

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education  
Oral History Project

**Miguel Escobedo**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Senon Valadez  
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Transcription by Guadalupe Manzo Rodríguez and Technitype Transcripts

**Valadez** For the record, please state your full name.

[00:00:09]

**Escobedo** Miguel Escobedo.

**Valadez** Your birthdate?

[00:00:12]

**Escobedo** 6/16/54.

**Valadez** Are you married?

[00:00:15]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** Children?

[00:00:18]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** What are their ages, if you can tell us?

[00:00:22]

**Escobedo** All the way from eighteen months to thirty-three years old.

**Valadez** Eighteen months to thirty-three? All right! [laughter]

[00:00:28]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** You're a young man. [laughter] So where were you born and raised?

[00:00:36]

**Escobedo** I was born in Woodland, California, and raised in Sacramento.

**Valadez** We're trying to connect with Woodland, Stockton, Davis, pull them all into what we're doing here.

[00:00:53]

**Escobedo** That's great.

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

[00:00:57]

**Escobedo** My father was from Zacatecas. He came here, worked the fields, the orchards, Orange County, and the railroad, and eventually bought his own business, pool hall. Skid Road back then where Old Sac is, back then was called Skid Road, and he had a pool hall called the Tijuana Pool Hall, and that was his business for a while. My mother was just a homemaker from Nevada.

**Valadez** Did you work there?

[00:01:27]

**Escobedo** No, that was just as a youngster, five years old, would deliver his lunch.

**Valadez** Brothers and sisters?

[00:01:40]

**Escobedo** Yes, I have a brother and a sister, still alive.

**Valadez** In the Sacramento area?

[00:01:46]

**Escobedo** One's in Alameda. My brother's in Alameda, and my sister's in Texas, Dallas.

**Valadez** Please describe your experiences as a child or a youth, something about your neighborhood, where you were growing up.

[00:02:05]

**Escobedo** I grew up around Southside Park, around 5<sup>th</sup> and O Street, back a couple blocks from—used to be a mortuary. What was that, Clumps Mortuary? About three blocks from the Capitol. Back then there was a lot of housing back around there. Went to Lincoln Junior High School for a while, but we moved around a lot in Sacramento. My father always, he would buy a business, sell it, go back to work, buy another business, go back to work, and that was his routine, basically. Most of my life I grew up downtown Sacramento.

**Valadez** How about schools you went to?

[00:03:00]

**Escobedo** The first one was Lincoln Elementary, Junior High. Then I went to Fremont Elementary. It was on, what was it, 25<sup>th</sup> and N Street, I believe. Then I went to Sutter Middle School. That was on I Street, Alhambra and I. Then I went to Sac High for about ten days and got expelled. So I ended up back at Lincoln as a continuation school. They turned it into a continuation school. That's about as much of high school I had.

**Valadez** When did you come here Sacramento City?

[00:03:51]

**Escobedo** When I was about eighteen, old enough. Yeah, eighteen. Came here for two semesters and then—

**Valadez** Did you go into the service?

[00:03:59]

**Escobedo** No, no, I didn't believe in—during that time was Vietnam time, and we were against the war because it was mostly—it wasn't right. We didn't feel it was right. The things that was going on, just like anything else, we felt that they weren't treating the Chicanos right, so why should we go over there and fight for some country that didn't treat us with respect? Because as a child growing up, I always had this thing, how we were treated by the Anglos. I remember in elementary, my name was Miguel and they made me spell my name as Michael. All these years until I was a teenager, I always thought my name was Michael because of the school, the way they—

**Valadez** Changed the name.

[00:05:04]

**Escobedo** Changed my name. One day I ran into my birth certificate. I said, “Hey.” I asked my mother, “Hey, I never knew my name was Miguel.”

She goes, “Oh, yeah.” It was something I never knew, but that was part of the way life was back then.

**Valadez** So, college. You went from City to State?

[00:05:29]

**Escobedo** Yeah, I went to State for a couple semesters. Then my father bought another business and he wanted me to help him with the business, so pretty much I just dropped out of school to help my dad run a business.

**Valadez** So then question number three is asking about whether you were a Fellow or Felito or in EOP Program. You weren't in any of those programs?

[00:05:59]

**Escobedo** When I was at Sac State?

**Valadez** Uh-huh.

[00:06:02]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah. I was in the MEChA for a semester or two.

**Valadez** Then you dropped out to go to work?

[00:06:11]

**Escobedo** Yeah, go to work, helped my dad run the business.

**Valadez** The idea is that when you are at school or for many people when they were at school they studied anthropology or they studied courses that had information about culture and the significance of culture. Had you had somewhere along the way people talk to you about the importance of culture or the significance of culture?

[00:06:45]

**Escobedo** Yeah, during my high school years, I came across this teacher and she gave me a book. She goes, "Maybe you might like this book." It was a book about Benito Juarez, and I pretty much started reading it, got interested in what was going on. Then during that time, we came across a lot of issues regarding—like Chicano Studies, there were no Chicano Studies of those things.

At that time I remember there was a bunch of us high school kids, all Chicanos, we heard that there was walkouts going out in East L.A. and stuff like that, so we followed suit and we did a walkout here in Sacramento at that time. I believe I was, like, fifteen at the time. So we went to about five different schools. We went to McClatchy, Hiram Johnson. From Sac High, went to McClatchy, Johnson High, Grant High, and back then it was North del Rio. We all caravanned from school to school to school.

Then from there we went to the Unified School District and we demanded that we have Ethnic Studies, because we also gathered—at the time, Blacks were following us, too, in this caravan, and they were coming up with—they wanted Ethnic Studies also, because at that time we didn't have no Ethnic Studies.

So they had this conference there at the school district, and I believe the superintendent was there and some other board members were there. I don't remember their names because it was so long ago, but I remember that we were a pretty loud group in there. Eventually, they started putting in Chicano Studies in high schools.

**Valadez**      Forced the issue.

[00:08:53]

**Escobedo**      Yes, yes.

**Valadez**      What was the first instance or the first major event that got you interested or looking at the Chicano Movement, this thing going on?

[00:09:05]

**Escobedo** Well, I think it was some friends. I think it was one of the city councilmen, the first city councilman, Ferrales?

**Valadez** Ferrales, yeah.

**Escobedo** Yeah, Manuel Ferrales. I'd never done this before. We were going precinct walking, me and a group of ten guys, about ten, about a dozen or so. At that time, they got me involved. Then they got me involved with picketing city hall and picketing Safeway for the farmworkers. As a youngster, everything just rolled from there.

**Valadez** You did picketing with Safeway?

[00:09:52]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** And what other places?

[00:09:55]

**Escobedo** Ronald Reagan's house when he lived in the forties, Fabulous Forties.

**Valadez** Candle vigil?

[00:10:04]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** I was there. I remember that. We were watching the guardhouse that was—

[00:10:10]

**Escobedo** Yeah, yeah. Right there in the corner on the right? Yeah, they had, like, a little camera right there.

**Valadez** The word *Chicano* hit different ways different people. What's your experience with it?

[00:10:23]

**Escobedo** Well, my father always used the word *Chicano*, even though he was from Zacatecas, so for me, it was always common, common to hear it, but from my impression from other people, it was more of a militant phrase to other people. It was like a threat to them. But in my household, my father used that all the time, the phrase *Chicanos*. So to me it was just second nature.

**Valadez** Were you aware of the Civil Rights Movement before the Chicano Movement or was that after?

[00:11:06]

**Escobedo** That was pretty much after. I mean, I'd seen, like, on the news and things, my father used to watch the news and I used to sit there and watch it with him, but I didn't come up aware about it till after the Chicano Movement started.

**Valadez** Do you remember individual events that were part of that civil rights?

[00:11:28]

**Escobedo** Not really, not really with the civil rights. Because we were pretty much—as a young teenager, we joined the Brown Berets back then, so we were really focused on Chicano issues.

**Valadez** In high school? Did you join the Berets then?

[00:11:51]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** So you were a Junior Beret?



[00:11:53]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** A Junior Brown Beret. You're the first one, the first one that we've interviewed that came in as a Junior Brown Beret. That's great.

[00:12:03]

**Escobedo** Oh, wow.

**Valadez** We were looking for you all this time. [laughs] That's good. Who brought you in?

[00:12:12]

**Escobedo** Ricardo Macias. I don't know if you remember him.

**Valadez** Yeah, Ricardo Macias.

[00:12:20]

**Escobedo** Yeah, Ricardo Macias. There were, like, Joe Mercado, Joe Isaac, Joe Martel. There was Charlie Garcia, he was the older Brown Beret, and a few other—there was basically about a good twenty of us.

**Valadez** Martel and all those, they're all gone?

[00:12:47]

**Escobedo** Yeah, drugs took them. That's sad.

**Valadez** Yeah. I liked Joe Martel.

[00:12:51]

**Escobedo** He was pretty smart.

**Valadez** The other—

[00:12:59]

**Escobedo** Joe Mercado?

**Valadez** Mercado.

[00:13:01]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** Is that the one whose dad had a restaurant over on Franklin?

[00:13:06]

**Escobedo** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Valadez** Yeah, he looked like he was going to make it.

[00:13:11]

**Escobedo** They were pretty sharp guys, but the bad thing about it is they started hanging around with an older guy and he was into drugs and they got him hooked on heroin. That was a sad thing.

**Valadez** Do you think the Chicano Movement changed you personally?

[00:13:34]

**Escobedo** Yeah, it did. It really did.

**Valadez** Like in what ways?

[00:13:39]

**Escobedo** It made me see a wider view of the world, made me more conscious on other things happening in other countries, how people lived in poverty and how they were treated by their own government, by the police, by different military governments and so on, and how people are just ugly. It made me see that real clearly.

**Valadez** How about when you were getting involved in this, you saw Chicanas getting involved or young Mexican American women getting involved. What role did they play?

[00:14:24]

**Escobedo** They were right there.

**Valadez** How did you react to that?

[00:14:27]

**Escobedo** They were pretty much right there, right in the front lines with the guys. There was no difference. We didn't treat them any different. They were one of the guys. There was one family always involved there, that was the Baca family. They were always there. The women were always there. They were right there.

**Valadez** Jeannie was always involved, so that means—we had Mary Baca here. She had gotten the girls involved in that Niños Sisters. Remember they had a drill team?

[00:15:08]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I remember that.

**Valadez** She came in here. She did one of those.

[00:15:12]

**Escobedo** Oh, my god! [laughter]

**Valadez** She did good, very confident, very enthused, very straightforward. Like, wow. From what I remember of her, that's a good trajectory. That was good.

When you look back to that time period, what do you think you participated in or helped initiate during this Chicano Movement early phase? Were you part of something? You joined the Berets, the Junior Berets.

[00:15:52]

**Escobedo** We were always involved in, like, the Chicano Anti-war Movement.

**Valadez** The Moratorium?

[00:16:00]

**Escobedo** Yeah, the Moratorium. We were there. We traveled up and down the state, Los Angeles, San Francisco, back and forth, and we participated in all the other marches and so on.

**Valadez** As Berets?

[00:16:15]

**Escobedo** Yes, as Berets.

**Valadez** I didn't realize that they were doing things outside of Sacramento. I thought Los Angeles had theirs and different groups.

[00:16:27]

**Escobedo** At that time, all the Brown Berets would gather in Los Angeles, because David Sanchez at that time was the minister of the Berets, and all the chapters, we all gathered in Los Angeles and we would strategize what's our next move, what's the next march, what's the next demonstration, what are we going to concentrate on, what city, and so on.

**Valadez** When you pulled away from school and got involved with your dad, with your job, what was the next transition for you?

[00:17:09]

**Escobedo** Work. Work. I started to work for the state of California.

**Valadez** How did that happen? What did you go to do? Because that's something you got involved in.

[00:17:20]

**Escobedo** Sacramento Concilio back, they had this thing called New Careers Program, and they were helping Chicanos get into different jobs, types of careers. There was opportunity for jobs for the state. So there was, I don't know, a couple hundred people fill these applications out, and a couple of months later, I got hired.

**Valadez** You got one of those?

[00:17:53]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** Do you remember who was doing New Careers at that time?

[00:17:56]

**Escobedo** I can't remember his name right now. I can't think of it right now.

**Valadez** Anyone in Concilio that you remember?

[00:18:05]

**Escobedo** Yeah, Henry López. He was the director of Sacramento Concilio back then.

**Valadez** Yeah, he's gone. You remember Nemecio Ortiz?

[00:18:18]

**Escobedo** Nemecio Ortiz? I can't remember.

**Valadez** Nemecio Ortiz was involved with Concilio a lot, La Familia, drug effort.

[00:18:28]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah. That's when Angelo Alvarez—

**Valadez** Alvarez, yeah. You remember him?

[00:18:34]

**Escobedo** Yeah, yeah, I remember Angelo. He got one of the first drug programs here geared towards Chicanos' addiction. He had that going. That lasted for a while.

**Valadez** Do you remember any other organizations that were based out of Concilio?

[00:18:55]

**Escobedo** Yeah, there was like—remember the Washington Community Council?

**Valadez** Yeah.

[00:18:59]

**Escobedo** That was run by Rosemary Rasul, David's sister.

**Valadez** Any others? I think Lozano was involved with the Center at that time, no? Or Bill Aguirre?

[00:19:14]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, Bill Aguirre. We pretty much at one time felt that he was not doing the job right and giving the community what they deserved, so as Berets, we pretty much threw him out of office. We pretty much forced him out, basically physically. We wanted a new program to come in and start gearing towards

the community, the Chicanos, that would be more effective for them. Yeah, we were kind of—

**Valadez** Do you remember who came in?

[00:19:55]

**Escobedo** I believe it was Rosalinda?

**Valadez** Rose Leal.

[00:20:02]

**Escobedo** Rose Leal, yeah.

**Valadez** Well, at least I know that she came in later. I don't know—

[00:20:07]

**Escobedo** Yeah, she was there during that time, but I can't—

**Valadez** Maybe Rosalinda, maybe somebody else. I don't know.

[00:20:13]

**Escobedo** No, there was one after Bill. But I felt bad for him after. As time went on, I looked back and I said, "Wow, we were really brutal then, back then. We didn't give the man a chance." But that's the way we operated. We forced the person's hand.

**Valadez** If they weren't doing what they needed to do for the needs of the community, that's what happens. Do you remember there was a mural in the hallway?

[00:20:46]

**Escobedo** Yeah, that Esteban [Villa] did?

**Valadez** Yeah, that Esteban did.

[00:20:48]

**Escobedo** Right there. It was pretty much something that like Diego Rivera would do, his style of the Mexican Revolution on the wall.

**Valadez** Like a warrior or something, yeah.

[00:21:02]

**Escobedo** Yeah, there was *soldados* right there.

**Valadez** He was experimenting with looking at the internal view of it. Did they have boxing there? What kind of activities?

[00:21:12]

**Escobedo** Yeah, I believe they had boxing there and field trips and stuff. I never got involved in that area over there, but I know they had a real strong boxing program there.

**Valadez** We had Breakfast for Niños.

[00:21:28]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, Sam Rios started the Breakfast for Niños.

**Valadez** Yeah, we were running a program there.

[00:21:33]

**Escobedo** Yeah, I remember that.

**Valadez** That's good. Those are a lot of things that were going on that were very basic in providing services to the community, and I'm glad that you were there. Do you think that the Chicano Movement raised your consciousness along social or cultural or political lines?

[00:22:01]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, definitely, 100 percent, 100 percent.



**Valadez** When you became involved with your next job, with the job with the library, how did that happen? Is that out of New Careers?

[00:22:20]

**Escobedo** Yes, that was out of New Careers. I eventually ended up working at the California State Library. I was working down in the area of—it was like the warehouse type for all the deliveries that would come in. It was like a mailroom-type thing for all the material coming into the library and stuff.

Eventually, I transferred to a different area called California section of the library, and in there, my job in there was to do research for, like, the senators or the congressmen and people writing books, authors and stuff. We would get requests from Australia, England, probably Europe. They would ask for these what they call citations. I would do my little search there and find the information that they were looking for, and send them a copy of that information at the library's expense. They wouldn't charge the public anything.

Then as I was going through this, I was looking at the archives, I came across the Zoot Suit Riots, where they had—what is it—a hearing? Not a hearing, but—what is it? The attorney general at that time was doing a—oh, I can't think of it right now. But what happened is—well, you're familiar with the Zoot Suit Riots and stuff. They had this documentation of all the investigation that the California attorney general was doing, how these riots started with Joseph Díaz, José Díaz, where he got killed after a party, that they were swimming—and that was pretty much—it was called—what was it called? The Sleepy Lagoon Murders. And that got me aware of what was going on during the forties and thirties and so on with the Chicanos throughout

California and throughout the Southwest, really. It made me aware. It was like an education for me, working there at the library. It was fun. I liked it. I enjoyed it.

**Valadez** You were the point man to do the research for José?

[00:24:50]

**Escobedo** Yes.

**Valadez** Was there anybody else that was involved in doing the research?

[00:24:57]

**Escobedo** Well, pretty much I was the only one working there, but I turned all that information in to José, and then José and a few other RCAF got involved and they started working on the project.

**Valadez** That was very successful.

[00:25:12]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** They did a big opening, a reception.

[00:25:19]

**Escobedo** The show. They had, like, the holograms, a Zoot Suit swinging, doing the hologram. I remember that. It was pretty good.

**Valadez** A lot of the Zoot Suit dancers either emerged from there or began to do the—

[00:25:39]

**Escobedo** To do a *teatro* out of there, out of that, yeah.

**Valadez** You were not a dancer?

[00:25:44]

**Escobedo** No, no, no, no. [laughter] I was just a spectator. I didn't want to get involved with that part. I don't mind doing the research, but I'm not out there in public.

**Valadez** Did any of this connection or involvement with the Movement influence your relationship with your own family and close relationships? Did people say, "Why are you doing that?" or, "Why are you hanging around with them?"

[laughs]

[00:26:13]

**Escobedo** Well, my father always thought they were a bunch of druggies and *pachucos* and *bandidos*. That's what he would call them. "Why you hanging out with them *pachucos* and *bandidos*?" and so on. I used to laugh, because, oh wow, he almost hit the nail right there, you know. [laughs]

**Valadez** Yeah. Do you think that the Chicano Movement influenced or affected your career, what you ended up doing as your career?

[00:26:46]

**Escobedo** No, not really, not really, because I got involved in other things. During that time, I was working at the Archives at the state library. I was working on this project. It was supposed to be for like a halfway house for *pintos* to reenter into society, Chicanos mostly. We got a grant, and Concilio was the one that helped sponsor that project. We got funded for like \$240,000 at that time. I was like about twenty-one years old when that happened.

So we got funded and things started moving pretty good, but then what happened, we started looking at all these other projects that all these other Chicanos

or organizations were bringing up the Bay Area and in the south, because the money came from the Office of Criminal Justice Planning, and they liked the idea of reeducating the inmates coming out of prison and putting them into these programs where they would get job training and housing, try to get him on the right road back to be successful in life. But at that time, things start turning around, so what happened, it turned into this first-time-offender program. So we started implementing this program. Eventually we got a letter from Evelle Younger, attorney general, saying it was illegal to implement a program like that, first-time offenders.

We met with thirteen judges from Sacramento. The district attorney at that time, I believe his name was White, I believe so, but it's been some years. But they were all for this program, first-time-offenders program. But again, we couldn't implement this program because it wasn't on the books.

So I went to the Governor's Office and asked for some help. So Henry López helped me, José Montoya and the RCAF helped, Concilio helped. What we did, then I talked with one of Governor Brown's assistants named Percy Pinkney back then. He was his liaison to the community, to Governor Brown.

So eventually we had some legislation passed for first-time offender to be on the books so it would be legal. So if a person got, let's say, petty theft or a minor offense, nonviolent offense, might be drug or something, to be diverted into a program, and the program would be ours. We got legislation to pass.

But then Proposition 13 came along, and they took all that money away from us, so it ended right there. But I think we were successful in getting legislation passed where first-time offenders were able to be diverted from the jails to courts to some

type of program. So I think we were successful, even though the program didn't succeed.

**Valadez** So the write-up is still in the book somewhere.

[00:30:42]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** That's good. I left in '72. When I came back, the *Pinto* Program had been launched at Sac State.

[00:30:50]

**Escobedo** Yeah, I remember that.

**Valadez** They had a program going on over there. So when I came back, I was working on my graduate. When I came back, we went to Folsom several times to do a short little presentations. I think Franko Ovina [phonetic] was—

[00:31:07]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, Frank! Yeah, "the Fox."

**Valadez** Yeah, he was involved I think, in doing that. He went and did some things.

[00:31:14]

**Escobedo** Yeah, and that's where I met Martín Susa. Remember him?

**Valadez** Oh, yeah, Martín? Martín was another guy that was just —

[00:31:24]

**Escobedo** Totally different.

**Valadez** But he had a seriousness about him.

[00:31:29]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah.

**Valadez** I liked him. He had a lot of *corazón*. Things happen to people on the way up. So sometimes even though you've got your heart in the right direction, something's going to pull you down.

[00:31:48]

**Escobedo** Yeah. Back then, he was with COPA. That was COPA back there. It used to be a bookstore, and they had a little print shop there with Joe Serna. I remember that things didn't turn out too good for Martín.

**Valadez** Yeah. I lost track of him. I know Rosalie was from Gonzalez, and that's the place where I went to high school. I went to Soledad.

[00:32:21]

**Escobedo** Oh, really?

**Valadez** We worked in the fields there, and I met Rosalie. Rosalie was going to high school with my brother Juan. In fact, they were boyfriend, girlfriend at those early years in high school.

[00:32:34]

**Escobedo** Oh, wow.

**Valadez** Then John went off to the Air Force, and I don't know whatever happened to her. But the next time I saw her was with Martín at the Reno Club. I said, "Hi, Rosalie! Hey, Rosalie!" It's like the world had united them and they were doing good. I liked them as a couple.

[00:32:59]

**Escobedo** Last I heard, he was in Long Beach. That's that about, what, twenty years ago?

**Valadez** Well, at least he survived that long. You remember Güerro?

[00:33:07]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** Güerro Francisco. Poncho—

[00:33:10]

**Escobedo** Yeah.

**Valadez** I forget his last name.

[00:33:14]

**Escobedo** Yeah, I remember him.

**Valadez** He was also trying to get into some kind of—

[00:33:20]

**Escobedo** He was trying to work with the *raza* drug effort. He was always trying to get some type of help and stuff, you know, but it didn't turn out good for him.

**Valadez** I don't think he made it either.

[00:33:32]

**Escobedo** No. They found him OD'd at Zapata Park. Somehow—it was some guys, they just left him there. Died.

**Valadez** He came to my office and he had been beaten up, but he was high. He picked up my guitar and he started to strum there and play some of his blues, some of his prison blues. I almost had this feeling that he was getting on the edge now,

something was going to happen to him. He called himself the anthropologist of *pintos*, because he said, “I know all the ins and outs, man. I could write a book!”

[00:34:20]

**Escobedo** Yeah, that’s right. I forgot about that.

**Valadez** Are there issues that the Chicano Movement tried to get at that still remain to be resolved?

[00:34:31]

**Escobedo** One of the main things was education. Education was one of the top things, and it still is. We have a high percentage of Chicano dropouts. I’m one, for example. I’m a high school dropout, college dropout. It’s the institution where we didn’t have enough guidance to really expose us to education. That’s one of the saddest things. It’s still going on.

**Valadez** You know the forces that are there in the *barrios* and in the poor neighborhoods that detract or that pull kids out, and then there’s the things that happened at school to kids that are coming from those neighborhoods that discourage them. So it’s, like, battles that are just losing battles. You what you remember, from what you can think, how do you resolve that? I mean, what could be done that hasn’t been done to get at the consciousness of Chicanitos coming up?

[00:35:45]

**Escobedo** I really do believe that there has to be some kind of a system to go into the schools and work at, like, the middle school. That’s the key right there. Elementary, they’re molded by the parents and stuff, you know, mostly are molded, geared for successful life. But middle school, that’s where their personalities start



changing. That's where they start going one way or the other. That's where needs to be some system in place to attract the Chicancitos right there, right there in the middle school. High school, pretty much they're set in their ways right there in high school.

**Valadez** Do you think the Chicano Movement affected or impacted life here in Sacramento?

[00:36:38]

**Escobedo** I really do believe it did.

**Valadez** In what ways?

[00:36:44]

**Escobedo** In the way of educating people, the *raza*, about being successful in life, for their families, for the future of things. I ran across a few years back one of the Berets. He's an attorney now, which is a good impact. But I lost contact with him, because everybody, they get married, everyone goes their own ways. You lose contact with everybody. But I do believe it had a great impact on being successful in life for their families, for a better life.

**Valadez** You were reminding me that in terms of the Berets, Frank Muñoz came in to do the interview.

[00:37:31]

**Escobedo** Oh, he did?

**Valadez** Yeah. He was remembering all of those early times. And Willy Chacón.

[00:37:39]

**Escobedo** Oh, yeah, Willy Chacón, yeah, yeah, yeah. I've run into him once in a while.

**Valadez** I hadn't seen him in forever.

[00:37:46]

**Escobedo** He works for the social services.

**Valadez** Yeah, in social work. He still has that Willy talk. [laughs]

[00:37:55]

**Escobedo** Yeah, yeah, yeah, he does.

**Valadez** Straight guy.

[00:38:00]

**Escobedo** Yeah. It's been a while since I've seen Willy.

**Valadez** A lot of people have come and gone in this life space of the Movement. Is there anyone that you remember that left an impression on you, taught you something, told you something, helped you figure some things out that remains in your mind?

[00:38:28]

**Escobedo** I think it was José Montoya. He left a big impression because he got me thinking. He got me thinking about the *cultura*, about everything. Pretty much everything I believe was taught from him as a youngster.

**Valadez** Especially when you were working with him on the Zoot Suiters and the Sleepy Lagoon and what was going on with the Chicanos at that time. They were the Chicanos of their time.

[00:39:05]

**Escobedo** Yeah, it was a grand jury. That's what I was thinking of. When they did the investigation, it was the grand jury. Oh, I can't think of the—it just lost me right now. I'm sorry.

**Valadez** I've forgotten so much about that time period, but I remember that a lot of people, I think, started to go through a reassessment of what they had heard about the *pachucos* and what really was going on in the country that calls for the beating up of *pachucos* at that time. It's like being part of the scapegoat system. You're losing the war, you're having a difficult time in Germany or everywhere else, and you take it out on the ones that are at home that really have nothing to do with what's going on out there.

Future challenges. What do you see going on now or coming in the future that remain as challenges to tackle?

[00:40:25]

**Escobedo** It's always the same old story: jobs for the youth. That's what it comes down to, because there's no jobs for the youth. They're going to go out there and try to make some money, simple as that, and you don't want to see a revolving door in the prisons, and that's what we have.

The other bad thing, the biggest challenge, these gang wars. You got the *sureños*, you got the *norteños*. When I was growing up, I'd go to Los Angeles and I had no problems, and I still go and I still don't have no—but it's a different crowd, though. It's a different crowd. That's the main challenge, is to see the *raza* come together. That's the biggest challenge there is.

**Valadez** That's one of the biggest. But I think we've made some strides, don't you, in terms of where we were some time ago, when we didn't have any consciousness?

[00:41:30]

**Escobedo** Exactly, yeah.

**Valadez** Things were really not right. We just sensed it, we saw it in the behavior of people who had never picked it up. For me, it wasn't until I came here, and then I was part of something that got me involved with so many other people, and we were thinking alike and we knew something that was wrong, but we didn't know how to put it in words, how to talk about it, how to target it. And when we did, it just, like, opened up. You have to change things, and a lot of that is what happens, probably needs to happen with a lot more of the Chicanos, like you're saying, in middle school, get them early on.

Any remaining thoughts, any ideas, thoughts to leave for future generations some years down way?

[00:42:29]

**Escobedo** You always remember your parents say, "Stay in school, stay in school!" "Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, Papá, yeah, I'm going to stay in school." That's the main thing. My father always instilled in me to stay in school. That's the most important thing for any Chicano, Chicana, always stay, go to higher education, a better life for the family and for the future. That's the only thing. It's real important, education. My education is from the streets and self-taught, but that's another thing.

**Valadez** And yet that street education toughened you up, made you be a fighter, learn to struggle and learn to figure things out for yourself. You took advantage of the opportunities that came up and you made a life. You survived it.

[00:43:29]

**Escobedo** I'm very fortunate, I would say.

**Valadez** When we did our first reunion of people, we collected seventy-three of the activists that we could identify right away, and at the same time, we also discovered right away that we had lost ninety-nine. This was 2003.

[00:43:49]

**Escobedo** That's what Dave was telling me.

**Valadez** Ninety-nine of the *vatos locos*, the people in the streets, the people *con la vida loca*, the people that were like us growing up, trying to make sense out of life, never got married, never had a girlfriend, got lost somewhere in the way because we were defined, the way that we were defined, never made it. And some tried the struggle, got connected to us, were with us. Somewhere along the way, they lost the connection. We made it. You made it. And I want to thank you for coming in and sharing your story with us.

[00:44:29]

**Escobedo** Oh, sure. No problem. I wish I could've used more information I have, but it's so—

**Valadez** Yeah, we forget it. [laughter]

[00:44:37]

**Escobedo** Yeah. Forget it.

**Valadez**      Once you get to a certain age—

[00:44:41]

**Escobedo**      Exactly. “What was his name? What was her name?” and, oh, my god.

**Valadez**      Yeah. It’s okay.

[00:44:47]

**Escobedo**      It’s funny, though. But we survived.

**Valadez**      Yeah, really. Thank you very much.

[End of interview]