “How many can you bring?”

I said, “Forty-two.”

He said, “We’ll get two buses. We’ll pay for the two buses if you can get that many students.”

I said, “Wow, that’s great! I don’t know how you guys can do that.”

And he goes, “I’ll tell you why we’re doing it, Tati, because if we can get one or two or three or four students from your high school to come to UC Santa Cruz, that means over $150,000 to our school, because tuition, room, and board runs about 30,000. You multiply that times four years, it’s about 120,000 to our school, because you’re going to take it out in loans or grants or whatever, and it’s all going to come back to the university.”

Now check this out. So he says, “The 1,200 I’m going to pay to have your kids, feed them and whatever, and bring them to UC Santa Cruz, where they’ll have a wonderful day and get exposed, is nothing compared to what the school is going to make if one of your students comes to my college.”

And as it turns out, my son and several of the students from that year, about six of them, went to UC Santa Cruz. Isn’t that incredible that they would pay that much?

The Youth Conference that we hold every year at UC Davis, they give us $10,000 to put on. And you would say, “Wow! That’s great!”

So 9,400—guess what—goes back to the university. We pay for the facilities, the printing. All of that goes back to them. But it is a good investment, because Latinos get to go, they get on campus, and I’ve always thought the more Latinos or people of color that you can get to a campus where they can see these beautiful buildings, the dorms, the gyms, the lockers, the food, the bowling alley, the sports, the swimming, other people of color, all of that, the t-shirts, the bikes, I say this, you can move away from home and enjoy yourself at eighteen if you go to college. Many

people struggle and work a part-time job and are never, ever able to move out the house. But if they go to college.

I used to tell this story to my kids at Kennedy High School and to my children. “Okay, here we are McDonald’s, here we are at Taco Bell, here whatever, right? And you see that person over there? What are they doing? They’re mopping the floor. See that person over there? They’re cleaning out the garbage. See that other person? Who are they? Mostly Latinos. Now, see that other guy? What is he doing? He’s telling everybody what to do.” And I said, “Okay, which one would you rather be, the person who’s being told what to do and when to do it and when to go, or the person who’s the boss?” In order to be that boss, you have to have a college education. You have to obtain as much as you can. And that’s just if you want to do that. There’s nothing wrong with what you’re doing being there, but if you really want to make a good living, provide for yourself, and help others, then you want to go to college, because that will be the difference in what you want to do.

Okay, I’m sorry. Go ahead.

Tsymbal No, that’s fine. So this is our final question. What do you see as the current or future challenges to the Chicano Movement?

[01:25:07]

Aguilera I think we need to continue to stress education for all our students at the high school level, and then getting them from high school to college and then getting them to graduate from college, but even after that is having them have employment opportunities after they get out of college. Many of the organizations like CAFE strive to help students get jobs *after* college, not *during* college, because

we think it's important they stay in college and graduate and do their work. But after college, we have to employ those people. So education is a very important part of it.

The other part is to support community organizations. There was a Day of Giving—I don't know if you know that—statewide, nationwide, about two weeks ago, and it makes it so much easier now when you can do it online and you just give $100, $200. So ten of us got together and each gave $100 to La Familia Counseling Center, which is right here on Franklin Boulevard and Fruitridge, tucked away against the police department. They service our community. It's very important. The Sol Collective, which is 24th Street, they work with young students of color. So for the Latino elders and people of color, we have to give back to the community, not only in our staff resources, time, but in our financial resources. We have that retirement fund. We were lucky to have a good job all those years, and now we have to take some of that and invest it in our community, period. There's no ifs or buts about it. If we want our community better, then we must be able to financially assist and be able to donate, without question.

Tsymbal And is that how you see yourself contributing to meet these challenges?

[01:27:15]

Aguilera Absolutely. I feel I've worked for the state for forty-one years, I have benefitted educationally, financially, and socially as a result of that, and I have many Latino friends who have done the same and think much like me. We have formed a little consortium. We call ourselves a little bit of philanthropical Latinos, and so we donate to causes that we think are worthwhile, like the $10,000 we donated to Eric,

the $1,000 that we donated to La Familia Counseling Center, the $1,000 we donated to the Latina Foundation, which gives scholarships, the $1,000 that we gave to Cien Amigos, which is the Mexican consulate that gives $180,000 in scholarships to people of migrant like we were at one time. So absolutely that's an area that we want to help do. I also do workshops on how to get a state job. So we do that all over. I'm willing to fly to L.A., Los Angeles, whatever, because I can and do it.

One thing that the Movimiento afforded me is a lot of contacts. I would not know about AMAE, CABE, La Raza Lawyers Association, MAPA, Latino School Board Association had I not been involved in the Movimiento. In the early days, going places with people, twenty to a car or whatever it was, a bus or however we went down. In later days when I got the state job, I would fly and go to community groups. I've been probably to almost all the state *rancherias* and reservations, not because I had to, because I wanted to, before they had casinos.

I don't know if you know this. When you go to a *rancheria*, all the services stop. You can tell where the paved road stops and the dirt road begins. Many places don't have plumbing, electricity, garbage, toilets, any of that. And people don't see it because they don't see it; they don't want to see it. So I applaud that the Native Americans have their Indian casinos. They have a lot of other issues.

California has the most Native Americans in the entire United States, but what they don't have is they don't have big reservations, like in Arizona you have the Apaches, you have the Hopi Indians. In California, most Native Americans are not land-based, meaning they're not on a reservation. They belong to a small tribe of *rancherias*. Most *rancherias* are like only twenty, thirty people. So you'll see a lot of

Native Americans. They're not land-based. They can't go back to the rez, because there's no rez to go back to.

One of the jobs I did for the state—I didn't get a chance to talk about that—is I was the executive director of primary health clinics that provided healthcare to low-income people. So we funded clinics on Indian *rancherias* and we gave it to them in grants. We funded clinics in urban areas like East L.A, the Venice Community Center, El Centro del Pueblo, Clínica de la Raza all throughout the state.

Many of the people that I worked with who were not Latino would say, "Tali, why do they name it Oscar Romero? Why do they name it Clínica? Why don't they do American names?" It is because we don't relate to American names. Why do we have George Washington School? It's named after our people, our culture, Cesar Chavez Community, you know.

And I said, "You're looking at it through tunnel vision. You can't see outside that tunnel vision. The next generation of non-minority people are going to be exposed to us, they're going to know a Latino, they're going to have dated a Latino, they're going to have to work with a Latino, and they're going to be much more exposed than you are." And that's why. We have a lot of things.

If I had the chance, I'd change the name of the school to Cesar Chavez, but what would I need? I would have to work with the Board of Trustees for this school and then have the majority vote to make it happen. And we're good at that. We're starting to learn that. The Board of Trustees for all the community colleges has Latinos. The Board of Trustees for CSUs now has Latinos, and the UC Board of Regents. We don't have a majority vote, but we're getting there. And you can see,

like I mentioned, that nineteen area school board members have hired six Latino school superintendents. It's just a matter of time. [laughs]

Okay. Any more questions?

Tsymbal No, that was the final one.

Montoya That was it. Thank you so much. It was a pleasure interviewing you. [01:33:11]

Aguilera No problem. I'm happy to do it. If you have additional things, I'm happy to do it. I've been very fortunate in my life. I wish you both the best. You have my card. If you ever need anything, you let me know. If you're looking for state employment, you let me know, but you need to get your college education first.

I'll probably see you on campus. I'll be over there on Monday for a meeting for the Cesar Chavez Youth Conference, which is going to be in March, April.

It's good to be where I'm at today and to have been where I was in the Movimiento, because it's made all the difference. And it'll make a difference—I mean, your background is Ukrainian, so you'll see a difference. There's more of that community in Sacramento, and it's a growing community. Many of the things that we've gone through, you can relate to, right? So we'll be working much closer together. That's what we want. We want harmony. We want to be able to work together to accomplish things, but not just for a select group; we want to help everyone, and that'll make the world better, and not only for us, but the next generation.

Okay. It was my pleasure, guys.

[End of interview]