The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Daniel De Los Reyes

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Taliá Cardenas and Rasna Suri
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Transcription by Technitype Transcripts

Q Can you please state your full name?

[00:00:10]

De Los Reyes Daniel de la Ramon de los Reyes.

Q And your date of birth, please?

[00:00:13]

De Los Reyes 2/21/47. February 21st, 1947.

Q Thank you. And your marital status?

[00:00:20]

De Los Reyes I've been married thirty-six years last Friday.

Q Wow! Congratulations. Wow! That's awesome! And do you have any kids? And if so, how many?

[00:00:29]

De Los Reyes I have four children, two boys and two girls.

Q So I'd like to ask you some questions about your early life. Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:40]

De Los Reyes I was born in County Hospital in East L.A., and I was raised in an *adobe* that my grandfather built before he passed, and I was raised there, right there in a *barrio* called Little Valley, by 6th and R____, right off Whittier Boulevard.

As a child, I really liked East L.A. My mother raised us by herself. My father and her got divorced when I was just an infant, so I really didn't have a father in my life. I had a father figure, my uncle, Michael Blackie [phonetic], but that was intermittent. So I did a lot of time just walking around East L.A. when I was a kid. My mom had to go to work. She worked in North Hollywood, which is a long bus ride from East L.A., so she left early in the morning, and we walked to school, my sister and I. It was really okay. There was nothing wrong with it. There was no [unclear] warfare, really. There was nothing really bad going on. We'd have occasional rock fights or things like that, but it was always just fun.

Q Childhood. [laughs]

[00:01:51]

De Los Reyes Yeah, just childhood. Then my grandmother died.

Q I'm sorry.

[00:01:56]

De Los Reyes When she passed, she'd been babysitting us all that time, and when she died, we had to move out of the house on 6th Street, the *adobe*, and we moved into an apartment above [unclear] Avenue.

During that period—I think I was in sixth grade—my mother had a nervous breakdown, I guess trying to handle two kids, leaving them by themselves all day, and then I don't know what exactly the stresses she had to deal with were, but they

were hard, and she had a hard life. In any case, she broke down. She had a breakdown, and we had to go stay with relatives. First we left East L.A. and went to Montebello to stay with my uncle and my aunt, who really didn't want us there and made it very clear.

Then went from there to Anaheim, where I went to the end of my sixth-grade year. It was really—I think I got in a fight every three or four days there, because I was the only Mexican in the school. I came out of East L.A. dressed like an East L.A. kid, and getting along with everybody, nothing but Mexicans. There was one White girl named Dee Spopovich [phonetic]. She was like [unclear]. She thought she was Mexican. And there was Daniel Earnestine [phonetic], who was Chinese, [unclear], and he thought he was Mexican. [laughter] We were all Mexican. Everybody was Mexican. All of a sudden, you go to this place where there's nothing but White people, and it really freaked me out.

During that time, my mother was rehabilitating, so we were staying with these relatives, my cousins in Anaheim, and they were all really different. They were trying really hard to fit into White society, and they were actually involved in the John Birch Society. I don't know if you know what that is, but it was a very right-wing organization that was around back in the day.

Q Right.

[00:03:53]

De Los Reyes So we listened to a lot of that stuff. I remember the first painting I ever did was a painting of B_____, the shield they use, you know. I was doing one of those for them. I've always been drawing since I was just a kid, just drawing cartoons.

When I went out to Anaheim, I tracked into the lowest kind of mentally retarded section where all they had me do is draw pictures for them, and I didn't get much of an education there.

Anyway, from there, my mother met this guy that she hadn't known for years, and I guess he just kind of swept her off her feet. She was real sick. She was really not in a good place. So she married him, surprised us and married him and told us about it. Then we all packed up and moved to Half Moon Bay, where he lived. So we went to Half Moon Bay up on the coast, which everybody, when I tell them that, they think it's a really nice thing, but if I thought Anaheim was racist, it was nothing like Half Moon Bay.

Q Wow.

[00:05:00]

De Los Reyes Half Moon Bay was growers and some Mexicans, mostly poor Portuguese pickers, you know, like that, and no respect whatsoever for anybody Brown. I fought a few of my peers that went to school there when I was there. I left Half Moon Bay and didn't go back for ten years after I graduated from high school. But I went to junior high and high school there.

It's weird. During that period, I was still fighting. All this time growing up, I thought something was wrong with me after I went to Anaheim. I was cool in East L.A., but after Anaheim, I started thinking, "What's wrong? Why am I always fighting everybody?" So I put it on myself. I always thought I was messing up. Then I got to Half Moon Bay and the same thing, so I thought, "Man." So I did four years of football, I did track, and I was really into sports, and I thought that would save me,

but I still got in a lot of fights, still got a lot of disrespect. So I was really plowing ahead, trying to assimilate as fast as I could and trying to lose my East L.A. accent, trying to just—I don't know. I remember I had this philosophy that by the time I was twenty-five, I was going to have a million dollars, you know. I kept driving myself with that so I could show all these people, you know.

Q Right.

[00:06:20]

De Los Reyes Well, when I was about sixteen, I met—I think I was fifteen. I met a bunch of old beatniks and poets and artists that lived in this little town called El Grenada, right by Half Moon Bay, and they just took my belief system and just shattered it. "Forget about a million dollars. You don't want a million dollars. That's just capitalism and bourgeois thinking," and just all this. And they started feeding me with books, you know, and different information, and teaching me about—destroyed my ideas, my philosophy about how things should be.

At that time, I met a guy named Langston Baun [phonetic], who was a teacher, but mostly he was an artist, and he actually was an artist for the State Department. He traveled all over the rural showing his artwork. But Lang Baun introduced me to a girl named Ann Gerrels [phonetic], who had been working with SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. So when I was sixteen, she was taking me up to San Francisco to Macedonian Baptist Church to help teach kids how to speak English properly and teaching them how to write and read, and we did that whenever we could. Meanwhile, I was getting ready to join SNCC and to go down south and do work in the Suarez Movement.

So as I read the article, I mean the questions, you said, "Did you know about the Civil Rights Movement? Did that influence any of your Movement experience?" I was kind of the opposite. I started out working with Black people in the South. When I graduated from high school, I left. Three days later, I was in Washington, D.C. I was supposed to go to Selma for the march, and it happened right around my birthday, but on my birthday, Malcolm X was killed on February 21st, 1965, shot in the Audubon Ballroom there.

Anyway, that really shocked me, so I really was determined to go to Selma for the final march they were having. Ann Gerrels was going to take me, this woman I met. She had means. Her parents were pretty rich. So she was going to fly us down. I got caught going out the door by my mom, so I didn't go, wasn't allowed to go. I was eighteen then, but still it wasn't old back then.

So as soon as I turned eighteen, as soon as I got out of high school, I took a plane trip to Washington, D.C., and from there I went there on an assignment with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and they sent me down to work with an organization that was working in the southern part of Virginia, in the Dismal Swamp area, it's called, in southside Virginia. It was really poverty-stricken, terribly racist, terribly—just nobody could vote. One school we went to was a Black school that we went to working a lot, was right next to the dump. You could smell the dump from the school, inside the school.

The kids were—it was really different. I'd never been around Black people that didn't hold their own around White people, but these people were all just sad. They weren't about to go register to vote. Every weekend we had organizational

meetings at the church, because that's the only place that everybody would go to. Anyway, we had to go miles, walking miles and miles and miles to get people to go. They'd go, "Yeah, we'll be there for sure," and they wouldn't show at all, because if they did, they would get their allotment.

There were all these different ways that the powers-that-be had. There was a White Citizens Council, there was the Klan, there was all these different organizations working against them. One of the organizations was the Allotment Board. How they worked down there was they were all sharecroppers, practically, and sharecropping is a system where they have a large owner of land and they allow a Black person to crop on a share of the land there. Then they give a share of their crop to the landlord, to the owner, when they harvest. Well, how much they were allowed to grow was determined by the Allotment Board, and the Allotment Board, if they got wind of them doing any kind of work with the Civil Rights Movement, people would say, "Well, we ain't gonna buy any of your corn this year. We just don't have no use for it." And they would just cut their allotment altogether, and they'd have no money. That was what they were working for all year. Anyway, things like that, just insidious stuff, you know.

I got beat over and over again down there, you know. We had a lot of violence that happened during that time. There was a newspaper put out by SNCC called *The Freedom News*, and in the middle it had two columns, just incidents that happened, you know. People were found in a river with their heads and their hands cut off so nobody could identify them, real cruel, terrible shit—terrible things. Excuse me. [laughter]

Q No, you're fine.

[00:12:01]

De Los Reyes Anyway, I got to spend a little time down in Mississippi, and that was even more blatant. The racism down there was just—

Q Mississippi?

[00:12:14]

De Los Reyes Mississippi, yeah. It was really bad. That was a short stint. The group I worked with was Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee, the VSCRC. Turned out Bea Herrera [phonetic]—I don't know if you know who that is, Jack Herrera's wife. Bea Herrera, she's White. She also worked with the Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee too. I was amazed. I've only met two people, since I've gotten back from the South, that were civil rights workers during that time. One of them was Betita Martinez. She's a writer and publisher. She's the one that put out *500 Years of Chicano History*. She was down in the South. In fact, I've got a picture of myself getting ready to go down south, reading a book about Mississippi, and it's a book she published. Betita and I talked a lot about the South. Bea and I, not so much, but I was surprised she was in the same organization.

Anyway, from there I came back, went to college in 1965, in the fall of '65. Spent four months down south, then came back here, and I guess what I had was what they call PTSD now. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was pretty shell-shocked. I was going to S_____ College in Los Angeles, but I couldn't stand being around White people. It scared me to death, after being down south. It was like being in a war zone or something, then coming back and then just being immersed in the school that

was mostly White people, you know. I just was uncomfortable, at the point where I finally dropped out. I promised my mother I'd come back and go to school, and then I just couldn't handle it.

So from there, I met a guy in 1966. I was hitchhiking. I was looking for a job, so I was hitchhiking out of Southern California, up north, going up to Santa Cruz or somewhere, and got picked up by this guy that was an old guy, older guy, that had a bunch of prints. The front seat was cool, but the backseat was filled up to here with documents and trash and all this stuff—not trash, but personal stuff, and cameras, all these great cameras, all this great stuff. I was interested in photography. I'd been doing photography since I was about sixteen. I was the only one who [unclear]. I'd been a really good photographer. One of the poets' wives taught me how to use a Rolleiflex and all that, Rolleiflex camera.

Anyway, so I was really interested in the cameras he had, some really good ones, and I asked him about the cameras, and he said, "Do you know about them?"

I said, "Well, I know a little bit."

Anyway, he lived in Malibu. He gave me a job helping him do this film on autistic children. He was a psychiatrist. He was the director of the Exceptional Children's Foundation in Los Angeles, and his wife, she went to UCLA and she was also a psychiatrist. She did the screening at the time for dialysis, because there were only a few dialysis machines. It's a real rigorous protocol, so she had to decide who lives and who dies, who got hooked in and who didn't. Anyway, it was real stressful on her.

I lived in Malibu, got to live in Malibu for a while, and that was great. They sent me to New York for a while, so it kind of broadened my perspective a bit. Then she died, his wife died, and we stopped doing the film. I was doing editing and doing 35-millimeter film, Moviola, a big machine they had at the studio down in Hollywood.

Anyway, long story short, the film ended and I hitchhiked back up north, got to Santa Cruz, got a dishwashing job. I've always told my sons, "I don't want to hear you can't get a job. You can always get a dishwashing job somewhere." I didn't care, anywhere I went to, I could always get a job washing dishes. So I got a job washing dishes at this placed called Manuel's. Manuel's was hooked up to the political scene in Santa Cruz, and I got the reputation of being a radical Chicano because I'd been in the South and I'd been against the Vietnam War since 1963.

In 1965, I got arrested in Washington, D.C. I hitchhiked up from Virginia, Blackstone, Virginia, to D.C., and got arrested with about, I don't know, hundreds of other people, maybe thousands, a group called the Congress of Unrepresented People. About 200,000 people marched to Congress to present this petition that we were all against the Vietnam War, and we were unrepresented as a group. Well, that was great until we got to a certain point. I was with this small woman I met there, and she was really tiny, and so I went to the back of the group so she wouldn't be in danger, and the cops blocked the front of the group, so they decided to start from our side and go this way. So obviously we were in the front of the group.

The cops had their arms locked with their billy clubs like this [demonstrates], and they were just like they couldn't wait. As soon as we stood up and decided to

march forward—we sat down for a long time, then we got up and decided to march forward nonviolently. All this was nonviolent, using our nonviolent training we learned from SNCC. I don't know where other people learned it. They came in in hoards, just beating the hell—just like, I don't know, just beating us over the top. I just covered her up, because she was so small. I got beat. Somebody else came and covered me up.

We all got arrested and we got put in these small paddy wagons that were like a dog pound truck. There was like ten of us in there, and it was 100-degree weather and 100-degree humidity, and they had us out there outside the police station for hours. One guy in our group had a heart attack while he was in the thing. There were only two louvers like that [demonstrates] cut inside the metal, [unclear] metal, and hot. We took turns breathing through louvers, you know, because it was so hot. We had our shirts off. Women took off their blouses. They were so hot, they didn't care. It was, like, crazy.

We got thrown in the jail, finally, and the Berigan [phonetic] Brothers, they were a couple of priests, were there, and we were all having a hard time dealing with what we had just gone through, and a couple of us, some of the guys we were with, some of my really good friends got beaten really bad, got their clothes torn, you know, got really hurt bad. So we were all really depressed. They started singing, these priests. These two priests started singing this song I'll never forget, [Latin name of song]. It's a very simple chant. [sings] And we started singing that. We started singing softly, real softly, and as people caught on, we just started singing louder and louder, and the jailers got crazy. At that point, I realized how important song was for

the Civil Rights Movement, for us. The jailers were not going to tell us to shut up, and we didn't shut up.

Anyway, so getting back to where I was in '67, I was in Santa Cruz and got a job in Watsonville. There'd been a pilot program for a cultural center in Watsonville. Watsonville was all Mexican, well, Mexican on this side of Main Street and White in the good part of town. Again, growers and pickers. I got a job working at the cultural center there. It was a pilot program that had been funded for a year, and it was already six months into the program and nothing had been happening, so they fired the guy that was working there and they hired me for the reason that I was a radical Chicano. Somehow they got the idea that I was. So I got there, and it was a storefront, a huge empty building. This guy hadn't done anything. So I scrambled fast.

That's the first time I really started using art for the Chicano Movement at all, for anything Chicano related. What I did was I made copies of *posada* prints on butcher paper and just hung them up in the windows to attract the *gente*. I was trying to do outreach to get people to come in and discuss the situation. They weren't having it. So I tried to make it as interesting as I could. I put stuff in the front windows, you know. So what I did was I started going out and bringing people like—I went out, and [unclear] Valdez, who's in Del Rey, and brought the *campesinos* out there to do a presentation. I got the Brown Berets at the time to come do a speech there. I got the guys from the EOP Program at San Jose State that somebody told me about, to come over and do a presentation. This was in '67. This program was going to end in '68.

So I never even knew that the EOP Program was myself, and it was Educational Opportunity Program. It was an affirmative action program, basically, for

San Jose State, and it was allowing Chicanos to go to school, regardless of grades, regardless of transcripts, whatever, and go directly into school and start and see how they did. If you made it, you made it. If you didn't, you didn't. So they asked me, "Why don't you go to school?"

And I said, "I tried it, didn't like it." I was older than most kids. I said, "I really don't have an interest in it."

But they talked me into it, so at the end of that program, I went out to San Jose and got started getting educated. So that was the year, '68 was the year of the strikes, the student strikes at San Jose State, and we were trying to expand the EOP Program. There were a couple of strikes there.

That was how I managed to—well, I had an accident with my right hand during the strikes and was really disillusioned by the leadership. I joined a group called Mexican American Student Confederation, MASC. It was one of the first Chicano organizations in San Jose State. When I got hurt, I was really disillusioned by the reaction of the leadership of the people that I was working with, the leadership of MASC, so that's when I decided to go out and meet Corky [Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales], because he was a down-to-earth person, kind of, and would understand where I was coming from better. I'd gotten burned really badly—I'll just leave it at that—on my face and my hand.

So I went off to see him and loved it, aside from getting a beating the first night I was there. I'd gotten in a boxing match with him with my left hand and lost, of course. That was before I knew he was a welterweight champion, all these things. I just loved the guy immediately. He was charismatic, he was strong. They bought the

Crusade Building without government funds. What they did was they got all the people that were in the community that were interested in having like the Washington Neighborhood Center, buying it, using their mortgages, getting seconds on the mortgages, getting whatever funds they were given, actually buying what used to be the old post office. No, it was an old Catholic school. I think it had four or five stories. It got turned into a post office. That's why I think I got mixed up.

Anyway, great building. They published their own newspaper, *El Gallo*, they had their own boxing team, they had their own *teatro* made up of women, had their women's *teatro* and a regular *teatro*. The [unclear] out there was fantastic. They did one play where they were all dressed up like Zapatistas from the revolutionary days, Zapata, and had wooden rifles, and they all did this really great drill with these wooden rifles.

Anyway, I met Corky out there, and Corky sent me down to New Mexico to go meet this fellow, Bill Longley [phonetic], because Corky had seen some of my artwork and he said I needed to do murals. So I said, "Well, I don't really know how to paint murals." So he sent me to meet this guy Bill Longley down in New Mexico, who was the husband of Enriqueta Vasquez. She's still alive. They were publishing a newspaper in *espanola* called *El Grito del Norte* at the time. That was where I first met Betita Martinez.

Anyway, I spent some time there with Bill and Enriqueta, and we did some mural work, and he taught me about brush, taught me some things about painting murals, and I was like I couldn't wait to get back and start working, you know. But from there, I had to go down to Reies Tijerina, because they wanted me to—I don't

know. Corky saw something in me, send me to go meet these people, and he said, "You have a revolutionary spirit. I want you to go talk to these people."

So from there I went to meet Reies, and ended up spending a lot of time with his brother Chemo [phonetic] Tijerina, spent a few weeks out there just visiting with them and was interested in what they were doing. I was very surprised, because their group was called Alianza del Pueblo Libres, Federal Alliance of Land Grants, trying to get the land grants back that had been stolen by the White man, from the Spanish in New Mexico, and they had a group that was made up of—I expected to see a group of young warriors, you know, and people like that. Now, they were all *viejos, viejitos* with guns.

They had the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse raid. What that was, was they organized a meeting of all the Alianza members in New Mexico, and they were all coming to this one town, Tierra Amarilla. The district attorney from that town had ordered the police to block certain key roads so they couldn't come from certain parts of town. Well, since that was a direct violation of the free speech and assembly, Second Amendment, that people can assemble and be free—I forget exactly how it's worded, but you know what I'm talking about, freedom of assembly.

Anyway, since that was against the Constitution, people of the Alianza decided to go arrest the district attorney. So they went in on horseback into the Tierra Amarilla Courthouse with guns to arrest the district attorney. Well, the district attorney wasn't there then, so they arrested other people and they took them hostage and went off in the mountains.

They had a gun battle in the courthouse. The way I heard it, I'm not sure if it's legend or true—I haven't ever gotten it confirmed—was that Baltazar Martinez, one of Tijerina's young warriors that had been in Vietnam, had strapped some dynamite to himself and walked in and said, "We've got to stop this shooting or somebody's going to get hurt." Had a cigar, you know. He was going to light it up, light the place up. That's what I heard. That's how I heard the shooting stopped.

They went up in the mountains, and the government reacted. They went with tanks and helicopters, and they never did find them. Finally, Tijerina and his wife and everybody that was involved gave themselves up. So, anyway, that's the people I was staying with.

So I came back to San Jose State all pumped up and really got involved in the radical Chicano Movement and became a member of the Black Berets. We had a group called the Black Berets back then. We formed a group. From a groundswell, we had different organizations that were sort of grassroots organizations. Chicanos for Gente, we'd go get food from grocery stores in town and give it to the poor people, people in East Side San Jose that didn't have any food. We started a breakfast program. We'd do security for when they had the county fair. We set up a trailer, and when the kids got too messed up, before the police would arrest them, we had a deal with the police to bring them to our trailer to get them sobered them and get a hold of their parents and get them out of there, things like that. Later, we had a Community Action Patrol, where we went around with video cameras and followed the police, because they had been really getting ruthless in East Side San Jose.

So from there, that was part of our radicalization process.

Can we stop for just a second? Is that okay? Can we pause for a minute?

[recorder turned off]

Q These are simple, and you can elaborate as you like, but there's some main questions we'd like to hit. If you feel like you want to go on more for certain questions, you can. There's just certain questions we have to get answered for our purposes. So that's it. Not trying to rush you at all, just giving you heads-up, too, because as I'm asking the questions, I realize some of what you've already said kind of overlaps with some of the other questions.

[00:32:17]

De Los Reyes I was just trying to remember my life, to go through my life chronologically.

Q No, that's okay. That happens. It's an interview. [laughs]

[00:32:32]

De Los Reyes So when I got back to San Jose State, I never registered for the draft. I was against the Vietnam War. I wasn't about to register and be caught in a position where I had to be dragged over there. So I was a draft resistance counselor at San Jose State.

During that time, I was doing artwork, a lot of artwork there. During the strikes, we needed some posters made. From San Jose, we drove up to Berkeley one night and I met José Montoya.

Q Oh, wow.

[00:33:09]

De Los Reyes And we worked in a studio up there. He was teaching at Berkeley at the time, and we made those huge fists you see from the sixties. We used those in the strike, and *huelga*. So that's when I started realizing I can use my artwork for the Movement, and started painting, started learning how to paint.

I'm sorry. What was the—

Q No, you're okay. So just a couple simple questions. I'm sorry, what did you mention your parents did for a living?

[00:33:54]

De Los Reyes My mother was a bookkeeper. My stepfather worked for United Airlines as a machinist in San Bruno by San Francisco. We lived in a house about seven blocks away from the beach, real nice, but it's hard to appreciate when things are the way they were at Half Moon Bay.

Q How many brothers and sisters do you have?

[00:34:36]

De Los Reyes I don't know. I've got one sister that's my full blood sister. My dad was married a few times; I'm not even sure how many. But I've got a half-sister, Dee Dee, from his second wife, and from his, I believe, sixth wife, Fernando De Los Reyes, who's my half-brother. And recently my sister and I found another sister in Whittier. I haven't contacted her yet. I've got sisters and brothers out there, half-sisters and brothers that I've never met.

Q Oh, wow

[00:35:18]

De Los Reyes I never knew my father until I went to Sacramento, really.

Q Oh, wow.

[00:35:24]

De Los Reyes And that was not till ’70. It wasn’t until after I got married. I mean, I knew him, I talked to him, we spent time together sometimes, but he made it very clear to me when I was about thirteen that he really didn’t want to spend any time with us. Broke my heart, but I got the message. So I didn’t really get to know him till I was a man, an adult and had already been married.

So I was working in Santa Cruz as a muralist and as a Head Start community organizer at the same time. This was way after leaving San Jose. Well, I left San Jose State, went on an independent study program to Europe, and stayed in Greece for a year and never came back to school.

So after coming back from Greece—I’m sorry. I have these blocks of memory. I had a stroke about nine years ago, so I have these memory blocks.

Q No, please don’t apologize. Take your time.

[00:36:42]

De Los Reyes I can’t keep it straight.

Q You’re fine. You’re doing fine. Thank you.

[00:36:48]

De Los Reyes So I was painting murals there at the same time, and looking at the *collection*, the one I have here, the one I showed you, and in Watsonville, I was working in Watsonville as a—I had three jobs. I was working in an outreach center that I set up for ESL students. It was an English Learning Center. I was a counselor at Watsonville High School, and I founded the English Learning Center for students.

What the ESL teachers didn't really understand was a lot of the students that came from Mexico or other places didn't even write or read in their own language, in Spanish or—so I fashioned my program after a program I saw in Salinas called English on Wheels. There was this woman, I forget her name now—I wish I could remember it to give her the credit, but she had a program where she'd take the students out into the community and make them actually work with the community and immerse them in the English language, and teach them how to say, "I want to pay for this. How much does it cost?" things like that, and go through a line in the market.

I had a lot of machines I used that were state of the art at the time, but most of the work I did was taking these people out in the community, and that worked really fast, because had mostly Mexican people. We had some other people too. We had some Portuguese and different people came through. That seemed like it worked the best, as far as covering all the languages, immersing them in the community and go through what they'd have to learn eventually anyway, besides going to school, besides what they need to survive when they're having a hard time. Anyway, so that worked out really well.

After that, I left that job and went to San Jose to work with the Centro Cultural de la Gente. It was run by Adrian Vargas at the time. This was getting up to '78, I think. Big jump there, but in 1978 I went out there and I took over the art component of the Centro Cultural. They had a *teatro*, Teatro de la Gente, and my wife was working in the *teatro*, and that's how we met. I fell in love with her watching her act on stage, and she kind of watched me paint. She liked to see me paint. So we kind

of gravitated toward each other because of cultural and revolutionary stuff. So we decided to get married just then.

What we had done at the Centro is we had gotten CEDA grants to do our jobs. We'd take our CEDA grants and split them in half, and we'd go hire another person, so we had twice as many people working that way. I'd learned this working at—I'd established with some other friends a thing called the Academia del Arte Chicano de Aztlán in Watsonville, another cultural center that was really successful, and that ran for a couple of years. That was during that seventies period after I came back from Europe and all that.

Anyway, I met my wife. The Centro, our funding ended, and just at the same time our funding ended, we decided to get married, so we got married up in Reno. I got a call. During that period in the seventies, I'd lived in the mountains in Santa Cruz and taken a test up in Deep Basin for state park ranger, and I just took it on a whim, because from my cabin, Deep Basin was within walking distance, and so I walked up to take the test, got a really high score on the test, figured I'd get called anytime. Of course, I didn't know anything about lists. I didn't get a call right away. My plan was I'd live in Deep Basin, walk to work every day, and live in my cabin and I'd have it made, you know. Well, I was simple, naïve, I thought. Anyway I totally forgot about it.

About the time the funding ended for the Centro, I got a call and they wanted a ranger, wanted to know if I wanted to work as a ranger down in Morro Bay, so I got a job as a state park ranger and was working down there for quite a few years.

While I was working down there, a position became available up here in Sacramento to work in the production shop over in West Sac, where we produced all the dioramas. We did all the work in the Railroad Museum, pretty much, and we did dioramas, we did all the park signs that you see when you go through the park. I was in the art production department, and we did the artwork and the final actual production work to finish whatever project it was. We had a carpenter and cabinetmaker there that helped us build the mountains over here we needed to build. They'd throw it at us. They'd send us an idea and we'd develop it. Then we'd give it to the writers to work on it. It was a long, involved process. But, anyway, I worked for them for years.

Then I got hurt on the job here in Sac. Meanwhile the reason I came to Sac was because earlier I had gotten a grant from the Arts Council years earlier and we had started a group called the Concilio de Arte Popular here in Sacramento, and I had been coming up during that time intermittently to meet with the guys, José [Montoya] and all the guys I met. When Luis Valdez was offered the directorship of the California Arts Council—Jerry Brown started the first California Arts Council. Anyway, he called all the Chicano artists that he knew, and we had a secret meeting. He saw the ins and outs, because we had to get grants, so we all got grants. So once we got the grants, we made this Concilio, which was mostly—well, it was all venues, all kinds of artists involved in it, musicians and visual artists and muralists, all these different people that worked for us. We had a publication called *Chisme Arte*. Danny Valdez worked with us, Luis' little brother. It was really great at that time.

There used to be a Centro set up behind Guadalupe Church. The guys had a Centro over there, RCAF, the Royal Chicano Air Force, and we used to just be printing posters and doing artwork and just sharing ideas. It was really a great time.

So with that experience under me, I decided to take this job in Sacramento. It was a real drag moving from Morro Bay on the beach to Sacramento in one way, but the other way, culturally it was really rich, and that's why I came here. I figured I knew all these people here, I knew José, I knew everybody in that picture that we saw earlier, Armando Cid, Max Garcia, all the guys from the RCAF. We all became good friends. Juanishi [Orosco]. I even brought them down during the time that we worked at the Centro. I brought Juanishi and Gina Montoya down with their stuff for the bookstore, from the bookstore down on F Street. I don't know if you know about that, La Raza Bookstore. You know the thing that is now Galeria Posada?

Q Here in Sacramento?

[00:45:22]

De Los Reyes Yeah, here in Sacramento.

Q I have been in the area, but not too familiar with Sacramento, to be honest.

[00:45:27]

De Los Reyes Okay. Well, back in the day, the very first bookstore was down on F Street. Anyway, that's where all the artworkers [unclear] and mural programs, had the best books on Chicanos in the whole country, practically, at the time. Anyway, it's less to being a bookstore and more to being a gallery, and ended up where it is now,

which I don't even know where it is now. But, anyway, so I was really involved with them for a long time.

I got involved with United Farm Workers during that time, worked with Dolores [Huerta] and Cesar [Chavez] and all the people, Paul Chavez. I just met people here that I really probably wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise.

Q So the next question—

[00:46:28]

De Los Reyes [unclear].

Q No, you're okay. Please do not apologize. Were you a Fellow or were you actively involved in the Mexican American Project?

[00:46:40]

De Los Reyes No, I wasn't, no, at all, no, not at all. I only knew what cultural anthropology was because Juan Garcia, my friend who wanted me to go see Corky, became a cultural anthropologist.

Q Oh, wow.

[00:47:01]

De Los Reyes And he studied under a guy that wrote—oh, what's his name? *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Carlos Castaneda. He studied under him at UCLA. We talked a lot about cultural anthropology, but that was the only influence from that whole area.

Q So I wanted to ask you, you mentioned some of your earlier memories of events that attracted you to the Chicano Movement. In your opinion, how did other

Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Latinos react to the term *Chicano* and *Movimiento Chicano*?

[00:47:59]

De Los Reyes How did they react to it?

Q How did they react to those terms?

[00:48:01]

De Los Reyes My stepfather almost punched me when I told him I was Chicano.

Q Wow.

[00:48:06]

De Los Reyes He said, "You are *not*! Don't use that word in my house."

"This is my house too." [laughter] We really used to get into it. But, yeah, I think a lot of us had that experience, you know. I've been Chicano to the bone since I heard the word.

My wife, it's interesting, my wife was raised—she'll be doing an interview later, but she was raised so that in her house she was Mexican, and when she went out, she [unclear] American. So she was really confused. She had that dichotomy.

Q Two lives.

[00:48:43]

De Los Reyes So then she read the poem *I Am Joaquín* by Corky, and she goes, "*That's* what I am. I'm a Chicana." Her dad got really mad, but that's who she was, and she realized it finally. And it's weird, because if she hadn't read this poem of this man that I knew and was security for and was a good friend of mine, you know, we wouldn't have gotten married. We wouldn't have met each other, probably, because

she was in *teatro* in Fullerton. She went to Cal State Fullerton. She was in Teatro Espirito de Aztlán down there, and they traveled, they did tours. Then she was contracted to work at Teatro de la Gente when I met her. She just happened to be there on contract from Teatro Espirito de Aztlán. She was a lead actress in the play that Adrian Vargas was touring at the time.

Q Would you say that your involvement in the Movement changed you personally?

[00:49:43]

De Los Reyes Definitely.

Q Could you elaborate on that?

[00:49:45]

De Los Reyes Well, it made me a poor person. [laughter]

Q Made you a poor person?

[00:49:52]

De Los Reyes A rich person and a poor person all at once, yes. I realize, now that my children have gotten older, that there were some roads I could have taken that would have benefited them a lot better than being a Movement person, but on the other hand, I've got four beautiful children and they're all *danzantes*, Aztec dancers. I consider them all revolutionaries each in their own way. I never pushed that on them. I never told them they had to be this way or one way or another. They all just grew up that way.

I realized at one point, when my son got a little older and my daughter was a little older, especially once they got in *la danza*, that all the pushing I'd done during

the sixties and all the angst I had had about "We have to get it done now. We need revolution now," in the sixties, we really wanted to take over this country back in the sixties. It was serious until we got our ass kicked by the counterintelligence program, by the CIA. People were getting shot left and right, you know, mysteriously. Vans were being run off the road and things were happening to people that were unexplainable, and it made you start looking over your shoulder and being careful who you talk to and all that kind of stuff, and it really slowed the Chicano Movement down to a crawl.

So it pushed me in the direction of doing artwork, studying art seriously, you know. I had worked for the state, I was doing great while I was doing that, and then I lost that job and I was here working as a visual artist and a musician. I worked with José Montoya in a band we had called Casilio [phonetic], and that was what I'd been doing for the last, say, twenty years, fifteen, twenty years, traditional artwork and doing music.

Q Focusing on your art?

[00:51:59]

De Los Reyes Focusing on my art, yeah.

Q What do you do in terms of music? You said you were involved in music.

[00:52:07]

De Los Reyes I play the guitar.

Q Oh, wow!

[00:52:11]

De Los Reyes I played with José. We had Casilio going pretty steady for quite a while, a few years. We almost went on *The Today Show*, was it? I think so. We got called by—we'd been playing, either opening for Jimmy Santiago Baca, the guy that wrote *Blood In Blood Out*, that guy, a great poet. You'd do poetry, José would do poetry, and then we'd play, or we'd play and he'd do poetry. We did the same gigs. We'd open for each other sometimes. Anyway, at one point, Jimmy was really hitting it big, and he called us up and he said that he had carte blanche for whatever kind of setting he wanted during his interview with—I forget the guy's name that was doing the interview, some famous interviewer, some guy that was on *The Today Show*. So he said he wanted us to go up there and do the music, background music, you know.

So we were all excited. José was excited about it, all of us were excited about it, except our *maestro*, Rudy Carrio [phonetic], and he said, "We're not ready."

"We're ready! We practice three days a week, eight hours a day sometimes. We're ready! We're definitely ready! Let us go!" We were all excited about it. But he put the veto on that, so we didn't do it. That was the closest we came to really hitting it big.

Q Wow.

[00:53:46]

De Los Reyes But it was really exciting to be called. We played at—what's that place in Berkeley? La Peña? Famous musicians have been on that stage. It was a really great, great thing, a real honor to play there. People from Cuba, people from Mexico, from all over the world have played on that stage, ended up playing on that stage. It was great.

There was another band there. I forget who they were now, that was supposed to play, and we did our gig, and the best fun you can have is after you play music and you go down in the Green Room. Then you can really play music. [demonstrates] You know, it's done. It's over with, you know. You did the gig, it was successful, and you can relax. Then we started playing the songs we want to play down there. So the other group that was there, I forget who they were now, but they were a pretty famous group, too, at the time, and all the guys wanted to jam with us, you know. So they were down there teaching us stuff, we were teaching them songs. And so they were supposed to go on, and so what they do, they sent the drummer up there to do a solo, and he'd always just want to do a solo, so he was excited. We were still jamming, we were getting drunk down there, jamming, and he was up there doing a solo. We were listening to him. [demonstrates] Anyway, they finally had to go up. It was a great experience, La Peña.

Q I know you mentioned—I'm sorry. Did you—

[00:55:26]

De Los Reyes Did that answer your question?

Q Yes, that was just a personal question. I love music, so I asked you what you did as a musician. I admire music so much.

[00:55:36]

De Los Reyes But my favorite right now is Silvio, Silvio Rodríguez, and guys like that. He's my wife's favorite, really.

Q Say the name again? I'm sorry.

[00:55:46]

De Los Reyes Silvio Rodríguez from Cuba. She would marry him in a minute if he came to the door. She told me, "If Silvio comes to my door, you're gone." [laughter]

Q That's funny.

[00:55:55]

De Los Reyes A lot of musicians that I just love.

Q Thank you.

[00:56:02]

De Los Reyes But I never heard anybody play the recito [phonetic] like Rudy Carrio [phonetic]. That's somebody you should interview if you get a chance.

Q Okay, will do. I know you mentioned women in the *teatro* and that you knew a bit about Dolores Huerta. What role do you believe that Chicanas played in the Movement?

[00:56:22]

De Los Reyes All the Chicanas I knew were really powerful. Jerry Garcia—[laughs] Geri, Corky's wife, Geri Gonzales, was an amazing woman. In Denver, they had no problem. The women had no problem with working in the kitchen. They knew how to cook—we didn't know how to cook—and letting us do whatever we did, you know, but they had no problem with that. When we were on the streets, they were right there next to us. They were throwing blows, they were doing whatever needed to be done at the time. In fact, right now they developed their own school called La Escuela Tlateloico, and that's still in existence. Corky's oldest daughter, Nita Gonzales, is running that at this time. She's a powerful woman. That winter when I went back in '68, we almost—could have been a contender. [laughter] But I went back in '69 for

the first Youth Conference, and she was getting married to this guy. I was like, "Oh, no." [laughter] Broke my heart.

Q Oh.

[00:57:41]

De Los Reyes She was like my wife eventually that I married, and she was a Chicana involved in the Movement. She was really strong. She was Corky's daughter. My partners Luis and Joel had fallen in love with his other two daughters, and the same thing happened to all of us, not exactly, but, you know. I mean, I went back there. She was getting married. Luis and Joel came out there and fell in love with his—I won't mention the daughters, but a couple of his daughters, and find out really they have a rocky relationship with their women. Each one of them managed, before they left for Denver, to get their women pregnant. [laughs] So just when they were dreaming all these dreams about having this relationship out here, found out. Oh, no. [laughter] They had to go back and take care of it. Anyway, they were good men. They did that they had to do, you know. But they forget their dream in Denver.

Anyway, the women were really powerful. Dolores Huerta, if she asked me to jump, I'll jump anywhere. We were on a march one time, we were coming up from Modesto, and Dolores is just unbelievable to me. She's the only woman—the only person I've ever known that has a memory that doesn't quit. We were up in the legislature one time, up in the Assembly, up in the gallery, and people were coming up to talk to her. We were just there supporting her, and people were coming up to talk to her and to meet her. "*Que va bien*?" These senators or assemblymen were coming up to shake her hand. She was going [demonstrates], and they'd walk away.

She went, “Jesus [phonetic] on the run. He voted against us in,” blah, blah, blah. She remembered exactly. “And now he wants me support? No.”

She had her perspective totally, you know. She’s one of the most intelligent, most powerful women I’ve ever met in my life. She’s one of the most powerful people I’ve ever met in my life. It broke my heart when Cesar died, but there was always Dolores. In fact, I thought she would take over the union after he died, but “Artie” was there, I guess, and took over. Arturo Rodriguez took it over, Cesar’s son-in-law.

But Dolores—anyway, I told her, “We’re going to march, Dolores.” And my son, marching with my son Daniel, who works here in D_____’s office with me, and we were marching after Dolores. I have that painting, us carrying that painting of Cesar. Marco Firebaugh was Speaker of the Assembly at the time, was there. She said, “Daniel, come here. I want you to meet this man Marco Firebaugh.”

And I said, “Okay.” We met.

“I want you to do something for me. Marco wants you to do something for him. We’re trying to get an Assembly bill,” 1736, I think, passed at the time. It was a bill just to bring all the parties together that were involved in United Farm Workers and the farmers, get them to meet and mitigate circumstances and meet on a level playing field kind of thing, and that was what the bill was about.

Anyway, Marco said, “Yeah, I’d like you to do a painting for me.”

I go, “Really? When?”

“Well, I’d like it in my office tomorrow, if you could.”

I said, “I thought I was going to sleep all day tomorrow.” We used to walk from Modesto and we were just coming into Sacramento. [laughs]

And Dolores said, “You can do it.”

I said, “Okay, I can do it.” And she told me what to put on it. It was a painting. My daughter S_____, my oldest daughter, and I painted all night long to finish this painting that he had in the north window. The Speaker of the Assembly is on the north side of the Capitol, where we had our vigil going on, and this painting covered his whole window. It said “Governor Davis, Sign This Bill Now!” Sign such-and-such a bill now. And a huge “HUELGO” flag right in the middle of it. And we got it done.

Q You did it!

[01:02:19]

De Los Reyes So we went in the next day. Yeah, we got it done, and that’s because of Dolores. Anybody else, I wouldn’t have got it done. I would have said, “Well, give me some time,” or I’d hemmed and hawed or something. Give me a break, you know? But I couldn’t.

So we managed to get it done, and it looked great. It was up on the north side of the Capitol, this big painting up in the window, you know, with just words and the “HUELGA” eagle, but you could see the eagle from the street. It was really nice.

Dolores, “We’re coming into town. We need a thousand flags printed. Can you do that?” So we’d be out there [demonstrates], printing flags all night, you know. Louis “the Foot” helped us, too, with that. Do you know who Louie “the Foot” is, Louie “the Foot” Gonzalez? He’s one of the Royal Chicano Air Force. He was one of

the silkscreen masters. He was *great*. He still is. He's still around. You should also interview him.

Q Okay. What did you personally initiate or help initiate during the Movement?

[01:02:19]

De Los Reyes That's what I was trying to think about. Like I said, I was a founding member of the Academia del Arte Chicano de Aztlán. That was in Watsonville. We set that up.

Q Say that one more time.

[01:03:41]

De Los Reyes Academia del Arte Chicano de Aztlán.

Q Thank you.

[01:03:51]

De Los Reyes We set that up, and it had a huge impact on the Watsonville community, on the Mexican community there, painting [unclear] all over town, and gave me a sense of pride. The murals I painted were inside a building called La Corichon [phonetic], and what La Corichon was, was a building where—it was just like a huge warehouse building. It was a coalition of all the people who did community work. D_____ was one that did housing. They had people working for CAMP, the migrant program. Anyway, they had all these buildings there. They all had offices in there, but they also had a lot of sitting area where people had to come and wait for the services that were being given there. They had people help them fill

out Food Stamp stuff. Anything you could think of was in that building, the coalition there.

So I looked at that place and I said, "Gosh, you must be bored stiff sitting inside here." So I figured, "That's going to be my first painting." So I just went in and I started painting [Spanish] on the wall, and people were getting interested. I started doing stuff here and [unclear] here. Then I decided to paint a couple of murals.

So I painted one mural that was there. It was a painting of—I went up in a friend of mine's office and did sketches of the mountains behind Watsonville, got all the tree section where the valleys and hills were. the hills, what the people, the *campesinos* who were working there in the fields would see as they were working in the fields, so they would recognize, right? So I painted that for background, had *campesinos* working in the field right in the front, and on the left side of him, a [unclear] to represent the old culture. Right there I had a *campesino* holding his son, who was crying, to represent "What's going on, Dad? Why are we suffering the way we're suffering? Why do we have to do this backbreaking work we always have?"

Anyway, coming from the right-hand side was a painting of Emiliano Zapata on horseback, holding a big banner that said "La Tierra es de Quien la Trabaja," a red, white, and green banner. Once I put that up there, everybody just loved it, because everybody worked so hard there in the fields. They got nothing.

While I was doing that, I got stuck at one point and I went over and finished another mural, the one I've got photographs here of. Anyway, it was a large—the one mural I worked on that I was telling you about took me a year, the one I did across the way took me a couple of months, maybe, worked really fast. I was excited not to be

doing that one. [laughs] Once I got the basic thing up there, I knew I had to elaborate on it, do something more on it, but I didn't know what. One of the *campesinos* out in the field, he's, like, wiping his brow and he's looking up and he's looking at Zapata and what he's saying on the banner. Another guy's sort of pointing over, telling his friend, "Hey, look," like that. It was a nice mural.

Q That's awesome.

[01:07:27]

De Los Reyes It fell down during the San Andreas earthquake.

Q Oh! Sorry.

[01:07:30]

De Los Reyes That's when I was told the whole building came down. I don't know if anybody saved the mural or if the guy still has them or what. I don't know. But all my murals got taken away, I think. I think there's one I did for the Biblioteca Latinoamericana in San Jose. I think they still have it in their archives someplace, I was told. At one point, they wanted me to repaint it, but the guy just couldn't afford it, so I never did do it. But I did a long thing that went in the Biblioteca for years.

I did a painting in Davenport at Head Start Building that was a 900-square-foot mural, wrapped around the building, and that was one of those portable buildings. Eventually somebody sold the building and I went down to take photographs of my mural, because I only had a few photographs of it. And it was gone.

Q Gosh!

[01:08:28]

De Los Reyes I said, "What happened?"

My partner was [unclear]. He goes, "I saw your mural going down the street on one of those moving trucks the other day." [laughter]

Q Just moving all of it. [laughs]

[01:08:41]

De Los Reyes Yeah. So I never did—I got, I think, a couple of Polaroids of it is all. But not much history there.

Anyway, did that. I was one of the founding members of the Black Berets.

Q Black?

[01:09:02]

De Los Reyes The Black Berets. Actually, that came on a little later, but one of the early members. Presently I'm one of the members of the Elders Council for the Black Berets.

Q Could you describe some of the impacts that your involvement with the Movement had on your career?

[01:09:22]

De Los Reyes My career?

Q Yes.

[01:09:23]

De Los Reyes If it hadn't been for the Movement, I wouldn't have developed my art. I wouldn't have seen the need to. I think I would haven't have seen a need to. I developed my artwork. I started painting and learning how to paint and taking it seriously for the Movement, to be a Chicano muralist. I didn't want to do this kind of

painting [demonstrates]. I didn't really like it. I wanted to do public art. That's all I painted.

Also during that period, in Watsonville I painted a mural for the United Farm Workers' office that was right across the bridge in Pajaro, near Watsonville, and it was against 14, [unclear] 14? I forget. Anyways, I painted a mural about the short-handle hoe over there. I did a couple of murals in Watsonville over there on that side of the bridge in Monterey County.

Yeah, I wouldn't have even tried to—when I was painting for me, I really just jacked around, you know, but when I was painting for my people, I wanted to get it down. I wanted to get it straight. I wanted everybody to be able to be proud of what they looked at, be proud of what they saw and say, "A Chicano artist did that. Somebody we know that's our people did that." And people would come up from [unclear] and say [Spanish].

I'd be like, "Okay." [laughter]

E: "I'll see what I can do." [laughs]

[01:10:59]

De Los Reyes That's why I was doing public art, so they could tell me what was up. I had one lady come up to me in Watsonville, this White lady, when I was painting this mural that kind of represented Aztlán, the roots were going down under the ground, had Aztec things under the ground. Anyway, she came up to me, she goes, "That looks like a piece of *shit*." Just like that. [laughs]

I said, "Damn! Really? That bad?"

"Just terrible."

I said, “Show me what to do.” And I changed it as much as I could for her, you know. I could only do so much. [laughter] I got a lot of input, and I took it all seriously, because I was just like them, you know. We’re all the same. I was just trying to make my art as good as I could, you know.

Eventually, when I got married—I never used to sign my paintings. My paintings like this [demonstrates], my small paintings or canvas paintings, I used to produce them but I never would sign them. I’d just put a little circle within a circle, a symbol I used. I’d put it in the corner sometimes. Then I got married, and my wife said, “You’ve got to start signing this stuff, because you’re going to have kids. We’re going to have your artwork, and one of these days you’re going to pass away and we’re going to sell this shit.” [laughter] Anyway, she didn’t put it like that. But they do now, they kid around me now, now that I’m ready.

Q Gosh.

[01:12:28]

De Los Reyes Now that I’m getting the urge. But, yeah, these are part of the paintings I’m going to leave to my family. These are not being sold ever.

Q Very beautiful paintings.

[01:12:39]

De Los Reyes I’ve got a body of work. Since I had the stroke, I had it nine years ago, and since I had that stroke, I haven’t been painting or doing much artwork. I stopped because I had a big deficit in my memory. And when you’re painting, it’s really terrible to lose your place while you’re painting. I had my studio and I didn’t allow the kids to come in there ever or even knock on the door. I go, okay, if I’m painting,

concentrating real hard and they knock on the door, I'd be, "What do you want, *mijo*?" Then I go back. "Where was I?" And I'd scramble and try to get it back. It would take a while.

But with this memory thing, I did some sketches and I didn't like them. I did some things. I didn't do much. I stopped right away, because I never learned how to pain formally. I never went to art school. I never did anything, never took any classes. I took sculpture classes in wood sculpture, but that's the only thing I did for formal education, as far as art goes. So it's very personal for me. It's always been something of mine. It's hard to sell painting. It's really hard for me to sell paintings, you know.

So, anyway, I didn't want to take a chance that I didn't have that anymore, so I didn't paint. I didn't try to paint. Meanwhile, I developed cataracts in my eyes and I started to see really bad, and it was really becoming a downhill slope as far as artwork goes. But recently I got cataract surgery on both eyes, and I'm *amazed* by how much I can see now, and I can read books, I can sketch, I can do all this stuff. So I'm going to start painting. I've started sketching a painting again, and I'll start producing more of a body of work pretty soon.

Q That's amazing. I can barely do a stick figure, let alone write properly, like a prescription. [laughs]

[01:14:42]

De Los Reyes Don't stop. Just practice. You know, I taught a lot of kids how to paint. I do classes for kids, and I'd show them one thing about drawing. For me, in order to paint, you have to be able to see what you're looking at, okay? So I'd have them put a cup or some simple object in front of them, and just get ten pieces of paper, just like

this [demonstrates], and spend like a minute, draw it, draw it. Okay, don't look at it. Draw it. Look at it while you're drawing it and turn it over. Then now, okay, draw the same thing over again, turn it over. Draw it in ten minutes. In ten minutes, by the time you got to the last cup, you look at their work from the first cup to the last cup, and the last cup was pretty good, looked like a cup, looks like it has shadow, looks like it has something on it, you know. I'd tell them about the light sources, think about that, think about how round things are, think about what all was going on. But they're the ones who are looking at the cup and drawing it, and if they can see it, I tell them, "If you can see it, you can draw it."

So if you want to just try that sometime, just get some simple object and draw it, then draw it again, draw it again, draw it again, ten of them on just paper, and see how good the end one is. Practice and seeing what you're looking at is, I think, what makes a good artist.

Q Looking back at your experience in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that were left unresolved?

[01:16:10]

De Los Reyes Oh, man, that's a really touchy subject.

[recorder turned off]

Q Looking back at your experience in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that were left unresolved?

[01:16:31]

De Los Reyes Yes. The issue of education is the biggest issue I have with this state and this country. I look at people like Juan Garcia, they came from the fields in

Fresno and there's now Dr. Juan Garcia. We have Fernando Torres [phonetic], same thing, EOP Program, affirmative action got him in school, and he's Dr. Fernando Torres. He's dean of sociology and international affairs down at UCLA now. And all these guys I knew that continued their education, were picked randomly and brought into the school system and into the educational system, and are so successful and so brilliant and so just amazing in what they do.

And I look around me and I see these Chicanitos, you know, *everywhere*, and it breaks my heart, you know, because affirmative action got bashed. Prop 13 gutted all the educational programs that were going on for Chicanos. Prop 13 was like a mandate from hell. I saw the changes like that [snaps fingers] in the educational system. So all these kids, they don't have a choice of what they can do, where they can go to school, you know. Maybe they don't take school seriously, but then they want to go to college. Well, where's the slots to let them go to college? Let them go to college and try, because they might be the next Einstein. They might be *brilliant.* They might be the person to solve cancer, all these kids running around. My daughter went to Cuba, got her medical degree.

Q Wow.

[01:18:30]

De Los Reyes She had to go to Cuba to get it. We couldn't afford to send her to college here, but she got it. She persevered six years, took her down there, to study medicine, but she's got it, you know. I like to think she's brilliant and something special.

My other daughter, S_____, works for the state now. I pressured her to get her master's and her doctorate, and she's resisted. She was very disillusioned by school. She got her B.A., but she got it quick. Well, I had told her personally that when they wanted to go out, about fifteen, sixteen, they started wanting to go out, I said, "Well, you can go out when you're thirty-two or when you graduate from college, whichever comes first. That's when you can start dating." And turned out, that's what they did. [laughter] Really, my daughter, her and her second boyfriend got married. She's happily married now. She's got a baby that's two years old. She's got her second one coming. But I think she was thirty-one when she got married. But they got their high school years, and they went to college and got that done pretty quick.

Q Education.

[01:20:03]

De Los Reyes But that's my real, is seeing how the powers-that-be don't understand how important it is to use every resource for every child in this country.

As far as the things that I wanted to do, there was a point in my life when I felt very sad and disillusioned about the revolution that never came, you know, and I look at things I'd written and poetry. I used to have scads of poetry and things that were revolutionary, writings and things, and it makes me really sad that we couldn't get it done. But then I saw my children coming up and I started realizing that I didn't have to do it all. It goes by generations. Generations, as long as they keep their head on straight, keep their shoulders on straight, they know that there's somebody out there who's not helping them get by, they have to work twice as hard to get by, work twice as hard.

That's how we used to teach kids in the EOP Program at San Jose State when we used to recruit them. We'd have a book. They'd read it. "I don't understand anything it's saying."

"Let's read it again. Let's read it together. If we have to read it five times, we'll read it and we'll get you to understand what it said."

It's like that drawing lesson, you know. As long as you read it enough, eventually you'll understand it. And that's what it takes because these people—look at all these *gabachos*, they're running around, they've had their education handed to them on a silver platter. They've been geared for that education all their life, you know. There's no doubt they were going to go to school. You came to school on an affirmative action EOP Program that didn't exist, now doesn't exist anymore because of [*Regents of the University of California v.*] *Bakke* and [UC] Davis. But if you have to work twice as hard, three times as hard, it's okay, you know. They don't, because they've been taught how to speak this way, they've been taught to read these things. Their education was better. They were given better schools.

I remember in Half Moon Bay, I never got an A or any kind of help during Algebra 2, during the difficulties I had in certain things. I had to really struggle. I did well, but it was a struggle. It was really a struggle. I mean, I had racism. In '63, I decided I was against the Vietnam War and I started petitioning people at the school about the Vietnam War. I got shit, had a real hard time the last couple of years of high school. Guys just couldn't wait to go, you know. The same guys came back in a box. Terrible.

Q Next question.

[01:23:27]

De Los Reyes Did I answer your question?

Q Yes.

[01:23:27]

De Los Reyes That's my main thing I hate, that and the way the police have created their mob, their gang, their unquestioned ability to just shoot us down or take us at random whenever they want, you know. It's just gotten to a point where it's ridiculous. I've been handcuffed to a fence with my mother-in-law and my baby and my wife and my son in the car. I had a '68 Chevy. I always wanted a '68 Chevy, but after I got that car, I never had a ticket till I got that car. I bought it here in town from a friend who owned it, one of the old RCAF guys. I got pulled over, I got tickets. I finally just parked it and sold it. "Mexican while driving," you know. It was terrible. They used every excuse in the book to pull me over. At one point, my license got suspended, I got so many tickets. I just said, "I can't live like this. I can't drive my car anywhere."

I also had a '67 Volkswagen, a van I used to drive. That's when I came up here. I had that since '68. I was planning to be buried in it, but I just sold it. [laughter]

But, yeah, I feel really sad about that. I used to be a park ranger, so I know what enforcement's about, and it's not about what they're doing. It's about compliance. It's not about forcing people. If you could teach somebody that they're not supposed to climb this rock because there's a peregrine falcon nest up there and it's endangered and we don't want it to fly away and not come back, that's why you can't climb the rock, and they understand and they walk away. You've done

something. But if they climb the rock and you arrest them and bring them down and they have got something on their record, they're going to hate the rangers, they're going to hate the system. They haven't learned anything but learn how to get bail. So I never arrested anybody when I was a ranger. Well, one guy, but that's all. Chased him down and caught him.

But, I mean, enforcement, it's really easy to get caught up in that. To me, it's like another gang. It's like Sureños and Norteños. Kids get caught up in this thing because they have nothing else, you know. My son started to get caught up in that, and I grabbed him quick, threw everything red out of his closet. Took me a long time to catch on to what he was doing, but we slapped the shit out of him. [laughter] Told him, "Hey, I'm from East L.A., your mom's from East L.A. You're Sureños by blood."

"No, I'm not!" [laughter]

"Yes, you are." We got physical, him and I, you know. But I wasn't having it. He finally let it go, understood what was going on. My daughters always thought it was ridiculous.

But these kids have nothing else, you know. The kids in East L.A., they would go in a gang in Little Valley, where I was from, a gang, the little [unclear] my age, you know, and they were coming up and they were going to get jumped in, you know, and it was all about having a family, having somebody watch your back, having something to do, having somebody that you could be with that could actually—it wasn't about drive-bys and killing other people and all this stuff that it's developed into. It was about something different.

And it wouldn't be what it is now if the kids had something to do, if they had a chance to go to school, if they had a chance to get a job. They don't even have shop classes anymore. You can't learn how to be a carpenter. You can't learn how to be anything, a mechanic anymore in high school. You can't get a foot in anywhere. It's all being outsourced. It's all being sent—all the jobs that you used to be able to count on for people just coming out with a high school education are gone. If you can't use a computer, you can't get a job. You can't fill out an application without computer skills.

Q Right.

[01:28:00]

De Los Reyes And they don't always teach that, certain schools in this town in Oak Park and other places. My wife and I did a master program for—I guess it was the Corcoran Arts Council and the Crocker Art Museum. There was a program where we went around town and taught kids how to make masks out of paper or whatever they wanted to use, and it was strictly our program. The teachers would come in and they'd say—one kid made a mask with a big tongue hanging out and all this, you know, like mocking the teacher, kind of, and the teacher got mad and said, "You throw that out."

I said, "Wait a minute. Hold it, hold it. Stop. This is our class. You're not the teacher today. We are. You've got to leave," and kicked him out. We had already arranged with the principal that we have carte blanche while we're in that class, you know.

We were supposed to pick out three or four masks from each group. We went to David Lubin School, we went to all these schools in all parts of town here, and the Oak Ridge School in Oak Park was really sad. They didn't have even a pair of scissors to use. They had one pair of scissors for the class. Well, what we did in the interim, going to all these other places, some of them had all kinds of resources to use, and we just put them in our—would take them with us, took them to the classes of other schools that didn't have that stuff, and leave them there. We hooked up Oak Ridge with all kinds of masks and stuff.

But we were supposed to pick out two or three masks from each school to put in the Crocker Art Museum. I couldn't do that. All these little kids were going to be disappointed. So we put every mask that we made in the Crocker, and all the kids came, brought their parents. They were all proud. It was great. Like at David Lubin, they have a deaf program, and they were wonderful kids. The kids at Oak Park did the most creative masks out of all of them. The best artists were in the poorer school, once they had the resources. Genius.

Q Yeah.

[01:30:27]

De Los Reyes Genius ignored. That's my biggest lament. And what's going on with the police is just insane. Again, it doesn't stop. Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, this guy who just got killed, broken back. The little boy that got shot with the because gun was twelve years old. The woman that—it just goes on and on, you know. It doesn't stop, it doesn't stop, it doesn't stop. Something's got to be done. I don't know what it is, but it brings that old revolutionary blood get boiling, you know.

Q Right. [laughs]

[01:31:15]

De Los Reyes So that's some of the things that I see that were undone, you know. The Chicano Movement, you know, I think the Chicano Movement could have been stronger, could have developed more. I saw it drift into the whole feminist area. That was good and bad at the same time, because it kind of—the women in Denver were cohesive with the men. If we needed a cook, it didn't matter; they were dignified when they were cooking. They were together. If something else was going on, they were political. Whatever it was, they were down for it, you know. But here seemed like the Feminist Movement had a "divide and conquer" kind of—divide and just—seemed like to me it diminished the Chicano Movement, the *mujeres de Aztlán*, got shafted a little bit. I hope that doesn't sound wrong, but, you know, it seems like that's what happened.

Q Again, it's your take.

[01:32:24]

De Los Reyes Pardon?

Q Again, it's your take. You know what you believed were some of the [unclear].

[01:32:31]

De Los Reyes Yeah. I wish that there was some way that what they learned in Denver could be brought over here, because it's really beautiful to watch. That school they have in Denver, [unclear], the classes start out as Olmeca, Chichimeca, second grade, Yaqui. Every class, they learn the culture of that name. Like the Olmeca, they teach

kids in kindergarten about Olmeca. In first grade, they teach them all they can about Olmeca. Third grade, they teach them, and like that. They call them [Spanish], and all the kids, at the end of the year, they do a play about their culture.

Q Oh, wow.

[01:33:11]

De Los Reyes And they're Montessori Schools, so they're also really independent children, real strong, real strong. And that's still run by the [unclear]. That's the last remnant of [unclear], but it's really beautiful. It's a really beautiful project.

Q Well, you were talking about Denver. Can you describe how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento or where you lived? How did the Chicano Movement impact community life here in Sacramento, in other words?

[01:33:45]

De Los Reyes Well, you know, when I first came to Sacramento, when we moved to Sacramento, there used to be every 16th and every Cinco de Mayo we had *huge* events at the park. The Washington Neighborhood Center was cooking. We did stuff there all the time. The RCAF was really busy showing artwork. It was a really productive, good time, and I think the reason we stayed in Sacramento so long, because I only left [unclear] for a while, but it's been thirty-some years now, and I never wanted to live in the city. I wanted to live by the ocean. I got used to it. But living here, it's been the richest cultural and community feeling I've ever had. There's a lot of rich culture here, a lot of *Chicanismo* here. That's a word we used to use back in the day, *Chicanismo*, and it really needs to be used some more, because it really gives people

a sense of family, I think, [Spanish], *Chicanismo*, [Spanish]. Those words you don't hear too much anymore, but they're really important.

Q You mentioned a couple of people earlier as far as activists that you said we should interview, but some of the activists have passed on. If you had to identify an individual or individuals that you feel had an impact on the Movement, who would you say?

[01:35:34]

De Los Reyes Personally?

Q Yeah, that have passed on, whether you know them or not, just significant individuals who have passed on that contributed to the Movement that you feel are significant to mention.

[01:35:46]

De Los Reyes Armando Cid. Mainly for me, José Montoya.

Q I'm sorry. Armando who?

[01:35:57]

De Los Reyes Armando Cid, a great artist, really fantastic artist. Juan Cervantes, he painted the right side of the mural that's in Southside Park, the one with the flag and the [unclear]. He painted that part. *Beautiful* artist, wonderful artist.

Montoya and I were good friends. We used to go to gigs. I used to drive because he had gout sometimes, and I would volunteer to drive and we'd be talking all the time. We used to drive to practice together all the time, used to hang out together all the time. We used to do little things on the side when Rudy was in Washington, because Rudy wanted us to only practice things we were going to do for

gigs, and we wanted to practice a few other things. We'd learn songs on the side and take them to Rudy. "Look at this! [Spanish]!" And we'd harmonize.

He goes, "We're not doing that. That's not part of our gig. I don't want to hear that shit." [laughter]

But José and I were good, good friends, yeah. It really hurt me when he passed.

Other people. Gosh, there's so many. Corky, I mean, that's not from here, but Corky and Cesar passing really struck me hard. Gosh. Ricardo Favela taught at Sac State. He was a hell of an artist.

Phil Goldberg was a Chicano poet. He was Jewish, but he was a Chicano poet. He's my *compadre*. He's my son's *niño*. He passed on. I really miss him a lot. He was a musician, a poet, a writer, a songwriter, hell of a dancer, and just all-around straight-up Chicano. His son did his *Juaras* [phonetic]. That's the dance ceremony for men when they're coming of age, called *Juaras*. For women, *Shilonen* [phonetic], when they're coming of age. Well, when they do that, they have to pick a *niño* and *niña*. Well, my son picked Phil Goldberg to be his *niño*, and Phil goes to my son, "You know I'm White, right?"

He goes, "You're not White." [laughter] He picked Phil. Phil was a great guy. He always wrote poems about the marches, about the Movement, about the Movement here in Sacramento, lots of stuff. I have recordings of his poetry that are all about Aztlán and about our struggle.

You guys make me proud. Looking at you guys and listening to you, and seeing how composed you are, how just beautiful you're carrying yourself and doing

this, I know you're getting educated, you know. That's why I don't worry so much. [unclear] my worries about the revolution dying or the revolution passing. Yeah, it's just changed faces a little bit and we're getting a little smarter about how to do it, and eventually I think we'll get our own.

Q Thank you.

[01:39:44]

De Los Reyes Because of you guys.

Q Appreciate it. It's exciting. When you were mentioning Corky earlier, I can only imagine how it might have been for you to work with him, what it must have felt like.

[01:40:00]

De Los Reyes Great.

Q Because I've only read about him and only seen his pictures and books and novels. I think it's amazing, and it's amazing to be in your presence, one of the activists—

[01:40:12]

De Los Reyes Oh, thank you.

Q —and if it wasn't for our professor, I wouldn't have imagined having the opportunity and honor to be here in front of you today.

[01:40:20]

De Los Reyes Well, thanks a lot.

Q Of course. No, thank you for your time and coming out of your way to do this.

[01:40:26]

De Los Reyes Yeah, I was really nervous about this. [laughs]

Q I know, and it's personal too. It's a lot.

[01:40:30]

De Los Reyes I wasn't nervous until I saw the final question. I said, "This was somebody's final." [laughs] Now I have to do a final. So I started writing down the answers. I was like, "Oh, man."

Q We appreciate it.

[01:40:45]

De Los Reyes But I was kind of relieved it wasn't difficult. It's really been pleasant.

Q I'm going to do the final stretch, though, just a couple more questions and then you're free. [laughs]

[01:40:55]

De Los Reyes I'll try not to get sideways on you.

Q Not to get your sidetracked. I'm sorry. Last stretch.

I know you had mentioned, like, current challenges you see as, like, education and, like, the police stuff. Do you see yourself as staying involved in meeting these challenges?

[01:41:13]

De Los Reyes Yeah, yeah, I do, yeah. I still do a lot of writing and I work in the community as much as I can. I used to work with Dolores a lot, Dolores Huerta. She was our homie. In fact, that's how I got my son through high school. He'd gotten in fights at school, and the last chance he had was to go to school called America's

Choice that was run by—the principal was Ricardo Flores [phonetic], and he wouldn't let him in. He was kind of like—and so we had Dolores to write a letter of recommendation for Br____ because he always worked with her a lot, my son had. So she said, "This boy has been working with me since he was eight years old, and has always been involved in the community and involved in the Movement." And she wrote this letter.

He took it to school with a bunch of other letters from people, but that was the main one. Mr. Flores said, "I'm not letting you in. This is one of my heroes, this woman. How could you write a letter and falsify her signature on this note? That's really the worst you can do. I'm not letting you in this school. You're a liar."

And he came from school and he told me that. I called Dolores. "Hey, Dolores, let me tell you what happened to Br____ on that thing on going to school."

She called up Mr. Flores immediately after that and chewed his ass out.

Q Oh, man.

[01:42:50]

De Los Reyes He apologized left and right. He said, "Daniel can come to school tomorrow." [laughter]

Q Oh, my goodness.

[01:42:58]

De Los Reyes Otherwise, he wouldn't have got through high school. That was his last chance.

What was the question? I'm sorry.

Q Oh, no. If you just saw yourself staying involved with meeting the challenges.

[01:43:11]

De Los Reyes I feel like I'm still involved, yes. I'll die involved. That's how I feel.

Q Well, we've made it through all the questions, but if there was anything else you'd like to say?

[01:43:26]

De Los Reyes Just, you know, try to think about that. [Spanish]. Try to think about that *Chicanismo,* that old feeling that we used to have all the time, that we used to support everybody. I mean, I remember during the EOP Program, we had kids there that came in that had got into fights. I'd get in between. "You guys are brothers. You shouldn't be fighting." I got punched a few times doing that, you know, in the middle of them, but I wouldn't let them fight, and telling them, "You guys are [Spanish]. We got somebody else to fight. You want to fight? Go fight the man. Go fight the guy that wouldn't let you get into school without the EOP Program. Let's remember who to focus on here. Let's get your education done. Then you can fight." That cohesiveness, I want to see a lot of it. I want to see more of it. I want to do what I can to make it happen, you know.

Like I said, I'm never going to change my feelings about what I feel about this country or how it just devastated our people and tries to continue doing so, and I'll never give up trying to change that. We need every soul we can trying to change that, trying to fight that, trying to make it not happen, trying to help every child get up,

give them encouragement, give them whatever we can to help them. It doesn't stop. But it starts with the children.

Q That's true.

[01:45:02]

De Los Reyes It ends with us old men. [laughs]

Q Well, that concludes our interview. Thank you.

[End of interview]