

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education  
Oral History Project

**Christina Ann Cervantes**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Jazmin Guerrero  
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Transcription by Revati Gottumukkala and Technitype Transcripts

**Guerrero** Can you please state your full name?

[00:00:10]

**Cervantes** Christina Ann Cervantes.

**Guerrero** Birthdate?

[00:00:12]

**Cervantes** December 13, 1952.

**Guerrero** Marital status?

[00:00:15]

**Cervantes** Single.

**Guerrero** Do you have any children?

[00:00:19]

**Cervantes** No.

**Guerrero** Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:22]

**Cervantes** Colusa, California.

**Guerrero** What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:26]

**Cervantes** My father was a batch man foreman for several concrete companies, Cortina Rock, Willows Ready Mix, and my mother was a farmworker, housewife, and a J.C. Penney salesclerk.

**Guerrero** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

[00:00:42]

**Cervantes** Five brothers and one sister, seven of us in all.

**Guerrero** Please describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and your neighborhood.

[00:00:51]

**Cervantes** Well, from the get-go, my neighborhood was very diverse. I would consider it low income to upper income, because we had some people that were poor, we had a lady that owned a ranch whose land is currently being leased by the Indians for a casino, so she was a little bit well off, and then we had us. We were kind of middle class.

Our house was where everyone hung out, and the reason why is because everybody liked my mom's tortillas that she made by hand. [laughs] So there were mostly White guys in the neighborhood, so I grew up a tomgirl playing all the sports with the guys, but I worked in the fields during the summers with a large Mexican family that lived down the street, seventeen kids. We'd go do prunes, walnuts. We even hoed one summer, which that I didn't last long on that one. We did peaches, picked peaches.

I had one African American neighbor. We had, like I said, seventeen children in one Latino family, and they were all farmworkers, one Mormon family that had twelve kids, and the rest were White families that had two to three kids. The rich rancher, the Seever [phonetic] family, had seven kids. I was always responsible for organized cooking, putting together events for the neighborhood. I was always the leader in studies for my family and school events in elementary school. Every once in a while, I would do something and get recognized for it.

**Guerrero** What type of events would you put together for your neighborhood?

[00:02:38]

**Cervantes** Well, I was a tomgirl, a tomboy, whatever you say, and so I organized—I used to play football with the boys and I used to play baseball with the boys. I was a pitcher, I was a hiker, and I even did boxing with the guys, because the girls in the neighborhood, they were always doing more the domestic stuff, but I wanted to hang out with the guys all the time. With my five brothers, they always needed extra players [laughs], so that's what I did. But for my family, personally, I always did the birthday parties, I always organized that or when we had to go to graduation, I always organized the family to do that. When my brothers were in Cub Scouts and my sister was in Girl Scouts, I'd help them get over there. In junior high—well, we'll talk about that later.

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

[00:03:46]

**Cervantes** No, but I knew of it.

**Guerrero** What exactly did you know about it?

[00:03:50]

**Cervantes** I knew that their goal was to help accelerate the representation of Mexican American students from different communities, and I was kind of happy about that, because it was needed, and I was wondering how come I didn't know about this program, because I had tried to enter via EOP, and I got next. My first choice was to go to UC Davis, and they rejected me, so I felt rejected. But then I decided to go to Sac State on a Cal Grant at the time. I just decided, "I have to go get some work-study because that's going to make my own way through college." My parents, they brought me a car, and that was the extent of their support for me when I went to college.

**Guerrero** What are your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:04:44]

**Cervantes** Well, I did a chronology. It's going to take a little bit. Hopefully you don't mind. Okay, I did a little of chronology, and I started out for the Chicano Movement, to be quite honest with you, when I had graduated and went to CSU Sacramento in 1971, I enrolled originally and wanted, like I said, wanted to go to UCD, but could not make the admissions, got in regular admissions because I wasn't accepted for EOP, but I got accepted to Sac State.

I decided that I either wanted to be a social worker or do something in government or be a lawyer, and I got work-study for the Associated Students for Consumer Affairs, and my responsibility was to do Spanish translations for lead

poisoning for low-income youth, because we did a Health Fair, we organized the Environmental Fair, the first one in the state. My boss was named Brad Booth. He was later a lawyer that headed up the Department of Fair Employment and Housing and California State Employees Association.

Well, it was at that point that I realized that I could have some influence as a Chicana to do these translations and help do things for these Earth Days. Then I started working in 1973. This is '73, '74, that I worked for Environmental Consumer Affairs at Associated Students. In '73, '74, I actually got exposed to the Chicanitos Science Project, and it was at the California junior high, middle school here in Sacramento. I loved it. It was with Alvino Chavez [phonetic]. The reason why I loved it is because I thought it was pretty innovative that they were exposing little junior high kids to science. I remember that I got to motivate them and encourage them to excel to their highest in terms of just thinking. You know what I mean?

**Guerrero** Yeah.

[00:06:53]

**Cervantes** So that was one thing. Then I worked at the Washington Neighborhood Center. So there were a lot of Chicanos there. To be honest with you, I was kind of *agachada*, because where I grew up, they didn't have Chicanos. I mean, there were Mexicanos, but not Chicanos, so it was very conservative, still is.

But when I went to Washington Neighborhood Center, I started coaching. I formed a basketball team of local Latina girls. Gina Montoya from MALDF and some other ones were part of it. I actually took the girls—they were junior high and high school girls—I had them play the college girls. We didn't tell them they were junior

high and high school, and we beat them. [laughs] Because I always believed that we had to take on responsibilities higher, take a standard higher so that we could be better, right? So to some extent, I got exposed to Chicanas. A lot of them were *esas vatas locas*, you know what I mean? But I converted them. I said, “Being a basketball player, you can make some money down the road.” One of them eventually died. She got on drugs, and I found out later she had died of an overdose, so it was kind of sad. But that was some of the exposure.

The other thing that happened in college was that I was exposed to the RCAF and Joe Serna, the former mayor, was one of my mentors and college professors, had him as a political science class and I got involved in political campaigns to elect Latinos mostly.

**Guerrero** Can you state what the RCAF means?

[00:08:26]

**Cervantes** Royal Chicano Air Force.

**Guerrero** What exactly is that?

[00:08:30]

**Cervantes** They were really a group of young artists, males and females, that did Chicano art, and their artwork, I believe, depicted lives of Chicanos in the *barrio*, in education and different things. They were very influential maybe because they made me become aware, because I was just a Colusa girl. I hadn't been exposed to that. Matter of fact, I was having a conversation with one of my nephews' mothers recently, and she said, “Well, what is the Chicano Movement?” She's in Colusa still.

So a lot of people really are kind of sheltered because they're not exposed to the Movement.

I really did get exposed at Sac State by participating with RCAF and also MEChA, got involved with MEChA and doing some advocacy stuff for the students. In 1974, '75, I got elected to the Senate chair of Associated Students, and in that capacity I learned about EOP and how they wanted to take a snow trip. Robert Hernandez and Xavier Tofourier were responsible for electing me. What we did is we did advocacy. We advocated for EOP and we lost. The students wanted to take a snow trip versus give money for student stipends for college. That was one of the things that was not very good about my Senate chair role, but it was important that a Latina was in that capacity, I think, because it was a role model to demonstrate that we can run for office and win. And in that capacity, I was able to be on the executive Senate giving policy to the university about people of color, Latinos. I was able to be part of the bookstore, so I got exposed to budgets, huge budgets. It was probably the most best excellent experience that I had when I was in college.

In 1975, '76, one of the things I did was when I graduated in '76 is I got on to an internship, administrative assistant managerial program through the Sacramento-Yolo Employment and Training Agency, and there was a program and it was through the Chicano Service Action Center out of L.A., Governor [unclear] state project. What they did is they made funds available so that they could train Chicanas like me to become managers or executives. So I went through the program.

Then in 1976, I also helped co-org with a Latina by the name of Antoñia Lopez a Chicana woman's group, and our job was to put a grant together to try to get

nontraditional careers for *mujeres*. So she actually started it—I kind of helped her—Arcoítis [phonetic], Inc. In that capacity, I met Antoñia Lopez, a mentor, Juanita Polendo [phonetic], a couple other people.

In 1976, I actually left and found my job at state service. I met a Chicano on campus, he was recruiting, and I said, “Well, do they hire Latinos at the state of California?”

He said, “Yeah. Would you like to be a presenter?”

And I said, “What kind of presenter?”

He says, “Well, different kind of training.”

So I became a professional trainer for the State of California Department of Social Services, and got trained by this women by the name of Kathleen Wheeler [phonetic], later on trained programs like manager development, analyst development, leadership development, county consulting, executive development, strategic planning. That wasn’t very Latino, but I thought, “I’m going to learn this stuff and then I’m going to take it out to the community and teach them.” So that’s what I did. So I have samples over there, booklets that show all of the workshops I did for organizations.

In 1980, I got elected statewide president of Hispanic State Employees. That was probably the critical point that I really felt that I could really give to the Chicano Movement. A couple things happened. Jerry Brown, first term, sponsored a Governor’s Issues Conference for Latinas. So with my training skills, I decided, “Why don’t I do the needs assessment to see what kind of workshops people want, and also why don’t I do the evaluation for it.” So I designed it, developed it, and we



put it for the conference, and over 800 Latinas attended from all over the state. I was happy about that. Marisol Montes Lopez [phonetic] was the leader on that, but I helped support that.

In '83, I was the state president of the conference and assembled materials over there. There was a conference with my picture that demonstrated it, and what I did is I did workshops there. But the main thing that we did previous to that is we put a petition to address the underrepresentation of Latinos in state service, where Latino representation was like at 13 percent. We went to the governor and said, "We need to raise it."

So he put an executive order together, and because of that, CHP started hiring more Latinos, you know, because of Erik Estrada. I met with a guy by the name of Glenn Cray [phonetic], commissioner, and he was just terrific. He just said, "Yeah, bring them in," and the stats just went wild. You would see brown faces, and I was really happy about that.

So the petition, which I have right here, I'll give you a copy of it, had all these Latino organizations throughout the state as cosponsors. You guys can keep that. It gives a description of what happened in terms of changing the face of state government, because at the time it was mostly Whites, very, very few Latinos.

In addition to my CAFE presidency, the other thing that I helped out, Jose Perez, a colleague of mine at Sac State, was the one that dreamed it up. I helped him by meeting with the department heads and helped him edit and write it, but my main role was to serve as an ambassador.

**Guerrero**      What did you do as a service ambassador?

[00:15:15]

**Cervantes** I met with department and agency secretaries, I met directly with the governor, I met with the lieutenant governor. I met with all the high officials. I met with some legislators about it so that they would support it, to talk about the intent of that, what we wanted to do with it, because we had a vision to have more Brown faces in state government, and we made it happen. So I was real happy about that.

In addition, during my legacy as CAFE president, I helped write a grant so that we could get computers, because we knew technology was very critical, and we were able to get funding from SMUD, Sacramento Municipal Utilities District. We got like a 25,000-, 30,000-dollar grant to buy computers, and we started a computer program. So that was kind of neat.

**Guerrero** The computers went to where? To high schools, schools?

[00:16:09]

**Cervantes** They actually serviced the membership's kids. We don't have it anymore, but we're planning to resurrect it, because the agents have one in Natomas and they have a beautiful center. That's what we want to do as one of our next projects, because that I'm still affiliated with this organization. I'll talk about that in a minute.

In 1984, I got an Assembly resolution from Peter Chacon [phonetic] for the petition. There's one more thing I just want to mention about my leadership when I was president of CAFE, and that was the whole issue about coalitions. We were very much into coalitions and sponsoring legislation. One of the things that I felt proud about, that didn't happen, was in conjunction with Diane Watson's office. We were

going to put an Assembly concurrent Resolution 17 together which would have investigated all the district attorneys' offices in the state of California to see if they were discriminating against Blacks and Latinos.

Unfortunately, we couldn't coalesce on that. It became a Black-Brown thing. And I told everybody, I said, "You know, this is a civil rights issue. Come on now. Let's go with it." And I told my board, "You need to support this." So my board did it. My board did it. See that list there? CAFE was the only one that did. Everybody else went against it because of the Black-Brown issue.

I told them, "You know what? We're going to have more guys in prison now. You watch." So after that fight happened and even today, what do we have? People in prison. So I've been asked to resurrect that, but I'm not leader anymore, so the next leader will have to do it. But that was one thing that I kind of failed on in a way, but, nevertheless, sometimes you can have big perspective and realize that it's just not time, you know?

Then what happened, I lucked out, and Jerry Brown was kind enough to let me go get my certificate, master's of human resource development degree in a national training program. I and another African American woman by the name of Dida Piña [phonetic] went all over the country and we got trained by the best, the best executive leaders, manager leaders, trainers, consultant types. We went everywhere, Washington, Denver, San Francisco, San Diego.

They actually trained us on situational leadership, Tom Peters' Excellence, Ken Blanchard's *The Situational Leadership*, different things like that. I was taking

this back to the community again too. So I was doing workshops for that in 1994 with CAFE, with advocacy groups.

Then in 1994, I actually started a Latina Management Institute and started training Latinas to be managers for the state.

1996, I became EEO chief, put in a diversity program by hiring Latinos out of the Bay Area, Gallegos [phonetic] Associates. We actually trained, out of the 4,000 people, 2,000 of them got diversity training, because differences was so important.

1999, I got involved in the Chicano Youth Leadership Program, which had a workshop with Ellie Peck. She was the leader. She worked for Senator Leo McCarthy. We did campaign planning, and I've been doing that ever since. I still do it.

That's pretty much it. I retired seven years ago, but I still do the Chicano Youth Leadership Program, the Cesar Chavez Conference I take kids to. I'm working on a political campaign right now. I'm involved with a coalition that's trying to keep state service from being insensitive. I want to make sure that they hire Latinos and Blacks and so forth.

In addition, I've been politically elected to different positions. 1990, Mexican American Political Association, I was the chair. We endorsed Deborah Ortiz's election for city council, and I was the secretary. I was also Latino Democratic Club secretary and vice president. We helped influence Joe Serna's elections and others. Got a volunteer award for Festival de La Familia. And I participated in the [unclear] Heights Initiative and did some work with Mexican American veterans. That's it.

**Guerrero** How did Mexican Americans or Latinos react to the term *Chicano* or *Chicano Movement*?

[00:20:57]

**Cervantes** Back then?

**Guerrero** Yes.

[00:20:58]

**Cervantes** I think if you were in a college area, that you became engaged and you became aware. But depending on where you came from—I was from the rural, northern rural. It seemed like the more northern you went, the more conservative things are, but it seemed like the more south you went—because our organization, CAFE, had people from across the state. We had thirteen chapters, and the lowest chapter was in San Diego. The San Diegos, they were really into the Chicano Movement because of Logan Heights, the *barrio* over there in San Diego. Here in Sacramento, it wasn't as intense, but with the RCAF influence and Joe Serna's influence, there was an awareness about the Chicano Movement. But it just depends where you came from.

When I first came from Sacramento, I was pretty naïve and I didn't really know anything about the Chicano Movement, but I got exposed quickly and I thought, "Yeah, we need to stand up for our rights." I got involved with Cesar Chavez's march and I just thought that was the right thing to do because people were suffering in those fields, and given that I had experience, even though, quite frankly, I got promoted and got to drive tractors, stuff like that, do all the "guy things," so I had

a different kind of experience, but I still was sensitive to the hardships that farmworkers went through because I did it.

**Guerrero** Had you heard of the Civil Rights Movement?

[00:22:28]

**Cervantes** Mm-hmm.

**Guerrero** What do you think about it?

[00:22:29]

**Cervantes** The Civil Rights Movement was for people of color and disabled, and now it's gays and lesbians, I suppose. I believe that there should be justice and fairness for everyone, but I think the governor right now has the perspective, in my opinion, that everybody should have turns at it. So right now, the Asians seem to be the favorite child, if you may. But I believe in the principles of it. I think that Martin Luther King, he was pretty incredible. Cesar Chavez was pretty incredible. This movie, I believe, didn't do him justice as I believe he was. But they stand for justice, they stand for liberty, they stand for opportunity, they stand for fairness, they stand for equality of access. I've really given it some consideration, and our civil rights have to be allowed, because we'll always have racism, discrimination in our society, and it's just a matter of learning how to manage it in a positive way.

**Guerrero** Did your involvement in the Chicano Movement change your personality?

[00:23:56]

**Cervantes** Yeah, it did.

**Guerrero** And for you personally?

[00:24:00]

**Cervantes** Yeah, it did.

**Guerrero** Why?

[00:24:02]

**Cervantes** I think when I originally came, I didn't know anything [laughs], and I hung around a lot of Whites. In junior high, there was a fight with one of my Latina friends and a White girl, and they actually tore my clothes off fighting over me to be on sides.

I think the Latino Movement made me more sensitive to who my ancestry was and my culture and why it was okay that we were different, you know. I had experienced some discrimination in high school, was told that I would never go to college, that I would be good for making tortillas. I had even experienced some harshness about not saluting the flag one day by a *güero* teacher that I had.

But in all due respects, I appreciate that I got acculturated to learn about the Latina Movement, Chicano Movement, and even the Mexican American Movement. I think that I respect, though, individuals' rights to be able to refer to themselves how they choose to, because it's a personal thing. These days, I think that *Chicano* is a good term and it was really great in the old day, but the government changes it every so often. Now we're Latinas. Before that, were Mexican Americans, and now we're moving into the Mexicano. It's kind of cyclical in its own way.

I fear it, because I think it's kind of divisive. You know, "Let's have the Mexicanos be against the Mexican Americans." You know what I mean? So I have

different perspectives on it, but I always maintain that we're all one, really, because we have the language in common.

**Guerrero** What role do you think that Chicanas played in the Movimiento?

[00:25:56]

**Cervantes** I think they play all the roles. They play leaders, they play supporters, they play advocates, they play catalysts, they play change agents. They play all the different roles that we have to play when we're pushing through a movement.

[00:26:10]

**Guerrero** Why?

[00:26:13]

**Cervantes** Why do I think that? Because I've done it. [laughs] You know, everything I've done, I've initiated, I've lead. Sometimes you can be a more effective leader in a secondary role. There are seven power bases that exist. I know how to use those seven power bases. I believe that the challenge is to learn how to be effective and know when to use things so that we can move the Movement to the level that we want.

I mean, Dolores Huerta, she's done incredible things with Cesar, and I think it's more of a partnership type of a situation rather than a pure leader. It takes a team to make things happen. That petition you have took a team to make it happen, to manifest it, and it was the ideas of a bunch of people that made that happen. As Latinas, we have to know when is it appropriate to be the leader, when is it appropriate to be not the leader, and when is it appropriate to train the others that want to come up. My choice in life right now is to now bring the other ones up and let



them be the leaders, and just to be the coach, the mentor, the cheerleader, the advocate, and to make sure that they succeed. And that's what I'm doing in one of the campaigns I'm doing in Sacramento right now, is helping a young man to try to do something that's his dream.

**Guerrero** You mentioned many of the organizations you were involved in. Can you give me more information about CAFE?

[00:27:45]

**Cervantes** Sure. CAFE was Hispanic State Employees Association and we did advocacy to help increase the representation of Latinos and Hispanics in state service. At the time, we used the *Hispanic* word. Like I said, we went from 13 percent to about 17.2 percent, and this is over 200 departments. We hit the main ones, Caltrans, Social Services, Health Services, CHP, some of the other ones, to make sure that they achieved forwarding of Latinos in terms of representation.

The other thing is we had conferences to train them, so we'd have different workshops. I have some samples over there of some the conference brochures, so you can take a look at them if you guys need to use them for reference. And plus we also did practice orals so that people who wanted to get into state service, they would have the capacity to do it because we would coach them on how to do a presentation, how to dress, how to talk, to be able to get their foot in their door. Now it's a little bit more harder. We also gave them technology skills. We did an introduction to automation because we've got that computer project. So that's what the organization used to do. We're restructuring right now, in that most of the people have retired, so we're going to resurrect it and our goal is to try to get a learning center.

**Guerrero** What significance do you think the organizations created play in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:29:20]

**Cervantes** They're *it*. I mean, they're the Movimiento Chicano. You know, CAFE had it in terms of Hispanic state employees. They actually manifest helping people move from an economic level that may have been lower to moving up into managerial, executive-level types of positions.

We influenced even my Mexican American Political Association chairmanship and Atheno [phonetic] Democratic Club secretary rules. We actually elected individuals to become mayors, to become in the legislature. I mean, we're the most represented in the legislature. Chicano Youth Leadership Conference, the whole goal of that is to train youth on how to work the legislative process. They visit the Capitol, they learn it. We teach them how to do the campaign workshops to get elected. It's the Movement. That's the criticalness. If we don't have these organizations, nothing happens.

**Guerrero** How do you feel about seeing more Chicanos being involved in pretty much keeping the Movimiento going?

[00:30:31]

**Cervantes** Proud. I mean, it was good for me to put this together, because I was feeling kind of depressed. I had retired seven years ago. I was caretaking my mom. So this was good for me because it made me realize that I had invested a lot of my time in a positive, productive way, that I really had purpose. I have a saying for myself in that my purpose in life is to help develop others so that they can chase their dreams.

**Guerrero** Did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, political lines?

[00:31:04]

**Cervantes** All three.

**Guerrero** Why?

[00:31:09]

**Cervantes** Because I think when I was in Colusa, had I stayed there and not came to Sacramento, I would've just ended up pregnant, on welfare, on drugs, or alcohol, because that's how that life is there or in being a farmworker. Not that it's negative. because some people love it, okay? But that was hard work and that's back-breaking work, and it's not very well appreciated, even though you know and I know that they're the ones that feed us. I mean, we should be paying them a heck of a lot more than what they get.

So on a social level, I think the Chicano Movement has made me realize that we have to bring it out to everybody to be aware that they don't have anything to be ashamed of, that we're Americans, too, and that we choose to be Chicanos or Mexicanos or Latinos or whatever, and that we count because our vote counts as well.

Politically speaking, look at the legislature we've elected. We have a huge number of people in the legislature. We're not finished yet. I believe someday we'll have a governor that's Latino, because of the statistics, and maybe even a president.

**Guerrero** How did these changes impact your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:32:35]

**Cervantes** My brothers all married *gabachas* [laughs], and it's been a challenge a little bit because they don't understand the Chicano Movement and they don't understand why I do the advocacy I do, but I said, "I do it because of your kids. Maybe you don't understand it, but because it's our kids, because someday they're going to experience discrimination and they need to know how to take care of it in terms of standing up and being proud of who they are and how they self-identify themselves. They don't deserve to be treated bad. They're American citizens. We all belong here. It's our country, and I'm very proud to say I'm very proud to be an American Chicana."

**Guerrero** Please describe some of the impacts that your involvement with the Chicano Movement had on your career.

[00:33:29]

**Cervantes** The impacts. I think that I would never have gotten the opportunity to do a national program to get a master's degree, master's of human resource development, had I not been involved with Latina politics and the need to open it up so that somebody could go out there and learn to bring back to the community. That's one kind of thing.

I think that politically I would have never known what politics is had I not gotten involved in the political arena and experimented with it in terms of election of people and actually running for positions. I feel like I've expanded my perspective on things because I've had a broader experience than more than a limited experience.

**Guerrero** Why is that?

[00:34:28]

**Cervantes** I think, like I said, when you go to get your education, some people will go and they'll get their four-year degree and two-year degree and that's it. Me, I went and got my education, I got my two-year degree, my four-year degree, and to me, you have to commit to lifetime learning, because it never stops. I think what I've really learned from a self-perspective is that I'll never stop reading books. I read books every week. I don't even watch TV anymore. I don't even get on those cell phone things or the technology, because I get so much more from the books. I think that what I would tell individuals is that you want to learn about the Latino Movement, start writing about it and processing out your experience of it, because it'll help you grow tremendously to have wisdom.

**Guerrero** Looking back at your experience in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that went unsolved?

[00:35:28]

**Cervantes** The biggest unsolved issue for me is the whole thing with the dropouts. I don't understand it totally. We try to help it in terms of our role as Hispanic state employees, and I try to help in doing volunteer work. I did a lot of volunteer work too. That was the other thing I wanted to mention, that as part of the Chicano Movement, I learned about the Chicano Movement because I volunteered for different organizations at a community level, and that was very fruitful in terms of expanding me on a personal level. I would encourage that. If you want to expand who you are, you really need to go out and volunteer as well as work, because it helps develop your dimensions and your perspective of wisdom and view on things.

**Guerrero** Describe how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento or where you lived.

[00:36:31]

**Cervantes** I say here in Sacramento where I live, where I grew up, no, there's not as much awareness. I know that they do, like, cultural activities, you know, Cinco de Mayo maybe in the park, and that's the significance where I grew up, but other than that, I don't think they really do an education program. And it's speaking to another failure, I think, the whole issue that we haven't indoctrinated the school system yet for Chicano Studies at a lower level, because these kids need to have self-esteem at elementary school level, not at college level. Well, at both, okay? If they start learning that they're of value because of their culture, because of their language, we're going to have some tremendous leaders manifested. But waiting till they're in college is a long wait. We need to start before, and I'm hoping that somehow I'll be part of a group where more Chicano Movement, where we can impact that happening, where there's books, where there's presentations in the elementary and junior high levels.

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

[00:37:50]

**Cervantes** Education. There's a public sentiment that people—it seems like it's going backwards and not wanting to allow people of color to move forward, and I think that that's one of the critical things that our community in particular needs. Economic development, I think that we have to expose our kids to science and

technology so that they can settle in the nontraditional jobs like doctors, like corporation CEOs, like technology specialists, even just to obtain their high school degree and move to at least two-year degree or a trade school.

Also the other challenge, I think, is the physical self, making sure that people don't get into the wrong lifestyle, addiction, things that are going to take them on the wrong path. We have a societal problem on that. It's just not a Latino problem. You know, we have prescription drug addicts, we have bad drug addicts, and we need to address that instead of let it just happen. I think those challenges.

**Guerrero** Do you see yourself staying involved in meeting these so-called challenges?

[00:39:19]

**Cervantes** I see myself being a coach. Like I said, that's my goal. I have a workshop slogan that says I'm committed to make you better and to make you excellent, and I will do whatever I can to help any individual obtain their dream if they're willing to meet me halfway, but they're going to have to do volunteer stuff, they're going to have to hit the books, they're going to have to be able to receive constructive feedback and criticism, and they're going to have to do something that gives something to the community back. Because I've made leaders. I've had people come to me and say, "Can you help me find a job?"

I said, "Yeah, go here. You'll get that job."

Sure enough, they come back and they say, "I got the job!"

I said, "See? I told you." [laughs]

**Guerrero** How do you feel helping out other people?

[00:40:17]

**Cervantes** That's what I'm committed to do, committed to helping people become better.

**Guerrero** Did you see yourself as you are now when you were eighteen or nineteen, when you were younger?

[00:40:31]

**Cervantes** Yeah, I was a cheerleader and homecoming queen. I still cheerlead. I still advocate for the low man on the totem pole. I do advocacy still. I just want to make society better, for that matter, because we can't afford to go backward. We have too much going to continue to move forward, and my plan is to see all my kids, all my nieces and nephews graduate from college or trade school and not end up in a place like the prisons. You know, that's what I want to do for Latinos. That's what I try to do for the Latinos, and that's what I'll always commit to.

**Guerrero** Is there anything else you would like to add?

[00:41:24]

**Cervantes** No. I want to thank you and everybody for doing this project. We needed it, and I hope I gave you sufficient information that you understand it from my perspective. And I want to thank all the professors, Senon [Valadez] and Joe Serna, the late José Montoya, and various other individuals at the college level that really opened up my eyes to understand that there's a world out there that's ready for us, that wants to embrace us, and we have to just think and become, be in the innovation of things, because we need to continue to make many generations of future leaders that are Latinos, Chicanos, Mexicanos, and so forth.



**Guerrero** Thank you.

[00:42:21]

**Cervantes** You're welcome.

[End of interview]