The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

José Luis Campos

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Yvonne Vergara
May 24, 2014

Transcription by Technitype Transcripts

Vergara Can you please provide your full name and your date of birth?

[00:00:11]

Campos My full name is José Luis Campos Arrellas [phonetic]. My date of birth is March 30th, 1938.

Vergara Can you please provide your marital status?

[00:00:23]

Campos I'm single.

Vergara So the next set of questions will relate to your early life. Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:33]

Campos I was born in a little farm right outside of Brighton, Colorado, and I lived in Colorado till I was about eight years old, and then we relocated to Washington State. I lived there until I was about thirteen, and we came to California when I was fourteen.

Vergara What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:56]

Campos My parents were *campesinos*. My dad came over in 1910. He was recruited by the Southern Pacific Railroad. At that time, the railroad companies were recruiting a lot of *Mexicanos* to come and work on the railroad tracks, so my dad worked for a while. Then he went and brought my mother, and they followed the migrant circuit all the way to Michigan, but they wound up settling in Colorado, where he became a farmer, farmed until about World War II, and then right after that, went to Washington. Then he became a successful businessman and we had a trucking company.

Vergara How many brothers and sisters do you have?

[00:01:37]

Campos Out of thirteen children that my mother had, only five of us survived. I'm the youngest, I'm the baby of the family, and I'm seventy-six years old. I have a brother that's older than me, he's eighty-two, and an older sister who's eighty.

Vergara Where do they live?

[00:02:01]

Campos My brother, Raymond, lives up, I think in Shasta County, and he retired from the Highway Patrol, and my sister, Mary, lives here in Sacramento.

Vergara Can you please describe your experiences as a child and during your youth in your family?

[00:02:17]

Campos You know, like I said, my parents were migrant farmworkers and *campesinos*, and so I grew up in that atmosphere, you know. We lived in the country, and I remember when I was little, they used to leave me in the car because it was so

hot out there. I remember I used to look out the window of the car and I thought they were drowning. I thought they were in water because I could see them over there working, but I could see, like, waves. I didn't know that those were heatwaves, but I thought they were underwater, you know. But they worked like that. They worked very hard. My mother worked right alongside my dad. It was really hard, because she was real heavy, and she would get on her knees. She'd make herself these big skirts made out of canvas, so when she got home, I could see her knees were all worn out.

You know, they worked in the fields, and I only worked in the fields when I didn't want to go to school, and I remember when they'd take me and I was little, I mean I was like in the first grade, second grade, and I'd tell my dad, "I don't want to go to school. I want to be here."

He said, "No, you're going to school."

So I got through. My brothers worked, and I never really had to work in the fields. If I missed one day of school when I was in junior high or high school, they'd really get on my case, you know. I was working at night at Campbell Soup while I was a senior in high school, and I was tired. I'd get out of school, an early class at 2:30, rush home, get a sandwich, change clothes, go to work at 3:30 at Campbell Soup, and work till midnight. So, you know, I was always tired, so sometimes I'd want to take a break, but they wouldn't let me. And it's because of them that I stayed in school.

Vergara Were you a Fellow or Felita during the Mexican American [Education Project]?

[00:04:05]

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Campos No.

Vergara You were not? Well, did you take any anthropology courses or social sciences class?

[00:04:12]

Campos Yeah, I took a couple of cultural anthropology courses. Dr. Steve Arvizu was one of my instructors, and I'm thinking who else. Oh, and I remember Dr. Senon [Valadez] also, I had one of his classes, but I don't remember if it was a cultural awareness class or if it was an anthro course.

Vergara How did those classes influence your thinking and your involvement in the Chicano community?

[00:04:35]

Campos Well, you know, the thing is that by the time I started EOP, or when I started EOP in Sac State, I was really new to the Movement. I'll tell you what happened. Just about a year before that, I was living in my own little world. I was a women's hair stylist. I had a little Midget sports car, and I used to play golf, and I resembled Lee Trevino with my white shoes and white golf bag and everything else. But once I took a swing of my golf club, all the resemblance ended.

But I remember my wife started working for SAEOC, which was the Sacramento Area Economic Opportunity Council poverty program. Lyndon Johnson was funding that, you know. She was some kind of a staff person there. She used to tell me, "You know, you ought to go to these meetings with me. A lot is happening out there with the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets."

I said, "Who are the Brown Berets?"

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

She said, "Well, Brown Berets, you know."

So finally she kept bugging me and bugging me, so finally I went to a meeting, and I walked into this big hall and the place was full of *raza*. I saw these kids, young guys, walking around with little brown beanies, you know, and I said, "Who are these guys?"

And all of a sudden, some people started speaking, and I saw this young woman with long black hair and a brown beret and a real pretty *serape*, and she was wearing brown boots and brown skirt, a brown shirt. I was really impressed because she had this real deep voice, and every time she was going to say something, she'd say, "*Raza*," with that deep voice. Even right now my skin gets—you know. And it was Jenny Polindo [phonetic]. Then she gave a speech, then the founders of the Concilio, Sam Ortega and Doug Patino [phonetic], somebody else, came in and they made a speech, and it was like a spiritual revelation for me, because I knew I was a *Mexicano*, I knew I was a Chicano. I was proud of myself, you know, I was proud of it, but I really—it was like a revelation, like an epiphany. I had never really experienced that before. Then I'm saying to myself, "Man, I wish we would have done that when I was young," and I was really proud of these kids, you know, that were sticking their neck out and speaking up for our people. So that was really my first experience.

Then I heard about the program here, EOP. Because I already had ten kids, you know, and so I got rid of—well, I was forced to give that up. My wife told me, "It's either me or the beauty shop and the kids." So I quit and I started working for PG&E, then I came to school. But here's where I saw all these students and I heard

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

about Chicano Studies, and I started meeting people from all over the state, farmworkers, urban Chicanos, whatever, and I started getting involved. I really bought into the program, because, before, you know, my wife and I were working and we were what you would call a middle-class family. We had a nice house, nice furniture, nice cars, and all that.

But all of a sudden, we wound up about two years later, I remember David [Armendariz] was at the house and we were sitting on the floor, no furniture, you know, and rapping. We used to call "rapping" was talking, you know, discussions, we used to call it. "Let's rap." We were rapping, you know, rapping the Movement, rapping the *Movimiento*, the Chicano Power and all that. So that was really my experience with it, then, of course, with the farmworkers and the community movements here in town.

Vergara Can you please elaborate on those community events?

[00:08:24]

Campos Well, the community events, I remember the first—that's when I met Dr. Senon, Dr. Valadez. I think it was probably the first Cinco de Mayo celebration we had at the Washington Neighborhood Center, I think, or maybe the Washington Council. Anyway, all it was, they got the parking lot in the back, and I remember me and my wife manned the popcorn machine for I don't know how many hours, and they were selling beer, but it was really small, mainly students, you know. Then the people there, they blocked off the street a little bit. That was very small. Then a few years later, we used to have the big celebrations at Southside Park, and it became Semana de la Raza, you know.

Then we got involved real heavy with the Sacramento Concilio, and it's through the Concilio that they started out with a 50-thousand-dollar annual grant, and I think five years later they wound up with an annual budget of five million. But they had vocational training. They had different types of vocational training and they had a referral service, bilingual referral service, and through there we started a communications department, which resulted in the development of a few television programs.

Vergara Prior, before entering college, what were your goals? What did you want to do?

[00:09:54]

Campos Well, you know what? I started college in 1958 or '59, right after I got out of high school. Mainly I wasn't really interested so much in college. My friend was going to college and he kept telling me about all the girls, and so I was single, so I decided I wanted to go to college, you know.

So when I got in college, I started taking courses and all that, and I met this girl from Bakersfield and we used to do our homework together. We were going to be teachers together. Well, I had a friend of mine, he's like a brother, but he was a friend, and this guy was a real playboy. I mean, if anybody was ever going to make a film about a playboy, this guy would be the role model. Anyway, he kept telling me, "What are you doing wasting your time?" He was a street guy. He said, "What are you doing wasting your time? Let's go out. You're young. You don't need school," this and that. I was always home studying, and no money and all that.

Finally, one day I said, "All right, let's go."

He says, “Wait till you meet these girls that I met.” He says, “I call them Rags The Tiger and Crusader Rabbit.” They used to be cartoon characters. Crusader Rabbit was real short and Rags The Tiger was a tall tiger.

Well, I met those girls. One of them was a real tall girl, a redhead, and the woman that I wound up marrying was real short, Maxine. So, anyway, once I met her, I broke up with my girlfriend, I stopped boxing. I was boxing for the City College. I used to be a bodybuilder. I stopped bodybuilding. And I quit school and I married this woman, and she already had six or seven kids. I think she had seven. Right. She had seven kids. I was twenty-one; she was twenty-three. Then she gave me three kids, so when I started at Sac State, I had ten kids.

But, anyway, you know, I was banging around, I mean I didn’t have a trade, and it was hard, you know, with so many kids. I did a lot of things. I was a truck driver, part-time musician.

And then I remember when I went to those meetings with my wife, I ran into this guy named Alvino Chavez, who used to be a playboy and he used to drink in high school, an alcoholic and all that. And I remember I met him at one of those meetings, and I hadn’t seen him since high school, so I said, “Hey, Alvino, so what do you do now?”

He says, “Well, I guess you might say that I’m a professional scholar.”

I says, “What do you mean?”

He said, “Well, I’ve been going to Sac State for I don’t know how many years.” Well, he stayed there. He’s the one that told me about EOP.

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

I said, “Wow! EOP?” I never heard of that. Anyway, I went ahead and filled out the application, and I was accepted. Alvino stayed here all my duration that I was here.

But during that time, we had a lot of involvement with the Concilio in the community and also with the Washington Neighborhood Center. Then it was right before that, I think it was right during the time or right before I started college—no, we were already in college because Professor [Joe] Serna, who later become the mayor, he started COPA, Chicano Organization for Political Awareness, and it was democracy at work. What these guys did is that we decided we were going to run a candidate for city council, and so we had a community—and I mean all the Chicano community in Sacramento—attend the Concilio at the auditorium, and we were going to choose one candidate that we would all support. I mean, we had Frankie Reynoso, who’s an attorney, he wanted to be the candidate. We had a bunch of professional people.

Then this gentleman got up there. He was a nice guy, I guess, and I kind of knew him, but not really well. I mean, everybody went crazy. Well, see, what happened is some of the people like Manuela Serna [phonetic], who’s a student, but also Marta Pinera [phonetic] and some other people, they went ahead and mobilized all the little old ladies from the community at the Washington Neighborhood Center, and they supported Manuel Ferrales, who became our city councilman. I think he was the first city councilman in the history of Sacramento. Joe Serna with COPA was the one that masterminded the whole thing. Then after Manuel left the city council, Joe

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Serna went on to become the mayor. So we got that gentleman elected to the city council.

It seemed like right after that, a lot of things started rolling. Before then—I was talking to my friend Dr. Valadez—I remember when I was young, the only thing that was of any significance here for the Mexican American community was this organization called the Mexican American Educational Association, and it was made up of a couple of teachers, mainly low-level civil service workers, but they were like the bluebloods of the community, but that was it. They had no political clout. There was no Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, no Mexican Chamber of Commerce. It was really disorganized. It wasn't until the *Movimiento* started and MEChA got started, that things all of a sudden started snowballing, just like a wave that people got caught up in, you know.

There was some other things that happened in the community. I wasn't a part of everything that happened in the community, but I did participate in a lot of the stuff, you know. It was an interesting time, very interesting time.

Vergara So before your involvement in these organizations, what did you define as Chicano or the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:15:59]

Campos Well, you know, I always thought of myself as a Chicano. Unfortunately, when we were in school, like when I was in high school, I happened to go to McClatchy, and that was the rich school, and I only went to that rich school because I happened to live in the district, at the outlying part of the district. I wanted to go to Sacramento High School because we came from Stanford Junior High, which

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

was on 12th Avenue. They burned it down. It was a blackboard jungle. I mean, it was bad. But, anyway, you know, there was only like five or six Chicanas and five or six Chicanos. Luckily, all the girls were good-looking and most of the guys were jocks.

But I remember one time we were playing football or something, and I remember the coach. I won't mention his name, but he said, "You guys, you better start working harder, better start—," this and that. He said, "Otherwise, you're going to like Mexican athletes."

And this white guys says, "What's a Mexican athlete?"

He says, "All those guys that sit on the bleachers." That's what he said. Well, we were those athletes.

Then I remember another time I was getting ready to graduate, and I needed one more class. I didn't think of what to take, because I was working, I didn't have time for homework. Anyway, I figured, "You know what? I'm going to see if I can take Spanish."

So I went to my counselor. She was a female. Anyway, I said, "Listen, I need a class so I can graduate, and I was thinking I could take Spanish because I speak Spanish, not proper Spanish, but Spanish." And I said, "I want to take Spanish."

She said, "Oh, Luis, you can barely speak English." She said, "Don't worry about graduating." She knew I was working at Campbell Soup. She said, "Why don't you stay at Campbell Soup. Be a laborer. Be like your dad. You'll never amount to anything." And that hit me like you don't know what.

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Well, years later, after I graduated from Sac State and I did whatever I did, I became known in the community, I actually went back and she was still there, and I showed her. I said, "Remember me?"

She said, "Well—."

I said, "Remember I asked you if I could take Spanish and you told me that I couldn't even speak English?" and blah, blah, blah. I said, "Look at my grades. Look at my transcript. Look at this and that." She was just like [demonstrates]. I said, "These are the articles." Because I was doing some work in Woodland with David [Armendariz] and the Mexican Concilio and the county. She just didn't know what to say.

But the reason I went there, I said, because I remember after that, they had the change in districts, and all of a sudden, a lot of young Chicanas and Chicanos started coming into McClatchy, and what I hated is that I'd be walking down the hall in the woodshop area—and you'd hardly see any Chicano; we never had any role models—you'd see all these Chicanas and Chicanos in the plastic shop buffing the hell out of the old plastic parts, and I'd say, "Why can't our students be in the regular classes?" It's because we weren't encouraged to do that. Well, we didn't have any—I remember I used to listen to the kids and the white kids would say, "You know what? I'm going to Cal because my dad went there," or, "I'm going to Stanford," or, "I'm going here," "I'm going there."

You know what we used to talk about? "When we get out of high school, we're going to start nightclubs," because we were going to get girls. That was our mentality. And out of the six Chicanos that I graduated with from McClatchy, one

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

went on to work for Aerojet, very successful. Richard Mendoza, his dad had Los [unclear] restaurant. I was the only one that went to college, and I wasn't the smartest of the students, but it was only me. So we had very few mentors. We didn't have any mentors. We didn't have any people to tell us, "Go to school. Do this and that."

So in a way, it was kind of a—how you would say—it wasn't depressing, but it was a hard time, because I experienced discrimination at a very, very young age, when I was like six years old. I became aware. They made me aware that I was a Mexican, okay? They used to chase me out of the stores when I was little, trying to buy candy.

I remember I went to junior high, I was discriminated against. I was working and I was living in Washington State, and in those days, if you were an Indian or a Mexican, you were nothing. They wouldn't even let you go into the stores. Stores had signs "No Mexicans or Indians." So I was exposed to that.

Then in high school, not overtly, but I could feel it, I could sense it. And then even in City College, one of the classes, there was this guy who—I mean, this guy was a real racist. I mean, he was making some outrageous comments, and we used to get in arguments and all that, but the teacher wouldn't say anything. She would condone it, you know?

So I had experienced all this. I knew who I was, I knew what was going on, and I always wanted to fight back, but my dad told me one time, said, "*Mijo*, I know that we're good with our fists, but we have to learn how to fight with our head, *mijo*, because after you get in a fight, you're still going to be a Mexican. You have to be proud of who you are and learn how to use your head."

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Well, lo and behold, when I came to Sac State and the students here, MEChA and the Movimiento, you begin to read and you begin to listen, you begin to learn. So then after that is when I said, "Now I've got the ammunition. Now I've got the skills. Now I know how to fight with my head, with my mouth." And that's probably what really changed my thinking. I was what you call—I was a born-again Chicano. You know how you have born-against Christians? This was a spiritual revelation for me, much like ten years ago I went to a service for born-again Christians, and it hit me. I mean, when I walked in, there was like a light that shined on me. I became a born-again Christian. It was a spiritual revelation.

That's the way I describe my becoming a real Chicano at Sac State, because I learned. I was learning history, I was learning everything about our people, you know, and I was seeing there was other people like me, and I was really proud because I never knew a Chicano teacher, and here's Mr. Valadez and S_____ a bunch of other students, Señora Luck [phonetic], Steven Dia [phonetic], Montoya, and I was beginning to really—just soaking all that up.

Now I remember when I was in San Diego about twenty years ago, I remember there was this guy who he was very supposedly prominent in the Movimiento in San Diego, and he's now an attorney. I remember I said something, and he says, "So you're still a Chicano?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "You're the last Chicano, then." He said, "I used to be a Chicano." But, see, he was a successful attorney. Unfortunately, that happened to a lot of our people, you know. There was a lot of us who really bit into it, and we're still there,

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

but I know some people that kind of like went the way that proverb that Jesus Christ has in the Bible, you know, where you're planting seeds, you throw some seeds in the soil, and some seeds grab real fast because the soil is shallow, and so they grab real fast and they get water, and some seeds last a little longer, but then they don't get any water and they die. You know what I mean? So a lot of people, when they became turned on to the Movement, they were yelling, "Chicano Power! Chicano Power!" this and that, but, unfortunately, maybe the commitment wasn't there or maybe they didn't really understand it. And it was like any other Movement, you have people that drop out.

But thank God for a lot of people, like this project here, that there's still a lot of us who believe in the Movement. The spirit is still there. We're still fighting. We haven't given up, you know, and I'm proud that I know a lot of people like that.

Vergara What does Chicano Power mean to you?

[00:24:40]

Campos Well, you know, what I really wanted at first was, it was kind of like a vindictive thing. I'll be honest with you. I was thinking I remember the shit that I went through. I remember how my family suffered, and it was to me like I was going to get even, not to go and do something really bad, but I mean, you know, I was going to make sure that nobody treated us that way anymore. But then all of a sudden, what I wanted was everybody to think alike, you know, and I was hoping that everybody would speak Spanish, I was hoping that everybody had the same spirit that we all had, but I saw that not a lot of people were like that. Then all of a sudden, my mind started thinking, "What is really the Chicano? What are we looking in the Chicano

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Movement?" And, see, like a lot of people thought that way, the way I was thinking, but then I started thinking, "You know what I really want? I want to be able to have our people, me and our people, be able to go and live where they want to live if they can afford it, that nobody's going to tell you, 'You can't live here.'" I wanted them to be able to go to school if they could afford it. Nobody's going to keep them out.

Self-determination, that's what I really wanted, and that's what I still want. I mean, I'm not a cultural naturalist. I don't love every—there's a lot of things that—for example, I don't like Banda music. It drives me crazy, you know. But that doesn't make me less of a Mexican. I know some Chicanos that don't like Menudo, but that doesn't make them less of a Mexican, you know. So I was thinking you can think what you want to think, as long as your rights are protected and nobody tells you you can't do this just because we're Chicanos. I don't want that. I just wanted self-determination.

Vergara So during your college experience, how did your involvement create a new Chicano—like, what was your definition of a Chicano? How did the classes bring awareness that this self-determination isn't brought by assimilating; it's brought by fighting back?

[00:26:51]

Campos Well, you know, what happened was that I guess it was when we were talking, the sharing of experiences, we were encouraged, when we were in our classes, to write your family biography, write something about your family or your history, this and that, and you began to learn a lot about people, different experiences of people. You began to learn about—like I remember one guy told me, he says,

"Well, you know, my dad was a very wealthy man in Baja California. When he came from the interior of Baja, he settled there and then he became very wealthy, and he came over here to the U.S. and he bought the franchise of the Dairy Queen." You know what the Dairy Queen is, those restaurants? And he was a dishwasher and his name was Jess Monroi, French name for "my king," and this guy became a dishwasher for Dairy Queen. Well, he happened to buy one. He bought the second one, he bought the third one.

Right before he went broke, he locked himself in a room with a bunch of attorneys for Holiday Inn. His plan was he was going to build a replica of a mission from Tierra del Fuego all the way across right next to a Holiday Inn. He was going to build the replica of the missions that the Spaniards built here, the *Mexicanos* and all that. But anyway, he was not an education person, so they took advantage of him and he lost everything.

But I started learning. I said, "You know what? That guy was able to do that." I read about other people who went to school or like the Abraham Lincoln story, supposedly that he was real poor, like Chicanos that were coming from Mexico and from here, you know, and I was starting getting all this impetus and I started getting all this pride, and it started changing me, the way I thought, because like I told you, when I was in high school, we didn't know one Chicano teacher. There was nobody there to tell us, "Hey, you know what? You guys can do this." Now you've got MEChA, now you've got teachers all over the place, you know, and they're going into schools and speaking and telling them, "Look, if I can do it, you can do it."

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

But it changed my thinking of the Movement, and I saw that it was really important, because I saw that it was like a great awakening, you know. I mean, there was the Brown Berets, too, and even like the Black Panthers in their community, they were going into the community and saying, “Look, yes, we can. Look.” They started breakfast programs, they started all kinds of stuff, you know, school mentoring. The people were taking advantage, benefiting from that, you know, and that’s what happened to me.

I started sharing all that information that I was getting. I tried to share with my brothers, but they were, like, in their own world and they would say, “Yeah, yeah, that’s good. Yeah, that’s good.” But I really started sharing it with my kids, the oldest ones. And it’s funny because now my son that lives with me—well, he lives in Merced, he’s fifty, and Tony, who lives in San Diego, he’s forty-six, and my daughter lives here and works here, but, like, sometimes we’ll talk and my sons will say, “Dad, remember you used to tell us—?” And they tell my grandsons, “You know, my dad used to sit us down and he filled our heads with the Movement.” And I did, and they remember a lot. It stuck, which I’m really glad. They’re still very proud they’re Chicanos.

Vergara Can you recall any specific Civil Rights Movements during your time?

[00:30:53]

Campos Specific Civil Rights Movement?

Vergara Not anything, but just can you, like, recall any of the events that went on?

[00:30:59]

Campos Yeah, we had the marches for the farmworkers and, of course, all the picketing and everything else. I remember one of the things that stands out in my mind a lot is that my friend David Armendariz and I think this woman from Colectivo, Sonya, and I forgot, there was three of us that went to the moratorium in 1970 in L.A. You know, of course that, okay? And we had a Cronica, which was our 16mm camera with a lens about this big [demonstrates], and we were there filming. We had a lot of that filmed. That place looked like a city in Vietnam, all the smoke and the destruction and all that, after the march, after the cops attacked the people. And we were driving around and we saw this lady get run over by an attack squad. They were running in a squad formation on the sidewalk, and this lady was in the road taking a picture, and they just ran over her, knocked her down. They really hurt her, and we saw that. And that's when they killed Ruben Salazar. We took a lot of film.

Unfortunately, I lost a lot of that film when I got a divorce. I mean, I had stuff that I had produced for the Department of Health, State Department of Health. There used to be these commercials, public service announcements, they were called "Save the Children." And the blacks made one later on. It was called "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste." Well, I did ten productions that were either twenty-minute productions on the various aspects that affected Chicanos, like drugs or policemen, discrimination, all that. And I had all those, but they got lost in the shuffle of the Movement.

At that point in time, we also went ahead and, through the Concilio, we developed this program called *Progreso*. We negotiated with the McClatchy

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

Corporation. We told them, "Look, the FCC rules and regulations state that every community's entitled to *x* number of community broadcasting," meaning that you can get up there and talk about anything, as long as it wasn't derogatory. So we said, "We want to do this program." So we developed a proposal and we negotiated and negotiated, and they gave us a half-hour on Sunday when only God and the winos are awake, but people started watching.

Well, about six months later, we were on an hour every Sunday. It was kind of a Johnny Carson format, and we used to have like [unclear], a lot of entertainers. It was a real nice format. We had a kitchen there for Betty Bask [phonetic], who started working there. We got her a job there. There's been about five or six people right now that are still working in that industry that got their start there.

But then we developed another program on Channel 10. That was called *Qué Pasa, Raza?* That was for Manpower, with Manpower funds creating jobs, getting money from the government.

The one that I was most proud of, though, was called *IMAGE*, and it was Involvement of Mexican Americans in Gainful Endeavors, the acronym, and we focused on high schools. That was Channel 40. So, like, for instance, if we were going to do Sacramento High School, I would let them know about it with enough time, about a month. "We want you to pick out whoever wants to do this, and they have to be at the studio at 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon."

So when the students would get there, I would show the kids, "Look, this is a TV camera and this is how you focus, this is how you zoom in, you pan to the right. If I say, 'Pan to the left,' you're going to be wearing your headphones. If I say, 'Truck,'

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

that means truck in and out." Then I showed somebody, "You're going to be the moderator," or, "You're going to be interviewed," whatever. So by the time we taped that program, it was the students that were operating the equipment.

So we did a lot of good, and it's funny because once we started those programs, you should have seen the directors and producers that were coming out in the community. Everybody was a director. Everybody knew how to direct and produce TV, you know, and it was really funny because you know what? They wanted the opportunity. The interest was there.

Then during the time that we were at Sac State, David Armendariz and I developed a proposal for Channel 6 for college work-study positions, and we called it the Minority TV Directors Internship Program. Well, we got a job there, some other people, and out of that, we talked to the guy that was like a host there, Art Irons [phonetic], real intellectual guy, we told him, "Why don't you interview some of our people, like some of the professors and people that are involved in the Movement?" and this and that.

Finally, he said, "Okay. Who should I talk to?" So we gave him the names: Joe Serna, [José] Montoya, [Estaban] Villa, and I forgot who else. So then Serna, he was being interviewed and he was talking about politics, Montoya was talking about art, and Villa was talking about art, and we were operating the cameras. So when they were talking about that, we were superimposing pictures of Emiliano Zapata, Cesar Chavez, and the Movement, and in the background we had revolutionary music. I don't remember the exact title, but they asked us, "What do you want to call this program?"

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

And I think I said, "The Impact of Revolutionary Music on Chicano Art." Anyway, that program was the first of its kind that was ever put on public service television from here to almost Southern California. What happened with that, I don't know if they still kept it there.

I know David [Armendariz]'s going to talk about this, but this is another one, too, that I'm really proud of, is that when we were at Sac State, he developed for the television—I was a technical director—this production called *La Morte [unclear] Por Mi*. It was a poem that was written by his girlfriend, and we did it kind of like in the Greek theatre type, where we had individuals in the dark, but then we turn on the spots and they would talk and speak. It was made here at Sac State and it made an impact, because there were a lot of educational groups that wanted to use it. So that's the stuff that we were involved in. It's not everything, because to tell you the truth, I can't recall everything that we did, you know, the stuff we were involved with.

Vergara How did these impacts with your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano affect your career or your goals?

[00:38:06]

Campos Well, you know what? It certainly helped me. It helped me because it gave me the confidence and the determination and the spirit to say, "Hey, I can do it. I want to do it." And I was a good student, I got real good grades, and I had that big family and all that. But in some cases, it really—I hate to use the word "retarded," but it kind of like created some barriers, because when people know that you're an activist, that hangs onto you, and some people say, "Oh, well." It's like not too long ago, maybe about five years ago when they were really bashing Mexico, there was a

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

lot of radio talk shows and they were saying, “MEChA, MEChA.” You know Bustamente, lieutenant governor, he was MEChA and so and so. And we were saying, hey, you know, I think every politico right now and person in position anywhere in government, in private industry used to be MEChA. It’s like that’s our sorority, okay?

But it helped me. It gave me that spirit, but at the same time, I know that in some cases, because of my activity, it hindered me. Just recently, right now I’m working in Merced County for the public defender. I’m an interviewer, basically just interview inmates and I help the attorneys, but I wanted to become a private investigator because I like it. Secondly, private investigators, if you’re bilingual and if you can get the job, they’re paying $85 an hour, okay? But I like that. Anyway, so I went to the sheriff’s office and I applied for a gun permit, license to carry. Nope, can’t because of my involvement in the Movement, because they have that history. I think he even alluded to the fact, he said, “You may even have an FBI number.”

And I was thinking, “Well, you know what? What did I do that I would do that?” But I do remember one time—and I know my friend David [Armendariz] was there and a bunch of other people were there—we were picketing Governor Reagan’s house [laughs], and there were reporters there. My friend’s picture came out right on the cover. [laughs]

But, you see, it was cases like that, a situation like that where sometimes we paid the price. A lot of the people that really were at the forefront of the Movement—and I’m not talking just necessarily MEChA, but a lot of them really paid a heavy price in that a lot of them, there was casualties in families because of the

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

involvement. Sometimes it really cost a person, a man or woman, his family. Some people were arrested at the picket lines. Some people, like Herman Cias [phonetic], who later became director of DMV—Governor Brown appointed him—I remember one time he was talking to some students and he said, "There was a lot of us who were *piñata* breakers."

I said, "*Piñata* breakers? What the heck is that?"

And he explained, said, "You know, *piñata* breaker is when you have a *piñata*, you've got the little kid with a stick and he's got that blindfold on him, on his eyes, and he's taking swings at the *piñata*, and every time he misses, he's missing and missing. Finally, when he hits the *piñata* and it explodes and all the candy falls out, everybody yells and he knows that he hit it, so by the time he takes off his blindfold to get some candy, all the candy's gone."

The analogy was that there was a lot of people who were up front, who sacrificed and did everything, but there was a lot of people who were on the outskirts and never did anything, that never participated, but got the benefit. There's a lot of people who got good jobs out of that, they got promotions and whatever. I'm not bitter about that, you know. I'm not really bitter. I'm glad, you know. I'm glad anytime some Chicanos or Chicanas are doing something good or is being successful. I just wish that they would give credit where credit is due, you know, because there's a lot of people that went through this Movement, that their hard work was never really given recognition, you know, and that's why I'm so happy about this program, because it's going to start bringing out a lot of people, you know. And us that were involved, it's going to be able to give some new revelation, new information about

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

some of the stuff that we knew, some of the people that we knew that contributed, and they were never in the spotlight, you know.

Vergara What do you see as current or future challenges for the Chicano community?

[00:43:32]

Campos Well, the challenge, of course, is there's a lot of factors that's going to affect our community. One right now is the proposed immigration reform that's going to the House and to the Senate, and the people that are pushing for it. The other thing is the backlash right now that Chicano Studies has suffered in the Southwest, in Arizona, where they've taken out Chicano Studies, and it's kind of like happening in other spots.

Then, of course, you have the problems that we're having with the immigration, that they're trying to stop immigration totally. Some people are advocating closure of the border. Texas is the only state so far, they actually went ahead and their legislature voted to close the border. Big mistake, because Mexico's the biggest trading partner commercially for the U.S. That's where all our tomatoes are coming from. That's where a lot of stuff is coming from. There's a lot of commerce going on. Secondly, it violates NAFTA. So because of their emotion and because of their racist attitudes, they made this impulsive move, impromptu move, that's going to have some repercussions and it probably could happen here in California. We don't know. Or Arizona. But Arizona had a big problem, you know. So, anyway, there's that immigration thing is going to have an impact, I believe.

Part of the problem that we have, in a way, is that too many people who really aren’t aware don’t really hold really a lot of hope for our community because they say, “Well, our people, they’re taking jobs.” But they’re low-level jobs. They’re like nannies and they’re gardeners. He says, “You know, the people, we’re not making any progress.” But we are making progress. The thing is, the reason why there’s so many people at the bottom, because the proximity of Mexico, South and Central America, we’re having these people come in and they start someplace, but they will progress. I mean, some of these people that are coming in from Mexico and South and Central America are very industrious, and they’re smart to see an opportunity, they grab it. And you know what? They’re prospering. They’re doing really well.

The other problem that we have is that a lot of people see that as a negative thing. Even our own people, some people are now saying, “You know what? I don’t believe in bilingual education. I figure if a person’s been here two, three years, they should know English, so I’m not going to support that anymore.” Well, I think that’s wrong. In the first place, bilingual education wasn’t instituted specifically to help Spanish-speaking people; it was instituted in something like the late 1800s in Philadelphia for Germanic-speaking people. That’s where bilingual education really got its start. It wasn’t so much to help Chicanos. We did it here and we’re doing it.

But the thing is, is that that’s something that right now I don’t know. I have a lot of hope. My hope is because of the numbers of students like you that are graduating from the colleges and are taking positions in education and government and across the whole spectrum, and these are going to be the people that I hope will

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

become facilitators to help our people coming up, growing up, and help them get jobs, help them whatever, whatever your job is, you know. But that's my hope.

I used to tell my friend, I said, "I remember when we graduated." He graduated from UCLA, but I graduated from here. I don't remember how big our graduation class was the year I graduated, but I know it wasn't very big. I think when the project in force, the Felitos and the Fellows, I think MEChA was at its strongest, because even the Fellows and Felitos who were members, I think we were 300-strong, and that was a lot. We were strong, a strong MEChA. We were doing a lot. But, anyway, see, so I don't know, but I was telling him, "I would like to find out, I wonder if anybody's doing a study to find out how many Chicanos and Chicanas are graduating from two- and four-year colleges across the nation." And I told him, I said, "I bet you it's a lot."

If I recall right, I think when his daughter graduated from Davis, I think he said it was a couple hundred. That's great. And then he said what really made me happy, see, because when I was going to school, there was a lot of people that were getting their degrees in Ethnic Studies, social services, or education, but he was telling me, "You ought to see some of these students. Chicanas and Chicanos, in electrical engineering," engineers, I mean the hard stuff.

And I said, "Yeah, we have enough teachers. We need more, but we've got to get into the other disciplines."

So that's my hope. It's changing. Like a lot of people say, "Nothing's changed." No, I don't agree with that. I think a lot has changed, but then you've got to think about your level of expectations. You have to understand that it takes time,

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento

and we don't all think alike. We don't all have our head in the same focus. Like I said, not every Chicano likes Menudo. Not every Chicano speaks Spanish. Some Chicanos are nationalists. We don't all think alike. But what's important is the self-determination.

Vergara This concludes our interview. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

[00:49:26]

Campos No. The only thing is that I want to congratulate Dr. Valadez for doing this project. I think it's long overdue. I hope it continues. I hope another conference like the one they had a couple of months ago is an annual thing. I want to congratulate all those Chicanos and Chicanas who did a part in the Movement and they're still doing their thing, fighting the fight for people, young people like you and other students. You keep it up. Stay with it, you know. You're our hope. You guys are carrying the banner now. We've done our thing. We're the old guard. What we can do, sit down, say, "Yeah, Chicano Power!"

[End of interview]

Donald & Beverly Gerth Special Collections & University Archives
California State University, Sacramento