

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

David Armendariz

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Maribel Gutiérrez
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Transcription by Technitype Transcripts

Gutiérrez So can you please state your full name, please?

[00:00:10]

Armendariz My name is David Secados [phonetic] Armendariz.

Gutiérrez And your date of birth?

[00:00:15]

Armendariz My date of birth is July 20th, 1949.

Gutiérrez What's your marital status?

[00:00:22]

Armendariz I'm married currently.

Gutiérrez Do you have children?

[00:00:25]

Armendariz Yes, I have two. I have a son by the name of Ramon Armendariz, and Primavera Armendariz. Ramon went to school here at Sac State, and Primavera went to school at UC Davis.

Gutiérrez So where were you born and raised?

[00:00:39]

Armendariz I was born in Nogales, Mexico. I came to this country, or my parents brought me to this country when I was seven years old, and from there I went directly to live in Woodland, California, which is right by Sacramento, of course.

Gutiérrez What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:57]

Armendariz My father was a farmworker all his life, and my mother was a cannery worker.

Gutiérrez And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

[00:01:06]

Armendariz I have two sisters and one brother. My brother passed away in 2011, but my other two sisters, they're still there. They live in San Diego.

Gutiérrez Can you please describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and your neighborhood?

[00:01:24]

Armendariz Like I mentioned, I was born in Nogales, Sonora, so when they brought me to this country when I was seven years old, I went directly to Woodland. Even as a young child, when I got to Woodland, I didn't speak any English whatsoever, of course, and so when I got there and I started looking around in the classroom, I remember my teacher in first grade, her name was Mrs. Farley, and there in the classroom I tried to make friends with people. I said, "*Habla español? Habla español?*"

"No, no, no, we don't speak any Spanish."

"[Spanish]"?

“No, no.”

So I got pretty sad there, you know. I said, “Gee, how am I going to do this, man? Nobody speaks any Spanish here.”

But when we went out to the playground, sit there by myself and I would hear them talking in Spanish, it just kind of blew me away. I said, “How come out here in the playground they’re speaking Spanish and in the classroom they’re saying they can’t speak Spanish?” I couldn’t figure it out as a young child. I said, “What’s going on here?”

So I went back to the classroom, and I was really pretty sad and just trying to figure that one out, and there was this one student there by the name of Concha Guerrero [phonetic]. I still remember even today she came up to me, she said, “You know what, David?” She goes, “I speak Spanish.”

I go, “You speak Spanish?”

“Yeah.”

I says, “Will you help me with the teacher, translate for me?”

She goes, “Yeah, I’ll help you.”

So Concha sat right by me, and she was my translator with Mrs. Farley. After a while, it’s amazing when you’re a child at that age, you pick it up right away. Before I knew it, I was speaking English and speaking it real well and stuff like that.

But also I noticed there wasn’t one Hispanic schoolteacher in the whole district, not one. Later on as I progressed in the educational system, in about seventh grade there was the first one. His name was Ramon Gutierrez [phonetic]. He was the only Chicano teacher in the whole district.

So in Woodland, it was a very rural area, a lot of farmworkers, and the people that kind of made it, they had small businesses, they were kind of pretty much more into social services and their own thing, so there was a lot of discrimination in many, many ways, and we didn't really have any role models. We didn't have any schoolteachers. There wasn't one Chicano police officer in the whole city. So you were pretty much on your own, I guess, as a student. I noticed that as a young child. I noticed, "What's going on here? There's none of our kind in key positions."

Gutiérrez And, like, how did that make you feel, like—

[00:03:56]

Armendariz It made me feel really insecure, because I really kind of developed—as a young child, I kind of developed a self-hatred, because when I was in first grade and I figured that all these Mexicanitos that were there, I couldn't figure out why they didn't speak Spanish. Then I found out later on, because they hated themselves so much, they didn't want to associate anything with being Mexicano or Mexican or anything like that, I guess, because of the discrimination and the racism. So when I started learning English, I said, "Man, I'm going to learn it so perfect, I'm not even going to speak with any kind of accent." I remember the schoolteachers telling me, "David, you're not like those other Mexicans." They used to tell me, "You're not like those other Mexicans, man."

"What do you mean?"

"You don't even look Mexican."

"Wow," I said.

"You can speak well."

I became a real good student. I became, like, a really sharp student, and I was really careful not to speak in an accent too. Then I started hating myself, man. What they were doing to me, then I started doing it to them, because I started hating myself. I said, “Man.” Anything that was Mexican, you know, it was like—I mean, the discrimination was so powerful there, that I developed kind of like a self-hatred. I just said, “Man.” Yeah, I felt really bad about myself in many ways, you know.

So when they would pass around the classroom, “Where were you born?” I was scared to say I was born in Mexico, man, because it was, like, real shameful, like, man, I was born in Mexico and everybody else was born here. They were saying Woodland, Davis, Arizona, and I had to say, “Mexico.”

“What?”

“Mexico.”

“Say that louder.”

“Mexico!”

Everybody’d look at me like, “Mexicano from Mexico.”

Anyway, so as a child, I developed, like, a negative image of myself because I didn’t really exactly know what was going on, but I felt that. Plus we were poor. My father was a farmworker. So I recall that we never really had a house, you know.

So since I was a pretty sharp student, a good athlete and stuff like that, I was pretty popular in school, so I’d hang around with some of the other, like, Chicano middle-class, you know, and so they had houses. I’d go visit them. They had nice houses, and we never had a house. We were living in a cramped little bungalow type of thing, you know, and I felt really bad about that. My father was a farmworker, you

know. I was poor, man. I grew up poor, and all my other friends had nice houses and nice cars and stuff like that. So I grew up kind of feeling kind of lost, I guess, in some ways like that.

Gutiérrez And did you, like, going through that struggle, did you ever express any of this stuff to your parents, or did you just keep it to yourself?

[00:06:30]

Armendariz I pretty much kept it to myself, because my parents never did learn English. Even though my father was born in the United States, he was born in the United States, he was born in Douglas, Arizona, but he was a farmworker, but as many other farmworkers, when you work in the fields, all that is spoken is Spanish, so there's no way you're going to learn English. So they never learned English. Neither did my mother. So they were pretty much—all of us were pretty much on our own, just trying to figure everything out, as far as education. They never went to any parent conferences, none of that stuff, no.

Gutiérrez Were you a Fellow or Felito during the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:07:06]

Armendariz No, I was not.

Gutiérrez But did you, like, take any anthropology or social science classes?

[00:07:13]

Armendariz Yeah, I took anthropology and social science classes, I think from Senon Valadez and Steven Arvizu, just like Luis [Campos] did. Yeah, I did take those.

Gutiérrez How did those classes, like, influence your thinking and involvement in the Chicano community?

[00:07:30]

Armendariz Well, they influenced it quite a bit, because during that time of just getting out of high school and then coming here to Sacramento State University, that's when I met Luis Campos, my best friend. You develop an awareness, kind of like a rebirth, I guess you might say, to understand all that suffering that went on when I was a young kid and stuff like that. You kind of develop like a healing process. You start to understand what is going on. And having an opportunity to come on to a college campus and to meet people who are professionals, to have those role models like Dr. Valadez, Steve Arvizu, and other people that were here on campus, it was like a real spiritual enlightenment, you know, and kind of, I guess, energized you to want to kind of find yourself, being a Chicano, like a rebirth, as we said earlier. So those classes and what they taught us, as far as anthropology and other history classes, really reinforced and kind of rediscovered ourselves, basically.

Gutiérrez In what specific ways did it help you, like, find yourself? You said it helped you, like, find out, like, understand more of, like, what went on when you were younger, like, you know, what are some specific things you could tell me, like, I don't know, like you kind of found out about yourself that you kind of understood now, not before?

[00:09:05]

Armendariz Well, I mean, like when I was younger, you know, like I said, as I realized there growing up in Woodland and not having any role models, I still had

kind of like a—maybe my foundations in Mexico, even being six, seven years old, I had a certain amount of strength of some type, you know, and I saw things a little bit different. For example, like during that time when I was growing up, in Dingle School I was in fifth grade, the big thing was being captain of safety patrol here. I mean, that was, like, the big thing for the school. When you became captain of safety patrol, man, that was like being the class president, you know. So I guess I always said, “Well, I’m going to go for it, man. There’s never been a Chicano, Mexicano elected captain of the safety patrol.” It was mainly all the rich White kids, doctors’ sons and lawyers’ sons.

And I went up against this one guy by the name of John Northrup [phonetic], whose father was a very successful lawyer in Woodland, and John is now a brain surgeon, you know. Anyway, so I went up against him. I felt, “I’m going to run for that, man, for safety patrol.” And I actually beat him out. I was the one that got elected to be the captain of safety patrol. So that was, like, the proudest moment of my life, man, wearing that little blue badge, and you’re captain of the safety patrol and you’re Mexicano, Chicano, and you’re captain. So all the other kids that were there, they kind of looked up to me. “Wow! Look at this guy!” I was the first one.

Then when I was in high school and they had the car clubs, for example, I noticed that there wasn’t any Chicano car clubs, they were all Anglo car clubs. So then I got together some people there, said, “Why don’t we just form our own Chicano car club? What the heck?” So, organized some of the people. We didn’t discriminate, either, because we had people like Dennis McKibben [phonetic], who was a doctor afterwards. We just included everybody, but we ran a car club. I

remember it was called the Quartermasters, and I was the first president and one of the founders, and I didn't even have a car. [laughter] So the guys would drive me around. I didn't have a car and I was the president. So, anyway, I had that.

So when I got to Sac State, it just kind of reinforced that energy that I had there, and I got to meet a lot of people and I got really heavy involved in the Movimiento. Anyway, that's when I got to this point.

Go ahead.

Gutiérrez Okay. So what are your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:11:29]

Armendariz I think my earliest memories are, again, as I said, when I was younger, I was kind of going towards that, but the early things that got me into it was having the opportunity to come on to a campus, because all of us that we met here, a lot of us came from farmworker background, and it's like a big dream, you know. It's like, wow, to be on a campus, to study, to develop, to evolve as a human being, it was like a real dream, a real fantasy, and I think from there, it kind of—and all the other people that you meet kind of energized you.

I remember that when we first got here on campus under EOP, we had a party here, a party that was here of the incoming students, and I remember that the person that came to this party was Ricardo Montalbán, and Ricardo Montalbán was one of the big-time actors, you know, during that time, and he spent quite a bit of time there, about two hours with us, and he was telling us how bad it was in Hollywood, Hispanics were kind of kept away from the acting field there. So all of that served as

a stimulus to kind of energize you, energize you. So from there, I was really involved in everything that was happening here, you know.

Gutiérrez And how did other Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Latinos, react to the term *Chicano* and *Movimiento Chicano*?

[00:12:58]

Armendariz Well, that was pretty rough because even here on campus, there was some conflict, but primarily it was the community, the more conservative community that the word *Chicano* was very negative, very negative. But some of the defenses that we had, you had to have a strong word, *Chicano*, to try to define you and defend you, you know, because the Chicano here, of course, you couldn't really—you were different than the Mexicano, because you grew up here. Either you grew up here or you were born here, and you grew up with a certain amount of discrimination and just differently. So the term *Chicano* was derogatory both in the conservative Mexican culture or, let's say, the Anglo culture, but that word, I think, defined us as kind of a different breed, I guess you might say, of people that were involved in the *Movimiento*. So we had the Chicano handshake and we wore all the buttons and all the—during that time was the war in Vietnam, so a lot of us, they came from Vietnam, we wore the Army jackets, you know, the Army jackets. So it was kind of like everybody energized each other, I guess.

Gutiérrez And how about that term *Movimiento Chicano*? How did people look at it. Like, how did they react?

[00:14:16]

Armendariz Well, you know, I think a lot of people were negative about it. Other people had fear, you know. They feared it, you know. We went to a lot of—like the last time that Luis Campos and I went to the Chicano Moratorium in East L.A., I mean, that was a really big experience for us because it was like 250,000 of us, you know, walking, going down the streets of L.A. with about 10,000 Brown Berets. I mean, it was such a powerful situation. You could almost feel the—people would yell, “Chicano!” and then they’d go, “Power!” You could almost feel the walls, man, just shaking in the *barrio* there in East L.A. You could feel the energy, and the walls just began to tremble. Everybody was just—the energy field moving through there. So I think all of us during that time really fell for that kind of thin. I think it was a spiritual thing, you know, kind of like a connection to ourselves, kind of bonding each other as a unit.

Gutiérrez And what was it like? You say that it was like so many of you walking. Like, what was it like during that time, you know, like, experiencing, like you said, that it was so empowering, everything was just like kind of very exciting, but, like, what was it like for you? Like, what did you feel during that time, like when you were walking, like, with so many people and, like, things so empowered?

[00:15:34]

Armendariz You know, I think I felt like I was on top of the world, just that energy level, to kind of see progress and see your people going towards the right direction, I guess, to the right direction in all levels. Yeah, I felt like I was on top of the world being with all of them and all of us being one.

Gutiérrez Had you heard of the Civil Rights Movement at that time?

[00:16:01]

Armendariz At that time, yeah, we'd heard of the Civil Rights Movement, but primarily it was Blacks doing a lot of things in civil rights. It was very little that was heard about Chicanos. I mean, we were aware that Cesar Chavez was, like, the leader here in California, and there was [Rodolfo] "Corky" Gonzales out of Colorado, and then there was Reies Tijerina out in New Mexico, so there were things going on in civil rights, but we were aware of it.

Gutiérrez Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally?

[00:16:40]

Armendariz Oh, definitely, yeah, definitely, because it developed, like I said, it developed an awareness, because I think you have to kind of find yourself. You have to find out where your roots are at in order to reinforce yourself, because all the negative energy that I had as a child, you know, I still carried it on a little bit as an adult because it's such a powerful energy level there of discrimination that really affects you, being Chicano and being poor. Sometimes when I used to look at *gringos*, man, I used to get this anger, man, you know. You develop an anger. But then through awareness and stuff like that, you were able to at least understand that perspective and kind of go through a healing process.

Gutiérrez Did that anger that you say you experienced, like, affect you with you communicating to them?

[00:17:25]

Armendariz No. I mean, it affected me in terms of the injustice that was taking place, so when I came back from UCLA and I went back to my community, again, you know, the same thing was going on, you know. We didn't have any schoolteachers in the whole district, there was still the same schoolteacher there, Raymond Gutierrez [phonetic], who taught physical education, but we didn't have any police officers in Woodland, for example, we didn't have any Chicano police officers.

We didn't even have a bilingual operator, so we were 20 percent of the population in Woodland and 20 percent of Yolo County, so if you had something going on in the community, [Spanish] *emergencia* [Spanish], "We're sorry." [demonstrates] Hang up. So I was saying, "How are these people going to get served? How are the people that are monolingual, Spanish-speaking, if we don't even have a Mexican police officer, let alone an operator?" And the same thing applied in the county. We were 20 percent of the county, and less than 2 percent were Hispanics were the workforce. So, you know, I saw all of this. I saw all of this taking place.

Then they had a small organization that was called the Concilio. It was just a little off-the-wall type of little office with a VISTA volunteer, and that was the only social services that they had there in Woodland for Hispanics or people that spoke Spanish.

Then after that, when I returned back to my community, a friend of mine, Rick Gonzales, who became real good friends, he's pretty much a mover there in Woodland. He was a barber and very much an activist there.

I made a presentation before the board of supervisors, trying to get some revenue-sharing monies, and there was a lot of people there. We filled the whole courthouse. And we were asking for \$21,000 to have a staff person and to pay the utilities and things of that nature, because other than that, we were doing fundraisers, you know, selling *tamales*, doing dances, just to do that. And the board of supervisors, the county, you know, just turned us down. I made the presentation before them, and they said, “No, we’re not going to spend any money.” Asking for \$21,000, and they said, “No,” and all of us just walked out.

So then at that time I had a meeting with the board of directors at Concilio. At that particular time, I was working for Economic Opportunity Commission in Yolo County. I was the affirmative action officer-dash-employment advocate. So then I met with the board, you know. I was pretty young then. I told them—after we walked out, the board of supervisors, I guess, kind of felt bad, and said they were pretty serious. They wanted us to come back and they offered \$10,000. They kind of threw a bone at us.

So when I met with the board there, I said, “Seems like a lot of money, \$10,000,” which it was at the time, I said, “but, you know, not only is the issue of not them wanting to fund us, but look at their hiring practices. We don’t have anybody there. The 2 percent that are there, they’re in guarding positions.” We didn’t hardly have any people in the sheriff’s department, any probation officers. I mean, it was like nothing. It was like the good-ol’-boys syndrome.

So then I said, “You know, what we could do, let’s just do it. Return the \$10,000 and let’s go for a lawsuit and sue them against discrimination against

Hispanics.” I said, “It’s going to be a long haul. I don’t even know how we’re going to do it, because we don’t have any funds, but we have to make a stand somewhere.” I said, “So let’s go for it. Let’s give the \$10,000 back, say, ‘We’ll take you to court.’ Let’s go for the whole thing.”

So the board supported it. I mean, that blew the minds of the board of supervisors. “How can you Mexicans refuse \$10,000? What’s the matter with you guys? And you’re going to sue us? Forget it, man.”

So then we took that step and that challenge, and it was very difficult because, you know, I mean, I knew that attorneys at that time, a private attorney wasn’t going to take the case, because there’s not much money in civil rights lawsuits. So I talked at that time to Lorenzo Patiño, who was a very prominent attorney and a very activist and friend of mine here in Sacramento, said, “Look, Lorenzo, I don’t know what’s going to happen. We’re going to challenge the board of supervisors.”

“Are you crazy? What are you doing? That takes a lot of money.”

I said, “We don’t have any money, but, look, I need you to do me a favor, is that Rick and I are going to go meet with Legal Aid Society in Sacramento, and I’m going to try to force them to take on our case to sue the county, but if that doesn’t work or something, I need you to be a backup, at least file the initial paperwork until we figure how we’re going to maneuver.”

So a lot of people don’t know how that lawsuit took place, and that was the lawsuit that kind of put Woodland on the map and gave Concilio the kind of power that it needed. Other than that, all the years, too, Concilio was just a little organization that nobody really paid much attention to. The *gringos* would laugh at it, you know. It

was just insignificant, really, I mean, to the *gringo* community and for us as a power base there in Yolo County, in Woodland.

So I met with the executive director of the Legal Aid Society here in Sacramento, and I had to basically threaten him. His name was Roger. I said, "You know, Roger, you guys have a responsibility as Legal Aid to defend us, and we want to sue Yolo County for discrimination against Chicanos and everybody else, all the other minorities, and we need you guys to take on the case."

He said, "We're not going to take on the case. We get funds from them."

"Well, I don't give a damn if you get funds from them." I said, "You're going to do it." I said, "If you don't do it, Roger, I'm going to have a thousand people tomorrow morning here, and we're going to picket your offices here in Legal Aid. Not only that, I'm going to come out on *Progreso*." Because I was one of the founders, along with Luis Campos and John Viarreal [phonetic], we founded *Progreso*. So we had access to *Progreso*. I said, "I'm going to condemn you guys."

"Well, you know, give me some time to meet with my board."

I said, "Well, you'd better meet with our board, and I'm serious, Roger. If you don't do it, I'm going to condemn you and all the Legal Aid Society. You have a moral responsibility." So I threatened him.

So then they took on our case, which was great. So now it was a battle between Legal Aid Society and the county, and that took a year. It was a million dollars in legal fees, but the net gains in that, to put it in a nutshell, at the rate that they were going, as far as hiring practices, it would have taken maybe thirty years to get to where we forced them to get there in five years, because we won that, and it

was a federal court decree. My buddy Luis was the first affirmative action coordinator for the county.

It was very difficult, hard for me, very stressful. The status quo in Woodland, or the *gringos*, I got a lot of threatening phone calls. They wanted to kill me. “We’re going to kill you, Mexican. What are you going to do, be suing the county?” And all this.

Then the Mexicanos on the other side said, “What are you doing, man? You’re really embarrassing us. How do you think you’re going to take on city hall, especially take on the county? Nobody’s been able to ever, ever do that. Why do you think you can do it? You’re really embarrassing to us. You’re going to lose and you’re going to cause embarrassment to all the community.”

“Well, you know, we’re not going to lose. We’re going to win.”

So, anyway, in the long run there, the board of supervisors just hated my guts, you know. I was a real threat to them. So even as part of the negotiations, once we got down to negotiations after a year of protesting, demonstrations, legal battles, coming out on television, you name it, and when the negotiations were going to take place, it was all the board of supervisors, five of them, and then their legal staff for the county, plus they hired a private firm to defend them. They were there.

I remember that day specifically. I was at the Legal Aid Society, and one of the persons that was really—I really respect him a lot, who headed that, this lawsuit, this was one of the major civil lawsuits in all of the United States that has to do with Chicanos, because we came out in the clearinghouse law review in the *Employment*

Practices Digest, so there was very few Chicanos doing major lawsuits like this in Title 7 that won in the whole country, and Concilio was one of them.

So Bob Leitig [phonetic], he was an incredible attorney. He's the one that really held it through, and I can't say enough for him. He was a real warrior. So him and I are there at the Legal Aid offices, and we were getting ready to negotiate with the board of supervisors. This is after a year. One of the things that their lead negotiator told Bob, him and I, said, "You tell David if he thinks that he's going to get a job out of this lawsuit or if he thinks he's ever going to work for the county, you might as well just cancel all the negotiations that are taking place now, because he's never going to work for the county. But if he wants that, you might as well just forget it. We're not going to negotiate anything."

So then Bob said, "David, that's what they're saying." Then Bob tells me, he says, "You know what, David?" He says, "You decide on what you want to do." He says, "I'm ready to go to court tomorrow morning. We'll go to trial." Going to trial, this was already a year, man, a million dollars, a lot of battles. Going to trial could last *years*, let alone the cost.

I said, "You know what, Bob? Give me a moment to think about it, all right? Tell them to wait."

So I went outside and I thought about it and thought about it, and I said, "I'd better negotiate with them because I might not ever have this chance again. If we go to trial, there's no guarantees we're going to win, plus it's going to be more costly, a lot more stress. I'm just going to say, 'Okay, fine. I'll never work for you guys. I'll

never work for Yolo County. I'll just forfeit whatever I have to forfeit, not to ever work for you guys or be employed.”

So I went back there, and Bob said, “Okay, my client agrees. Let's go on with negotiations. He'll never work for Yolo County.”

If I would have said, “You have no right to deny me work for a county. I love here, I grew up here, I pay taxes. I have a legal right to work for our government. How can you deny me that?” But I gave that up, and we went on. So the lawsuit was settled, and, like I said, we had a federal court decree, and that gave Concilio all the credibility. It was like an atomic blast. They gave it all the power and the credibility they needed after that.

After that, I went to knock on the City of Woodland's door. The city manager came out and he said, “You know what, Dave? We don't want to fight with you. We're ready to negotiate.”

I said, “I thought you would be.” So we negotiated with them. We got another court decree with them, so we brought everything to balance, you know. Again, it would have taken a course of maybe thirty years, even more, to have an economic pie, because opening up opportunities, meaning that if your dad got a job there working as a police officer or as a probation officer or whatever, you got a bit of the economic pie, which means you were going to have better clothes, better schools. It's a piece of the economic pie, basically, which gives you an opportunity to succeed, you know. So it was a lot, a lot of money, and that was a major, major change that happened in Woodland.

And Luis Campos, my buddy, did a lot of work on that because he was the affirmative action coordinator, so he was the one that was the enforcer. So after *all* this work took place and a lot of people were sacrificed—you know, I nearly had a nervous breakdown in the process, because I was under a lot of pressure. And once we won and he became the affirmative action coordinator, he became the enforcer of the court decree, so he did a heck of a job, a heck of a job enforcing it, because if we'd have had anybody that was weak, then all our efforts and everything, you know, these guys wanted someone who was weak and they could manipulate, but Luis is a pretty strong guy, so we were able to balance them and we were able to put people in key strategical positions as administrators. We had the first Chicano welfare director, we had people there on the sheriff's department that were promoted on all levels, you know.

The had to report to the federal court every year as far as their goals and timetables. It wasn't just, "Do it." No, they had to come up with goals and timetables every year to see that they were meeting all their objectives, you know. So it was an incredible lawsuit and it opened up a lot of opportunities for people. It established the Concilio as a very powerful base in the community, and it goes on even today.

Gutiérrez So, like, if you were to go back, like, to that decision that you had to make, like, to say you wouldn't work, or, like, if you had that money, would you still make that choice of, like, telling them, "No, I wouldn't work for you guys ever"?

[00:29:29]

Armendariz I would still make that choice, because I figured that the gains we were going to get for everybody else, it was going to be just incredible gains, so I'd rather

give up that privilege to work for them for the gains that we were going to get. So, yeah, I would, because I believe in sacrificing at that point, sacrificing my personal future, maybe, in many ways for the betterment of the people. Like I said, it was an incredible amount of gains. You can see the difference all the way through.

Gutiérrez So what role do you believe that Chicanas played in the Movimiento?

[00:30:06]

Armendariz The Chicanas?

Gutiérrez Chicanas.

[00:30:09]

Armendariz Oh. Chicanas played quite a major, major role in the Movimiento.

There was a little bit of conflict at the beginning, okay, because, I mean, once we got here on campus, we got the Chicanos and the Chicanas, and both of us were trying to define ourselves, you know, define ourselves not only as just Chicanos, being Chicanos and Chicanas, under that umbrella, also the role of the Chicanas played in there, you know, the women roles. I mean, there was even some battles that were taking place of just us trying to develop an awareness of some Chicanas would actually get—and even Chicanos, you know, as we met some other professors, not only at Sac State, but UCD and other campuses, I mean, one of the sayings that the Chicanos used to use, Chicanas, “You talk Brown and sleep White.” [laughs]

“What?”

“He talks Brown and sleeps White.”

“What do you mean, man?”

“Well, you know, he’s a professor there, and he’s really heavy with the Movement, yet he’s married to a White woman.” And the Chicanas too.

So then you got the traditional Chicano, you know, with the *machismo*, and the Chicana trying to find them self there, so the Chicana played a major, a major, major role. I mean, they were the strength and the power, you know, behind the whole Movimiento, man. They were, like I say, the backbone. But as we were defining ourselves and trying to figure it all out, they played just as much role as the Chicanos, man. We were like a unit, you know, a unit.

Gutiérrez What did you personally initiate or help initiate in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:31:55]

Armendariz Well, the Movimiento Chicano, I personally helped initiate, I think, as I mentioned earlier, I think two important points. Other than us being involved, Luis and I went to Delano a lot of times. Dr. Senon Valadez also went with us. We would take caravans to Delano and take food to the farmworkers. We picketed Safeway. I was one of the persons that also went to visit Alcatraz when the Native Americans had control of it. Also when they started D-Q University, I was one of the original people that walked from UC Davis on to the communications facility there that they took over, that later evolved into D-Q University. The Chicano Moratorium and then being involved in COPA with Joe Serna, helping elect Manuel Ferrales, who was the first Chicano city councilman in Sacramento.

Other than those things, I think the two things that I think that Luis and I would like to be recognized for, as far as our contribution that we put our hearts into,

let's say, other than the other things, was that we were kind of like the spearheads or the founders of *Progreso*, which at that time was the first bilingual program in all of Northern California. So we were the ones that were the, like I said, the founders, that put together—which really gave a voice to the Hispanic community, and a lot of people that came after us got their start there, that went on to bigger and better things and became newspaper reporters and became involved in other aspects of media. So I think that we would like to think that we were the pioneers in that field.

And the other one was the lawsuit in Yolo County. I think that really—it was a major, major accomplishment, you know, because there you can actually measure it and you can see the gains, you know, millions and millions of dollars in jobs and positions, and Luis played a major role in that. We were part of a team, because, like I said, once we won that major lawsuit, I mean, with the insurmountable odds, I mean, how can a little organization like you with zero funds take on the county and take on a private law firm that they hired? It was unheard of, you know. I mean, it's like how could this ever be done? And then with Luis being the one that was the affirmative action coordinator and the enforcer to enforce all these things that we worked at. So I think that those are the things that I think that are major, major contributions that we would like to think of.

Gutiérrez You mentioned earlier that one of the things you would help is you would take food to the farmworkers and stuff. Like, what was that like for you, or, like, what type of food or how often?

[00:34:36]

Armendariz Okay. What we would do is, you know, Sacramento State, here at the university, Sacramento State University, I would say that in all our visits, we went to visit Stanford, and even all the other state colleges, this was probably kind of like the spearhead of the Chicano Movement, as far as activity. So there was a lot of coordination going on, you know. We had a lot of very active people, very brilliant people here. So what we would do, along with Dr. Valadez, Jennie Polendo, and a lot of people, we would have food drives here on campus. We would collect can goods, for example, from the students. We'd set up booths here and we'd collect canned goods. Then we'd do it like maybe once a month, we'd collect all the goods here.

And then we would take a caravan. We'd put the *huelga* eagles on the car, and all of us, a caravan of cars, maybe ten, fifteen cars, would go all the way to Delano, take the canned goods to the farmworkers. We would stay there, and then we'd see maybe the *campesino* with Luis Valdez [phonetic]. We'd have just an incredible time, and it was, like, very spiritual for all of us. It kind of bonded all of us to that common cause.

Gutiérrez Were students, like, very supportive of that?

[00:35:47]

Armendariz Oh, yeah.

Gutiérrez Like, when they would, like, bring a lot of food and, like—

[00:35:49]

Armendariz Yeah, the students were very supportive. Even the non-Chicano students here on campus, they were supportive. They would contribute, yeah.

Gutiérrez Can you tell me, like, a little more about the organizations you were involved in, like—

[00:36:02]

Armendariz I was involved, of course, in MEChA, in MEChA here at the university. I was involved in COPA, and that was a Chicano political organization spearheaded by the late Joe Serna, who was the first Chicano mayor, just a brilliant, brilliant person and just a great human being. We were all in COPA. We were all in Sacramento Concilio here in Sacramento. I was involved in Woodland for the Woodland Concilio, I mentioned earlier. Yeah, those are the organizations.

Gutiérrez What significance did the activities and organizations created play in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:36:41]

Armendariz The organizations?

Gutiérrez Yeah, or activity, organizations.

[00:36:45]

Gutiérrez Or activities? Well, I think the organization activities, it was all part of the bits and pieces that we had to have to make the whole, because, like, for example, we talked about the Brown Berets. They were a significant part of the whole, you know. They were like the muscle, and we were the students that were pushing. Then the organizations that were also part of it. So I think every little piece had to come together for us to reach our goal, you know. Everyone played a major part to get to where we're at.

Probably the most, I think, significant thing for me is when my daughter graduated from UC Davis years later after we did all this, and I went to that graduation. It was such an incredible graduation, because first they did the one with all the students, then they had a separate Chicano graduation. And, man, I was just so impressed that people—I mean, people were crying. Man, people were crying in that whole auditorium, because the students would get up there and they would make their presentation, each one of the graduates. We had aerospace engineers, we had biologists, we had chemists. Then they would ask their parents to come up, and they were little farmworkers. You know what I mean? Farmworking parents would come in. They would say, “This is *mi mamá, mi papá.*” I mean, everybody was in tears. It was so—I mean, and you could see the parents were just so proud and so humble, people humble. And here their son is an aerospace engineer or a biologist, you know. I went up there when my daughter went up there with my two grandkids, and it was just—this is what it’s all about.

That made everything worth it, you know, all your protesting and all the families. There was a lot of divorces that took place there. There was a lot of sacrifices. A lot of people lost their families, because you really had to spend a lot of time if you’re going to be effective. And like we said earlier, you know, like the *piñata* theory, yeah, we were the ones carrying all those baseball bats, and we were the ones that were going here, going there, picketing here, not spending time with family here, to make those—you know what? In the long run, that was the payoff, you know. That was the payoff to see all these students progress, that are going to be the doctors, the lawyers, like I said, the nuclear physicists. And I saw that there, and

it's even coming faster and stronger, and I think that's what really makes you feel good that you were on the initial start to open up the doors for everybody else.

I think a lot of the younger students really understand that, are really appreciating that, you know. That's why this project that Senon, Dr. Senon Valadez, is doing, you're doing as students, it's really giving us, the older vanguard, so to speak, an opportunity to express ourselves. This is probably the first time it's ever been documented about what really took place in the Concilio lawsuit and its real impact. That changed everything in Woodland, established a power base, and it just changed everything and brought a lot of money or opportunities to people there for the generations.

Gutiérrez And did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, and political lines?

[00:39:55]

Armendariz Absolutely, absolutely, because I eventually became the executive director of the Mexican American Concilio of Yolo County. I was the director, and when I was thirty-two years old, I resigned my position in Woodland.

Also I want to mention that after the lawsuit, when we won that, people in Woodland, I mean, the status quo and the good ol' boys, they hated my guts. You have to remember that, like, I ran for the city council, man, and that really got me out of politics. [laughs] There was only 2 percent *raza* registered voters, right? Everybody really feared me because "This Mexican radical, man, doing all these changes, that won this lawsuit, he wants to become a city councilman? Never." And, boy, they showed it, too, man. I got the support of the 2 percent, but you know what?

It's like getting hit with a baseball bat over your head, man. After that, I gave up politics. Never again, man. So I ran for the city council, I got really—I ran for the school board, the same thing.

But, anyway, at thirty-two years old, I resigned my position as executive director to go to Mexico, and my *compadre* Rick, you know, was very active, I gave him the name of “the godfather of Woodland,” very famous guy, very great human being, like a lot of ones that we have, he said, “Are you crazy, man? You're going to what?”

I said, “I'm going to go to Mexico.”

He says, “That's *loco*. Here you're at the prime of your career. You're thirty-two years old, you're the executive director of the Concilio. You know a lot of people here in the state. You've established a good track record, and you want to go to Mexico?”

“Yeah.”

“That's *loco*, man. What are you going to do down there?”

“I don't know, Rick.”

“Well, you're going to suffer.”

“Yeah, probably, probably I'm going to suffer.”

“Well, what do you want to go suffer for?”

“I don't know.” I said, “There's something there for me. I don't know what it is. I mean, I don't know what it is, Rick, but there's something there for me to learn. I want to go learn.” Like I said, I was born there, but I grew up here as a Chicano, grew up here. I knew really nothing of Mexico other than I was Mexican, I was born there,

but to know the culture, to be emerged into it, I knew nothing. I said, “I’m going to go find out what’s going on.”

“Well, you’re going to suffer.”

I said, “Yeah, probably, but I don’t care, man. I don’t care.”

So I did. I left. This is kind of unheard of. I never knew anybody else, many other people that were that young and they said, “I’m going, man,” and just went for it. People do it when they’re sixty-five, seventy, retired, go live in Rosarito or some other—Cuernavaca, just live off the fat of the land, but I went there at my youth, you know.

I went from there to go living in small village with my father, where there’s no water, no electricity. It’s like going back in time, which is fantastic. I enjoyed it, man. It was in V_____. You might know that area since you’re from that area. It’s right in between San Felipe and Ensenada, V_____. That’s where I went to, you know. No water, no electricity, with my father.

We bought some land. I bought some goats, and I got to learn what was going on. I got to know people. At first they kind of rejected me. “You’re a *pocho*, man. You’re a *gringo*.”

“How can I be a *pocho* or *gringo* when I was born in Mexico?”

“You still are, man.”

And it took a while for them to respect me and understand me, to really become part of the community. So I’ve been there ever since, you know, so I got to learn a lot about the Mexican culture. I live there. I haven’t read about it, I don’t just go there on vacation and say, “Okay, I’m home now.” I’ve been there for many, many

years. I got to learn a lot about the Mexican culture and how they think and a lot. I've traveled all over Mexico and all over Central America.

Gutiérrez And how did these changes, like, impact your personal relationships with family, peers, or, like, significant others?

[00:43:33]

Armendariz Well, with family and peers, it impacted the relationship. Like I mentioned, I was the first one to go on to college in all of my family, and I was the first one to go on to college. Then there was my sister, my other sister, there was my nephew, there was my children. Everybody else just kind of followed along. So now, like Luis mentioned earlier, that's what they talk about. They prepare, you know. "What school are you going to go to?" So both of my children went on to college, and my sisters. So it kind of, I guess, broke the cycle of maybe, I guess, poverty in some respects, and awareness. So now when you talk to your children or your grandchildren, whatever, you talk about education, talk about what schools are they going to go to and stuff like that. So it just established some, I guess, some confidence. Yeah, confidence and opportunity.

Gutiérrez Can you please describe some of the impacts that your involvement with the Movimiento Chicano had on your career?

[00:44:31]

Armendariz Well, on my career, I think because, like I mentioned earlier, I left my career when I was thirty-two years old, so from there I had to kind of learn other things, because from there I had—like, I was the executive director, I worked in television. I was also the director of the Migrant Childcare Program. I forgot to

mention that too. I was director of the Migrant Childcare Program. It was a three-county farmworker preschool program. I was in charge of eighty-three teachers, migrant teachers, at three centers, Davis, Winters, and Madison. There it became really complicated there because of the funding processes that they had, and so we went into a strike. I convinced the teachers, eighty of them, "Let's go to a strike. We need to change the system. It's not feasible, man. It's too complicated."

And we did go on strike. It closed the centers down, and they sent some guy from the state to talk to me about not to do it, you know, this and that. And we did it. We went to the State Capitol with all the teachers, with the guitars, the women, the children, right into the State Capitol, right into the main offices, and these guys came out and they looked at us like we were just little peons. "How you guys think you're going to change this? We've been trying to change it. We haven't been able to do it." They really laughed at us, you know?

But at that time, I was pretty well-connected, so I went to talk to Vic Fasio, who was a congressman in our area, and we helped Vic Fasio get elected to the Assembly. He went on to Congress. I explained to Vic the problem, the funding processes, and he did help out a lot, and I was able to change the—they call it the Lockyer Bill, just to change the funding process, because all the organizations like that, they were literally going bankrupt because of the complexity.

But then getting back to my career, at thirty-two year old I kind of ended my career and left to Mexico, right? So then you say, "Well, what did you do now?" Well, so Mexico, I learned—I would like to just say a little bit maybe for the future, is like if I had to give recommendations for students right now, for example, what do

you see as the future, how do you see as our preparation, what I would do, my recommendation would be first you have to have academic training, which means that you should have gone to school, to higher education. That's number one.

Number two, you better know a second language, my friend. I tell this to *gringos*, too, you know, because a lot of our kids now are intermarried, you know, so there's a lot of intermarriage, so we're more bonding, right? So I tell it to *gringos*, too, Anglo *gringos*, "You know what? You guys better learn some Spanish, because times are changing, man. You can't have that attitude, 'Well, you better speak English, man. You better speak English. You're in America.'" I said, "You're living under a rock, my friend." And I tell this to students that are Anglos, "You have to learn a second language, my friend, because if you don't, you're going to lose it. I'm telling you, man, because once you go for an interview, they're going to ask you. Sure, you've got fantastic qualifications, Jeff Smith, you've got your incredible math, but do you speak another language?"

"Well, no, I speak American."

"Well, do you speak anything else? Do you speak Spanish?"

"No, just American."

"Well, I'm sorry. Can't use you."

That's the reality. I say, "You have to look at reality." So I tell that to the young students, to the young Chicano, "You better know a second language. It should be Spanish."

So, academic training, Spanish. Then, of course, you have to be computer-literate, technology-literate. And then the other one that's really important, that I

think that we're missing, that we truly are missing, you better have an ace in the hole, which means get some vocational type of training behind you also, have something else that you know that will help you in case once you get—I mean, because in the future, as the Internet is taking place, degrees are going to become kind of like everybody's going to have a degree in the future, right? Internet degrees, this and that. So a degree is maybe not going to be as worth as much as it was in the past or not, because so many people are going to have it, so they're going to flood the market.

So in order for you to have a backup to learn something—and I learned that with my career there, okay, have some vocational training along with all the other stuff that I have, because that's your ace in the hole. So if you get a doctor and you can't get a position right now, you're a schoolteacher, whatever, a professional field, and you say, "God, what am I going to do now, man? It's all filled," or whatever, then if you have a backup there, which would be vocational training, which would be like maybe construction, electrical, plumbing, something that pays well in the vocational field, now [demonstrates] you've got it all locked in together.

So that's what I've learned in the past, you know, and I learned that from experience. So I do have I guess what you would call kind of vocational training, because I developed my confidence and my skill enough in all my time that I could build a house just like a contractor, which I didn't have. I just had the academics. I could say, "Okay, you give me a blueprint. You want a house built? You want a house built in Baja California? I can do it for you, man." Square footage, I know all

the material it takes, I know all the people to do it. We could do it, and we do it. I have the confidence and I've done it before.

So those are my recommendations for the future student, to have those elements. You have to have also a vocational base just to give you even a lot more strengths within everything else.

Gutiérrez And looking back on your experience in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that you believe were left unresolved?

[00:50:02]

Armendariz Issues that were left unresolved. You know, I think the only issue I think that was kind of left unresolved, which I'm thinking about even working on it right now at this point, because living in Mexico all these years, you know, like I said that I've been there, and living at the border, living at the border in Tijuana, you know, the border and Tijuana is a lot different here than Northern California, the way people think there, and not only the way people think, it's just like there's a whole different dynamics taking place. And as you go deeper into Mexico, it's a different ballgame.

So I think that even all these years as we've evolved as Chicanos or Mexicanos, there's still the Chicano that lives here really knows nothing about the Mexicano in Mexico, and the Mexicano in Mexico knows nothing here about the Chicano over here. So I think I might be stereotyping a little bit or generalizing, but I think it's very, very true, because I've talked to a lot of people. The Mexicano that lives here, or the Chicano that grows up here actually thinks that there's no rich people in Mexico. When they think of Mexico, they think of poor people and crime.

That's all they think about, poor people and crime. And the Mexicano that's over there, when they think of Chicanos over here, they think they're just rich and spoiled, everybody that's here, *pochos*, rich and spoiled.

So what I'd like to see in the future is for the young Chicanos is to break all these stereotypes and see Mexico, for them to see each other at a different light, you know, at a different era, you know, to come back and come back into what's going on, the 20th century, and wipe out all those negative stereotypes and see from a different perspective what's in it for you.

Like, for example, I got to explore a lot of things in Mexico. I got to see a lot of development that's going on. I really have a love for land, and not because of the money in land, just the heart, the *corazón* for land. When I travel all the way like through Sinaloa, Baja California, Aztecas [phonetic], G_____, and I see these huge parcels of land, I see all these people that are there that are landowners and they're Mexicanos, what's going to happen in the future? There's no doubt in my mind, because like how we lost half of our Mexican territory, we lost all the Southwest, what they call Aztlán, well, that's going to happen to Mexico, too, because the basis of all wealth, all wealth, will not only be economical, but just spiritual wealth, the *corazón*, is land, is land. That's what keeps us together, Mother Earth, as the Native Americans would say it. And I think that we don't really have a real appreciation for that here. We don't even understand it.

So what's happening in Mexico—and I even tell Mexicanos that—foreign investors are going into Mexico like [Spanish], man, spreading in there. They see the land, they see all this land, like farmland, beach land, and they're buying it. They're

getting control of it. In the future, in the future in Mexico—and I can guarantee you 100 percent—in the future, not right now, but say fifty to a hundred years from now, we just may end up like the Native Americans here, without land, and it's going to be owned by foreigners. It's going to be owned by *gringos*, Japanese, Chinese, whatever foreigners, and we're going to be again strangers in our own land. You know what? There's no more land.

So as young Chicanos that are here, like Mechistas, they have to think of Mexico as opportunity for them. They have to get both countries. I mean, I love both countries. I love both countries. I love Mexico and I love the United States, both countries, and I know—and I've taken the time. That's why I've spent the last thirty to forty years living in Mexico and really emerging. I can tell you a lot, and I've had a lot of experiences of how Mexicanos think. Of course, I know how people think here. I think us Chicanos, we have to take from both countries and then make it another unique—jump to the next level, I guess. What's jump to the next level? Get a piece of the land, man, where you can have a ranch over there in Mexico, have a little beach house in Rosarito where your kids can go there and spend some time, having access to the land, because you know what? Other people are getting it, and it's not us. So that's the kind of awareness I would like to develop, breaking the stereotype and seeing what both countries can do for you, how can you benefit from both countries without getting too caught up in all the negativism.

Gutiérrez Can you please describe how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento or where you lived?

[00:54:31]

Armendariz How it impacted?

Gutiérrez Yeah, in the community life.

[00:54:34]

Armendariz Well, the way it impacted in the community life here, I can talk about Woodland. I think that because of the Chicano Movement, you know, it was the key, I guess, that opened up all the opportunities. Like, for example, in Woodland now, there's a lot of Hispanic schoolteachers, there's bilingual education. I think just recently, not too long ago, they elected the first Chicano mayor. So it just opened up all the opportunities for us to progress, for us to progress and tell the young kids, have role models, to have role models. Phil Serna, for example, who's on the board of supervisors here, his dad was Joe Serna, who was the first Chicano mayor here. So they look up to Phil. So we're having role models, you know.

See, that's the difference between like in Mexico, there's all kinds of role models, right? [laughs] It's not even an issue there. But here there is a big issue. I think that the Chicano Movement is the one that changed that, that showed a little bit of light. You see that judge. You say, "You know what? I can be a judge someday, or I can be the mayor of Sacramento someday, or I can be on the board of supervisors, or I can be a nuclear physicist, I can be an aerospace engineer because I see some of our people there." It's that role model. I think the role model is very, very important, and I think that's what the Chicano Movement did. It created role models, it created those role models. In turn, it created the opportunity for that little *Chicanito* to dream. That little farmworker that's there even right now, they're saying, "You know, yeah,

he can do it, I can do it too.” And then the trails have been paved, have been explored, where he has that path.

I think this office here is the path of all the pictures that we see here, and that was the path that was created by Dr. Senon Valadez and all the other people that also contributed. For you as a student, you’re seeing and you’re opening up the path. You’re being a role model. So I think the Chicano Movement, I think that was the window of opportunity and hope that it opened up for all of us and all the generations to come.

Gutiérrez And besides, like, the challenges or, like, the characteristics that you said that Chicanos had to possess, like the second language and like those examples you gave, what do you see as the current or future challenges for Chicanos, for the Chicano community?

[00:56:57]

Armendariz I think the future challenges, I think that, you know, the future challenges are going to be, is we have to continue to keep on fighting for opportunities and positions, because as we mentioned earlier, even though we’ve gained a lot, I mean, we’ve gained a lot, but there’s so many in numbers. Because I was talking with some people that are in education, a lot of people I know, and they said, “You know, when we started out in the Chicano Movement, it was a 50 percent dropout rate in Chicanos, man, and high schools, 50 percent dropout.”

My friend says, “It’s the same thing now.”

“What? How can that be the same thing?”

“Yeah, it is.” And it is the same thing now. So we made even changes here, it’s still happening here because of just numbers, numbers. So I think that we have to, you know, continue the struggle, continue being the role models, continue opening the doors, and hopefully it’ll keep balancing and we’ll just become, you know, I guess, regular caring people.

Gutiérrez And do you see yourself as staying involved with meeting these challenges?

[00:58:12]

Armendariz Oh, definitely, definitely, but as I mentioned earlier, since I spend a lot of time—I went to Mexico to spend a lot of time there, and I see that I would like to—my contribution in the long run, I would like to see that kind of stereotype broken for the Chicanos here as well as the Mexicanos there, on a higher plane, on an academic plane, to kind of bond themselves, you know, bond themselves and take advantage of both countries, the Mexicano from there and the Chicano from here, so they can become taking both worlds and making a better world for yourself. And I think that still has a lot of work to do, because as far as I know, really nobody’s doing it. Nobody’s doing it, and that naivety still exists, and it’s pretty sad.

Gutiérrez And what do you think would be the first step towards, like, achieving that, like, breaking that stereotype?

[00:59:05]

Armendariz I think the first step would be is to be able to meet, say, for example, to speak to MEChA organizations throughout the country and start talking about Mexico, start talking about “What is your impression of Mexico? What did your dad

tell you about Mexico?” And like I said, a lot of times there’s such a negative thing, and even the Chicanos in San Diego don’t even know what’s going on in Mexico. I talked to one the other day, said, “I live here, my dad lives in Rosarito.”

I said, “What do you know about Mexico?” His dad lives in Rosarito and he lives in Chula Vista.

“Well, not too much. I just know my dad lives in Rosarito.”

“But what do you know about it?”

“Well, that’s all I know. I’ve only been to Rosarito. I don’t know too much.”

So you have to really—I think once you learn what is going on, you know, once you begin to learn what’s going on, but I think it’s going to happen at a college level with young people such as yourselves. The new generation can say, “Okay, now do we jump from here? Let’s go up to the next level. Now let’s go to—.” There’s things to be done here, no doubt about it, but we also can jump to the international level, to the international level to see what is there for us. Is there something there for us? I definitely think that there is there for us, for Chicanos and for Mexicanos, and I think that’s the next level that we have to take it to. And once you take it to that plane, it’s a fantastic plane to take it to.

Gutiérrez So do you believe that by talking to the MEChA organizations, it would help, like, providing that awareness to, like, students?

[01:00:32]

Armendariz Right.

Gutiérrez Do you believe that, like, not just college students, but, like, maybe middle school or, like, since they’re a little older than elementary and, like, high

school students could still, like, try to understand and break that stereotype, even though they're younger than college students?

[01:00:48]

Armendariz Oh, yeah, definitely. Yeah, definitely, yeah, because I think it's a thing of just, you know, human awareness, you know, human awareness, because I'll give you one example. One time when I was—as Chicanos, we kind of became nationalists in some degree because we had to, to have that strength within ourselves, but then within that, you know, you become a little bit bitter in some ways, you know, but I guess that was a natural thing, too, because as I recall, as you have it, I was there at one of the COPA meetings that Joe Serna had, people were there in the meeting, and I went outside and I saw down on the streetway, kind of like on the gutter, and I was sitting there, you know, just kind of thinking. They were having the meeting. I saw this little White girl there, you know, [Spanish] on her face and everything. She kept looking at me, like—she was about three years old, you know. She was blonde, totally blonde, blue eyes. And I was just sitting there. [Spanish] I'm sitting there, just thinking about the meeting, what's going on, and I could see her in the corner of my eye. She just kind of looked at me. Then I kind of looked at her. She ran right up to me, she hugged me, you know, and I hugged her back. So I said, “Wow, man!” I mean, you know. And that's what it's all about, you know? So I said how can I have any hatred toward *gringos*, man? Little girl, blonde hair, blue eyes, man, hugged me.

And I think ultimately that's where we'd like to be, just have respect for everybody, you know, have a real respect. But we have to go through a cleansing ourselves to understand ourselves in order to love other people. And, unfortunately,

you know, the hatred and the racism and all the other stuff, it's just not a very healthy thing for human beings in general. I think once we understand ourselves and we evolve, we can really grow to try to create a better society for our children, you know.

It's like I try to tell my children, my kids and my grandkids, I say, "You know what? The most important thing in this world is just to be happy, and not to compare yourselves to anybody, because once we started comparing ourselves, there's always going to be greater or lesser people than ourselves. It doesn't really matter." I said, "Just be yourself. It doesn't mean you shouldn't struggle. You should definitely struggle, but struggle on your own merits, on the way that you want to struggle, but appreciate everything. And you have to be able to fluctuate between all the different levels. If you had to sleep on the ground, don't be bitching about that. Go sleep on the ground as well as you can sleep in a mansion. I've done them all. I've slept on the ground, I've slept in mansions many, many times. But you have to fluctuate between and try to understand everybody, and try to contribute something as a human being," which I have all my life. I've always, even in Mexico, I help people out, either through *consecos*, through advice, you know. So I think that's a good karma that we all want to put out as Chicanos and as human beings.

Gutiérrez Well, that concludes our interview. Is there anything else you would want to add?

[01:03:42]

Armendariz The only thing I would like to add, I'd like to really thank you and Dr. Senon Valadez for this interview. It's really a pleasure to come and be interviewed, and I think this is so important and it's going to be very historical, very, very

historical, and I would really like to see this even take place in all of the colleges throughout the country, because I think every community has its leadership, not that everybody's more of a leader than anybody else, but I think every little piece makes a whole, you know. No one can change everything. It's all everything makes the whole, you know.

So we're all part of change, of positive change, and I think that with programs such as this and people being able to express themselves, then we can really know what was going on, for example, say, in Denver at this time, what was going on in East L.A. at this time, what was going on in Utah, because now we're spread throughout the country, you know. We're spread throughout the country, and it really gives us a sense of history, of history, of people that were part of the change, that we're part of human evolution. So that's what I'd like to add. This is a fantastic program, and I'd like to see it done throughout the country, so I would like to see what was going on in Denver at that time, what was happening there, so on, so forth. So you guys are doing a fantastic job, and I really hope that it continues. Thank you very much for your time.

Gutiérrez Thank you so much for your time and for sharing all your stories.

[01:05:17]

Armendariz Thank you.

Gutiérrez Thank you.

[End of interview]