

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education

Oral History Project

Name of Interviewee: Juan Manuel Carrillo Guerrero

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1 BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

2 [0:00:04]

3 Angélica: I would like to, first of all, thank you for allowing me to interview you.

4 Juan: Great, it's an honor. Thank you.

5 Angelica: I'm excited to know more about you. Please provide your first name.

6 Juan: It is Juan Manuel Carrillo Guerrero.

7 Angelica: Okay, and please provide your birthday.

8 Juan: July 1, 1941

9 Angelica: And what is your marital status?

10 Juan: I am married.

11 Angelica: And do you have any children?

12 Juan: Yes. I have four sons. Do you want to know who they are?

13 Angélica: What ages?

14 Juan: Oh, ages. Well, the oldest is fifty. His name is John, John Michael. Then Miguel

15 Antonio who is mid-forties. I have to calculate, he was born '69 so he will be forty-five. And

16 then there's Diego Ignacio, he is thirty-three. And Evan Manuel who is twenty-eight.

17 Angélica: And-

18 Juan: I won't forget my other son who died, Adan Andres. Gotta throw him in there.

19 Angelica: And where were you born and raised?

20 Juan: Well, I like to point out that I was conceived in San Francisco. I was born in

21 Tamazula de Gordiano in Jalisco. I returned to the United States, my family did, 1944

22 when I was three and a half and I was raised in San Francisco.

23 Angélica: And what did your parents do for a living?

24 Juan: Well, I think like lots of our parents, they did a lot of things. My father came here

25 when he was 16 years old to San Francisco with his father, from Jalisco.

26 [0:02:04]

27 And at age 17, less than a year later, my grandfather died of a heart attack and so my father

28 started working in the shipyards first when he was 16 and he went to the American Can

29 Company when he was 17. And then little by little, he sent money to Mexico to bring his mother

30 and siblings. So he worked as a warehouseman as well. My mother worked in a variety of jobs,

31 office jobs, cannery work. But she ended up in her last bunch of years at PG&E working in a

32 office. And my father is a warehouseman.

33 Angélica: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

34 Juan: There were five of us. I have three sisters, two older and a younger sister, and the

35 youngest is my brother.

36 Angélica: And please describe your experiences as a child and youth and your family as

37 immigrants?

38 Juan: *Hijole* [Yikes], this is going--this can take a long time. Well, let's see, you know

39 my memory of Mexico is very very slight, very thin. I do remember a little of growing up in

40 Tamazula. I now know how poor we were. I didn't, you know, kids don't know that growing up.
41 So that's where I learned to walk and talk and I think I felt pretty secure in those early years. I do
42 recall a little about the travel to the United States, very little.

43 [0:04:03]

44 Juan: But my growing up years in San Francisco from kindergarten--first childcare,
45 kindergarten then beginning Catholic school. I was in Catholic school through high school. I was
46 a good kid, I think I can say that. We were raised to represent our family, it was real important
47 that our behavior represented what our parents wanted us to be. We were taught manners, I was a
48 religious kid, I was an altar boy. I even thought of becoming a priest, I went to the seminary in
49 the seventh grade to take a look at the Franciscan training center in Santa Barbara with a bunch
50 of other boys. So all those years I was a good kid, I developed a side that was a clown. I was
51 joking, it was real important to me. I was smart, but I was called lazy by people. So I didn't fully
52 achieve all that I could have, I suppose. I was very interested in drawing, I used to draw on my
53 books, which was against the rules. I remember being commissioned into doing a big black
54 board thing in fourth--fifth grade, but cartooning is what interested me. I drew a lot of cartoon
55 characters like a lot of kids, a lot of artists who start out with cartoons. Went to high school and
56 that's where things fell apart. I spent my final year in high school, I got kicked out of my high
57 school for trumped-up charges.

58 [0:06:10]

59 Juan: Do we have a sense of humor here?

60 Angélica: [giggles]

61 Juan: Anyways, I was kicked out for very little cause, I believed. That started my slide. It
62 took me 3 years to get out of my senior year. I spent 6 semesters as a senior, it was pretty

63 frustrating. I finally graduated from Mission Adult School. I then went on to work--during that
64 time I got married. I had my first son and then said “what am I going to do with my life?” But I
65 think most of those years I was a pretty decent guy, you know. School was a problem but I
66 wasn't a problem maker. Does that answer enough about growing up?

67 Angélica: [I think so?]

68 Juan: Okay.

69 Angélica: Were you a fellow Felito during the Mexican American Education Project?

70 Juan: I was a fellow, 1969 to 1970.

71 Angélica: How did your participation in the Mexican American Education Project influence
72 your thinking and involvement in...?

73 Juan: Oh God. It gave my future professional life, as an administrator, as a school teacher,
74 a great deal of ammunition for the battles that had to be fought.

75 [0:07:57]

76 Juan: I have to go back. I don't know whether your questions go back to my college
77 years. Does it? Let me just back a little bit to give some grounding. I got into Berkeley, leaping
78 from getting kicked out, continuation high school, adult school all that sort of business. I ended
79 up in Berkeley as a junior, I was married, I had a child. So in '66 I went to Berkley and it
80 followed very major issue of the free speech movement in Berkley which sparked so much
81 across this country. It also paralleled very huge civil rights movement, anti-racist movement in
82 this country. So here I was a young guy, I didn't have much education, I had my high school
83 degree, growing up and at the time when there was a great movement. A real heavy duty
84 people's movement in this country about our rights, whether it was civil rights or speech rights
85 and so I grew up observing this, not participating. I found myself slowly disagreeing with my

86 friends who thought that Martin Luther King and civil rights people, who were in San Francisco
87 they were picketing the car sales or something called Auto Row in San Francisco, Van Ness.
89 It's a big street, used to have all kinds of car, new car buildings.

90 [9:58]

91 Juan: Their hiring practices were looked at and a lot of people began to picket them. San
92 Francisco was also the site of the House on American Activities Committee hearings, in which
93 people's loyalty were being questioned, whether or not they were communist or left-wingers.
94 People really protested that. To the point where I saw the police and the fire department just
95 hosing people down the stairs and people being arrested in huge numbers. And then there was
96 the free speech movement. I had just started City College, San Francisco, and this woman
97 came to speak on the campus and I just happened to go. I was interested in these things, but I
98 hadn't really participated and just then it was the beginnings of the United Farmworkers
99 Movement. So being a city guy, I didn't really know much but that began to appear in the news.
100 This women came to speak and I went to hear her, she, in one hour, gave me and everyone in
101 that auditorium a lesson in American history, in American economics, American politics that
102 went so deep into my core of understanding the world in which I lived, transformed me. So I'm
103 now filled with all this stuff, and these little debates I had with people, disagreements with them.
105 I end up at Berkeley and I'm there less than a month and the students kick out the navy recruiters
106 from the student union and this big thing breaks and the students call for a strike. Well in my
107 growing politicization, I said, you know, I agree with that position.

108 [0:12:02]

109 Juan: If students who, we funded the building of this student center, it was our student
110 center and the student council of the university voted to remove the navy recruiters it was sort of

111 their statement about war and our country's militarization and other arguments began to reveal
112 itself to me about the use of military around the world, the education of people getting them
113 ready for a military-industrial complex. All that was going on. Anyways, I said "I'm going to join
114 the strike." Here I am just a few weeks into college in Berkeley and I'm on strike and I'm
115 holding a picket sign. I don't even understand what I'm doing, I'm so fresh, so naive. And
116 even a little intimidated by just having students walk by me and me trying to tell them not to go
117 to class. Everyone is ignoring you, I don't think one person stopped and changed their mind
118 because I was standing there, but I believed in the cause. That was my first engagement, this a
119 long answer to your question about the fellowship but it's connected. The next, 1966, '67, '68,
120 '69 I left Berkeley. During that time, there was besides the echoes of free speech, the recruiters
121 then there was the people's park issue. Which became a campus issue because that was campus
122 property. Do you know anything about that? The university had ideas of building a space, and it
123 was empty, they demolished the buildings.

124 [0:14:05]

125 Juan: And people turned that into gardens and began to grow food, so there was free
126 food. And the whole argument about feeding the society and the cost of food and what goes into
127 making food, the corporate structure of food making, all that began to filter through and now that
128 became a cause. So the university erected a fence. Then students tore down the fence, they
129 erected the fence again, put police around there and people fought the police. It just kept
130 growing and growing into a larger issue of what is the university's responsibility in the society.
131 Once again I went on strike to try to lend one little guy's body to this larger movement of getting
132 the university to address the regents, the university to put themselves in a better spot. Then in
133 1967, I'm walking across the campus feeling pretty much alone, I was married, I lived in student

134 housing and had a son. With all kinds of tables, that's the way universities are, you know, people
135 trying to get you to join their club and all that sort of business. And somebody hands me this
136 little yellow flyer and I grab the flyer as I'm walking. It's a rental sheet, you can rent Mexicans.
137 As I'm reading this sheet and walking and I don't know anybody, I don't even know who I got it
138 from, someone just said "here you want it.?" I'm walking and reading and it starts out with prices
139 that go from lowest to highest.

140 [0:16:01]

141 The lowest rental is a Mexican who is well dressed, wears a suit, has his haircut very nicely, is a
142 graduate of the university, is carrying a briefcase, can speak English, can only speak English but
143 can speak it very well. And each Mexican as you go down becomes closer and closer to the final
144 stereotype of a Mexican, just like you've seen in so many cartoons and drawings, a little short
145 guy with a big *bigote* [mustache] wearing a big sombrero, carrying a guitar can't speak English
146 but can sing songs. He was the most expensive. By the time I get to the end, I'm really angry.
147 Partially because I'm Mexican, I was born in Mexico. I didn't become a citizen of the United
148 States 'til I went to Berkeley. I was in my mid-twenties before I became a U.S. citizen 'cause I
149 always said "I'm loyal to Mexico, I'm a Mexican." Becoming a citizen seemed like a traitorous
150 act to me, but at a certain point I realized my work was going to be limited if I wasn't a citizen, I
151 had experienced that. I was probably going to live in the United States the rest my life, I'm
152 married and very rooted. I became a citizen just as I entered Berkeley. In fact, I registered at the
153 international house. I'm just a kid from the Mission District, you know, and I'm in line with
154 people wearing turbans, no one speaking English in line. I'm just a Mission District kid, saying
155 what am I doing here, it was for that reason.

156 [0:18:04]

157 So I get this thing and I said to myself do I go back and give them a piece of my mind or do I just
158 roll this thing up and throw it away and stay angry? And said "I'm going back." So I go back to
159 the table, it's two guys sitting at the table, and I said, trying to sound really pissed off, "what the
169 hell is this about?" And they said "We're glad you stopped. We're Mexican American students
161 here on the campus and we're trying to recruit people. Other Mexican Americans to start a club
162 here. To establish a Mexican American club. We took a survey last year and there were 69
163 Mexican Americans at UC Berkeley out of 30,000 students and we want to do something about
164 changing that." So now my anger is, no I'm real confused. Okay I was angry, but I am interested
165 in this, it sounds like the right thing. And they said "we're having a meeting tonight, would you
166 be interested in coming?" I said I don't know. I wasn't a joiner, I didn't know anybody. But I
167 went home and told my wife "I'm going to this meeting." So I go and in the room, it's an office
168 off campus of a professor, there's about 5-6 students and a professor in the room. They're all
169 Chicanos and it turned out they were the most articulate, I mean their education was deep. By
170 comparison I felt like "WOW these guys are really way ahead of me and many were graduate
171 students." That was the beginning of our discussions of establishing a journal called *El Grito*.
172 [0:19:59]

173 Juan: *El Grito* was a journal that came out of this, I'll call it a club, this organization. The
174 organization was Quinto Sol. It preceded things like MECHA, MAYA, or MAYO. San Jose had
175 Student Initiative, SI. We were the first organization of Chicanos at Berkeley, Quinto Sol. We
176 were so small we knew we couldn't have any kind of an impact of numbers of people. We
177 decided ideas is what is going to be our job, that's how we are going to affect the world. This
178 journal published: writings, surveys, bibliographies, poems, art, all these issues we had to deal
179 with, history. Every quarter we put out this journal. That grounded me much more into the

180 intellectual side of the movement, the ideas. I eventually--Oh sorry this is taking so long. The
181 final thing was the very first Third World Strike, the very first Ethnic Studies battle in this
182 country took place at San Francisco State in 1968. All these other battles I had been involved in
183 and now the organization and we were organizing student-centered operations. We brought
184 students from all the high schools to Berkeley for a conference. We started a counseling program
185 for students in the East Bay, an organization called La Causa.

186 [0:22:06]

187 Juan: I got involved in the very first Chicano art movement efforts in the Bay area. Through
188 that I met Esteban Villa, Rene Yañez. I met a whole bunch of artists, on the phone
189 I talked to José Montoya and asked him for his writings, for *El Grito*. We used Esteban Villa's art
190 at the time. So now my *compadre* [close friend], Bill Vega, who was on the editorial
191 board at Berkeley as well, he and I would go over to San Francisco State and participate in the
192 demonstrations to establish Ethnic Studies. And from that came the Berkeley fight for Ethnic
193 Studies. I was at the time a teaching assistant, I'm now in graduate school. I became a teaching
194 assistant for the first Chicano studies class at Berkeley. It wasn't called that, it was called the
195 Mexican-American-- it was an anthropology course. Octavio Romano who was our group
196 leader, faculty leader, in *El Grito* in Quinto Sol, this was his course. So I'm teaching that I'm
197 also doing student teaching in Oakland High School because I got teaching credential out of
198 Berkeley, and the strike is called for to establish Third World Studies at Berkeley. It was a scary
199 thing because we weren't just fighting the administrations, the campus police, the sheriff's
200 department came.

201 [0:24:12]

202 They were mean, mean guys, big guys. But as a result of that Ronald Reagan just felt this was

203 such a threat, such a left-wing threat, and it got in the ways of his plans to, now we see, to turn
204 Berkeley from a free public education institution, one of the best in this country one of the best
205 oldest, into more like a private university with now tuitions and fees. It got in the way of that,
206 and the result was we went on strike. The strike grew, all kinds of people got involved from the
207 community, the unions got involved. It was a huge, huge strike, Bay area strike, to the point
208 where the national guard was called. They had in the evening curfew, you couldn't walk or drive
209 down the streets of Berkeley after 10 pm. They had barricades all around Berkeley, you had to
210 go through barricades to go into Berkeley, of course, it was national news. At this time, also, are
211 strikes across the country at universities. At this time there are strikes in Mexico City, in Japan,
212 in Paris. I mean huge strikes, we're talking about hundreds of thousands, if not a million or more
213 people involved in some of these strikes in these other countries and across this country.

214 [0:26:02]

215 These huge anti-war, anti-Vietnam things going on. There's a strong feminist movement that is
216 starting. There is the farmworkers movement in the countryside and the cities. This country is
217 going through incredible turmoil in the surroundings, this need for studying our history, you
218 know.

219 Angélica: You mentioned all these things, and you also mentioned cultural anthropology?

220 Juan: Yes

221 Angélica: Okay, how did that influence your involvement and participation?

222 Juan: Well, cultural anthropology helped me to understand culture. I came to school
223 here, through the fellowship, to understand the culture of education. That's why cultural
224 anthropology was part of what was offered to us, we took education and, anthropology, cultural
225 anthropology. Understanding education and how institutions worked, how people get caught up

226 in the culture of an institution, like schools. Understanding our own culture, and how culture
227 works, was layered on top of all that criticism of anthropology that I got at Berkeley by Chicano
228 students and that faculty member. There was so much criticism of the past and how
229 anthropologists viewed us as the people and widened my thinking of who we were, it just
230 widened deepened, and I began clearly to see that going through a Chicano studies door, going
231 through education in Mexican history, Chicano history, whatever, was an opening into the
232 universe.

233 [0:28:03]

234 Juan: Behind that door was the universe and the people who fought us felt establishing a door
235 of Chicano studies, or whatever, limited our thinking, our world. To this day they still don't
236 understand that, you know what's the saying, "*cada cabeza es un mundo*"? [every head is
237 its own world?] or something like that. Each door is the universe you don't stop just 'cause you
238 go through a door called Chicano Studies and your thinking becomes limited just blows
239 everything, it's the Big Bang in your head. There was this connection what we learned here to
240 what I brought with me as an experience which we find my arguments, which I used so much
241 later when I became a teacher, which was the plan of this program. To go into an institution and
242 make the changes and understand where you're heading. In the arts which was my long
243 profession is working for the State Arts Council, the California Arts Council, is making
244 arguments of the value of art and culture in society and so the program, my experiences here
245 and in Berkeley and in the streets and growing up and being a foreigner, an alien, gave me
246 everything I needed for the rest of my life's work.

247 Angélica: Now that you have this change in ideology, right?

248 Juan: Yes

249 Angélica: They opened eyes. What were events that attracted you to the Chicano Movement?

250 Like specific events besides the pamphlet?

251 [0:30:04]

252 Juan: Well, the pamphlet was really important, wasn't it because that was like one of
253 those doors I was telling you about. Well, you know, coming here and meeting my *compañeros*,
254 *compañeras* [classmates] in Sacramento, this was the first community that I had following being
255 a high school kid in San Francisco in the Mission District. There I had a sense of community, I
256 had friends, I had a circle. After high school all that breaks up and slowly your communities, you
257 know, who you can keep as friends and your family is always there. I came here and had no
258 family here, except the family I brought with me, my second son was born during the fellowship
259 program. Then I began to meet all these people and then we were taking out into the
260 neighborhood and introduced to people. So working with this growing community of activists of
261 dedicated people coming from so many places. So many of my friends here were farmworker
262 family members they came from doing--they were all Valley people. I'll put it that way. People
263 would make fun of me because I was not a Valley person. I used to tell them "no we have the
264 Visitation Valley, we have the Noe Valley. I'm a Valley guy," but it was meant to be funny. I had
265 all of that and then what people did not know is my family background, when I go and when I
266 went back to Mexico for the first time in 1968 from 1944.

267 [0:032:07]

268 Juan: 24 years it took me to get back to Mexico, back to my hometown and I saw where
269 my parents, at least my father's side. Well my mother's side too because I went to Sinaloa and
270 visited family there and saw that my family is rural. I'm the generation that became--my mother
271 and father of course grew up in San Francisco but they came with small-town values and those

272 agricultural roots. When I went back as a *city boy* [emphasized in interview] back to my
273 hometown, both my mother's and father's side, I saw that my roots were really, like so many
274 mexicanos [Mexicans], we were rural people. What was the question? [laughs]

275 Angélica: Umm

276 Juan: Oh yeah, the community here, right? Anyways so this community of people here
277 through the activities that occurred here, I went to their communities that they came from or
278 similar communities. The program here required us to, for instance, one project that was hotly
279 contested by some; we had to go back to a community and live like poor people. Live like others
280 in the community and some people here in the program were all angry about that, you know, "I
281 don't have to go back to that, da...da...da." But for me it was really valuable, I went to Yuba
282 City and I slept in a trailer and so I experienced how cold it gets in a trailer in the winter in Yuba
283 City. Early in the morning going out to look for work to do pruning, you know, what experience
284 did I have? I didn't even know that *aguacates* [avocados] grew on trees, that's how city I was.
285 They were there in the store right, but I didn't know where they came from. Anyway, so the
286 people I met--the community that was built here that grew that became an organic thing was
287 something I really valued, something that taught me a lot going on down to Delano in vans.
288 Bringing food or bringing clothes or taking our support to that. It was a real education, expansion
289 of my knowledge, you know. It's funny how you get to a point as an intellectual and you think:
290 there's Algeria and they fought the French for their independence you know, and there's
291 Bolivian and there's Che and there's Cuba and there's Castro, there's all these places and yet
292 right here in your own front yard there's very similar battles that need to happen and to go on
293 and so you get grounded in a different reality.

294 Angélica: You mentioned Delano, so my question is what did you personally initiate or help

295 initiate in the Movement? Were you part of the--

296 Juan: Well what the what happened here on the campus was a coalescing of all of our

297 lives, there were about 20 of us in the program, we coalesced into a real group.

298 [0:35:57]

299 Juan: We spent a lot of time in each other's lives and homes and something real special

300 happened and that was the arrival of José Montoya and Esteban Villa to the same place. They

301 were compadres, they went to school together, you'll hear from Esteban more about this when he

302 presents his history. Those two artists, two artist masters in our community were able to

303 coalesce, able to make happen, a group of artists and a group of activists. Jose Montoya became

304 a voice, he became our voice and not only in this community but across the state and across this

305 country and even outside of this country. When José spoke, he spoke of our values, of our

306 history, of our dreams. He said it in poetic ways, his powerful voice. I don't know if you ever

307 heard him, but he had this powerful voice rooted in truth, rooted in conviction. Between he and

308 Esteban, these artists and these activists that became this circle here, it's hard to say who initiated

309 what but I do give them credit for bringing a voice and coalescing at least the Chicano art

310 movement and a lot of the activism here. I was now at Cosumnes River College, in the southern

311 part of Sacramento, a brand new college. I initiated the MECHA program there. I mean I really

312 tried to make an impact on my little campus with Chicano students.

313 [0:37:58]

314 Juan: I taught Chicano studies, the history of Mexico, minorities in America, and U.S.

315 History. Those were my assignments and in each coursework, I tried to bring, you know, the

316 histories, the intelligence, the passion, the role of culture even though the course said nothing

317 about culture I just felt that our culture had an impact and I used to have to do an annual battle on

318 that campus to teach the way I wanted to teach and to carry out the programs in the way that I
319 felt was important. Which meant bringing artists or bringing my students to see murals. Have
320 you seen the murals in Mexico City or Guadalajara?

321 Angélica: Uh-uh

322 Juan: Oh, you stand in front of those things and you just, your jaw drops because it is a lesson.

323 Artists here in Northern California, were teachers to their mural work and so it was important for
324 me to take students out to see murals. Anyway, so outside of Quinto Sol, *El Grito*, MECHA I
325 don't know whether or not I started anything, but I was there.

326 Angélica: [that's important?]

327 Juan: I was there at the beginning of many things.

328 Angélica: So you know, you have these changes in thinking. How did these changes impact
329 personal relationships with family, peers, or significant others?

330 Juan: Wow, that's a tough one. Let me back up to the change business. I'm sorry but I am
331 ignoring my 27 years at the California Arts Council. Here, I became deputy director of the
332 California Arts Council responsible for, well over my 27 years I once calculated, probably
333 oversaw the distribution of about 200 million dollars to artists and arts organizations.

334 [0:40:12]

335 Juan: When I first started at the Arts Council it really was a continuation of the presence,
336 the domination of art organizations that were rooted in wealthy white communities. Real
337 presence were the symphonies, the ballet, the Opera, the Museums of the state. I came to work
338 for a whole group of artists who were placed there by then Jerry Brown, he was governor his first
339 term he abolished the old Arts Council and established a new one. Luis Váldez was appointed to
340 be on the Arts Council as well as a real mix working artists. One guy from Armenia from Fresno,

341 he was the only donor, the only non-artist on the council. They redirected that agency like
342 all hands on the wheel like a boat captain they redirected the direction of that state agency
343 and within that direction I was given the opportunity to do something about new programs as
344 deputy director and where money is distributed and so I had an impact on what became known as
345 Multicultural Arts distribution of funds to support artists and arts organizations of color. I sat on
346 17 or 19 National Endowment for the Arts panels.

347 [0:41:57]

348 Juan: I sat on the Western States Board of Trustees always the voice for the art of people of color
349 because there was no one else in the room sometimes who was a person of color. Certainly there
350 were no other Latinos, they were blacks on occasion, you know. This pretty much became of
351 white-black conversation in America in all those years and a Latino voice wasn't there and
352 Native American and Asian. Sometimes I had to speak for all Latinos, don't know if you've
353 ever been involved in that kind of situation, you represent everybody for the moment, you know,
354 but you have to do it. What I learned here about cultural anthropology and in all those years of
355 Berkeley about anthropology, I put that to practice. My history, my anthropology in those policy
356 discussions at the National Endowment for the Arts I had to squash some of the thinking that
357 went on because it was old-time anthropology. I had to listen to some real BS about people of
358 color and sometimes, you know, you just say I know I'm not going to win the vote here but
359 somebody's got to say this. And that little boy that I told you I was, I was a good little kid, I was
360 religious, I respected my elders, every once in a while that little boy still, "cause we are
361 everything we've ever been." That's the way I view life, I'm everything I ever was and once in a
362 while the nice little religious boy says, "you shouldn't say anything you might offend
363 somebody." because that's the way I was raised and then this other voice says, "You know what I

364 don't care" that other voice from another time--

365 [0:44:08]

366 Angélica: Now that you have that I don't care voice, how did that voice affect your
367 relationship with your family, your significant other, your wife?

368 Juan: Do we have to go into this? Anyway, I lost that marriage. I was not alone, I mean,
369 there's probably some anthropology study of what the movement did to marriages. The
370 engagement of people in the movement but a lot of marriages either revealed the fault, the
371 problem and it exacerbated the problem or it created the problem, the division. A lot of people
372 were able to overcome the divisions that happened because, you know, the spouse was not
373 always your partner in the activities, that was my experience. My wife was not always present in
374 those events, she had business to take care of, children to raise. So I'm off and then there's all the
375 social activity that happens once you're there. Anyway, it did not have a good effect on my
376 marriage, the marriage broke up and so some years passed. I was a single guy on the road.

377 [laughs]

378 Angélica: May I ask how many years you were together [giggles]

379 Juan: Well, the first break-up, marriage break-up, was 1970 the first year I was teaching.
380 It was on rocky grounds for about another five years. 1977 I left the house and nothing never
381 happened again, filed for divorce in '78 completed, in '79. In that interim period of, you know,
382 she moved away and I was with the kids, she moved back, I moved away and I came back and
383 trying to make it work for about 5 years there was '74-'75 to '79. Anyway, I met somebody. I
384 met my current wife and it's a great marriage and we've had three children. We lost one at the
385 age of one he died, but it's been good. So both things have come out of it. Something good and
386 something not so good.

387 Angélica: Looking back at your experiences in the Movimiento Chicano are there any issues
388 that were left unresolved?

389 Juan: That are left unresolved? Well one issue that I'm always talking about is when I was at
390 Berkeley I wrote a very long paper for a speech class, I had to prepare a major speech and I
391 chose to talk about because I was so engaged at the time at Berkeley in education issues,
392 recruiting kids talking to them about Berkeley or college, establishing that counseling center.
393 Anyway I wrote this long thing about research on education and I was, as a student, astounded at
394 the history. I learned the history of education and the Mexican people in this country.

395 [0:48:00]

396 Juan: I was segregated. How we were treated in schools. I remember one story, it was
397 Watsonville or the Central Valley where the queen was always white. What do you call that?
398 When people return?

399 Angélica: homecoming

400 Juan: The homecoming queen was always white and the princess was always a Mexican,
401 it's just the way it was. No one ever questioned it until someday somebody said "why can't a
402 Mexican be queen" and the response was well you know we have to raise the, the... I think this
403 how the story went, I might be wrong. We have to consider that whites will be running the town
404 and Mexicans will be working for them. So we have to have always the kings and queens be
405 white and you can't reverse it because of this. It was said so matter-of-factly like what happens.
406 Anyways I was shocked that this kind of stuff was said so openly and it was a great number of
407 cases of this stuff going on. Our dropout rate 1960 something was 50%, you know, 50% did not
408 graduate from high school. Recently, 47 odd years later after, after the whole Chicano Movement
409 after all of us going to college, after all of us going--blah blah blah-- I see our dropout rate was

410 50%. I think, “Jesus!” How unresolved is this issue, the issue of education in our community.

411 But I know it’s deeply rooted in the issue of the larger issue, of how America’s structured.

412 [0:50:08]

413 Juan: How race is still carried out. I remember saying, at some point, it took us five

414 hundred years to get here, from the time of Christopher Columbus 1492 and the establishment of

415 the European racism in America, it may take us 500 years to get out of it. I mean ‘cause we've

416 never been in that situation before, how long will it take? And so it becomes--we've all said it, all

417 of us here in Sacramento, we’re long-distance runners we’re not sprinters and we're in it for life,

418 we’re lifers.

419 Angélica: Does that mean that you see yourself staying involved, meaning like the challenges

420 Chicanos face now--

421 Juan: I see myself disliking meetings more and more. I grew up hating meetings unless

422 something real came from it unless it was really an action meeting. So any meetings are about

423 regurgitating what we know. Maybe we're like so many people were waiting for that leader to

424 rise up and really give a voice, powerful voice as his experience. We've had that experience from

425 Mexican history and civil rights history--César, José who just--and other voices believe me there

426 are other voices--who have no compunction of raising their voice and providing leadership and

427 having following.

428 [0:52:09]

429 Juan: A lot of people speak up and they don’t have anybody behind them, so it's like eh

430 okay. Those are rare, those are rare people.

431 Angélica: I want to ask you, what role do you think that Chicanas played in the movimiento

432 [movement]?

433 Juan: Well I have to tell you this, I am working on an art edition, silk screen edition of about
434 8 prints on the life of my mother. I am working also on her book, her story. My siblings and
435 myself, we honor our mother in a way that is not necessarily uncommon, I mean, I think most of
436 us think our mothers are saints and wonderful and always there for us. I will argue that my
437 mother had, though, an extraordinary experience as a mujer mexicana. She did things, went to
438 places, observed things and was a leader in San Francisco so I got to begin always with my
439 mother and her shaping of me, my values, my manners. She's the one that really wanted to make
440 sure that I brought that great credit to the family. She was someone who I always went to when I
441 had to solve a problem because my mother always looked like she knew what she was doing--she
442 could solve problems.

443 [0:54:04]

444 Juan: and then there are my sisters were quite gifted, but in the Chicano movement--I'll start with
445 Berkeley--there were not very many women at Berkeley. There was one, Becky Morales who
446 was on the original board. She was the only woman on the board, she was very artistic, she was a
447 student of architecture. She went on to become vice-president at MIT. And I thought "wow
448 Becky went all the way to the top man she's like she must have kicked some ass to get that far"
449 'cause you have to. Here in--well I mean you know you always had people like Dolores Huerta
450 who was certainly, and still is an incredible voice just inner strength in you. It just comes so
451 easily to her I don't understand where it came from but--'cause I don't know her childhood life
452 but Dolores was always there. I do know there was a lot of criticism of the guys in the
453 movement, the artists. I'm really much more part of the artist Chicano art movement than other
454 kinds of things but there had been criticism of Chicano artists in the movement for ignoring
455 women artists and leadership roles where women often played supportive roles. But I think any

456 intelligent look at the history--if you go to the sub-level--the comandante [commander] beyond
457 the comandante level you really see the presence and the strength and the ability of women to
458 make things happen.

459 [0:56:17]

460 Juan: I don't know how far we are beyond that but it certainly is a great number of
461 examples of strong dynamic leadership. There was a time, I think, when men said that "I'm not
462 going to follow a woman," it clearly that happened in the workspace when you have a woman
463 who became a supervisor, a boss, you're working for a woman. I think those American cultures is
464 evolving Mexican culture is evolving. Those are deep-rooted values, I'll put that way, that
465 really have to be addressed. Yanked out of the ground when you get a chance to do it and you
466 have to demonstrate that you're quite willing to follow regardless of the person.

467 Angélica: Would you like to say last memories or?

468 Juan: Oh god, so many. I do--let me just say something for the present generation. I'm
469 involved a bit with UC Davis Chicano Studies over there through their art workshop--their
470 [inaudible] Workshop established by Malaquías Montoya and then run now by Carlos Jackson.
471 Malaquías's son is involved over there Maceo Montoya, who is a writer, muralist, and painter.

472 [0:58:05]

473 Juan: My son went to UC Davis, my son became the first transfer student, he transferred
474 from Consumnes. He became the first transfer student to become president of the campus in the
475 hundred years history of UC Davis. The second Chicano ever to become the president of the
476 campus. Through his experience, I met students who were politically active, the whole Dreamers
477 movement--huge demonstrations across this country at a certain time and still very, very active.
478 Today Santa Cecilia is performing free, you should go. Anyway, I only bring them up

479 because they're young people and they're addressing undocumented, you know, the deportations
480 and all of that. I'm so--it fills me with joy to see that when I see young people on national
481 television sitting side by side with, you know, and this confidence it just comes across and I
476 think YES we only need to expand the number of people. That's exactly why all of us got
477 involved in this movement for, was to have a generation that follows--or two generations that
478 follow of people, young people, like that. Take the responsibility, take the leadership then I think
479 we feel we've done our work.

480 Angélica: Thank you for commitment.

481 Juan: And all that was just until I was 23.

482 Angélica: [laughs]

483 [0:60:01] END TRANSCRIPTION