

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education  
Oral History Project

**Max Garcia**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Daniela Garcia Contreras  
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Transcription by Technitype Transcripts

**Contreras** Please state your full name.

[00:00:09]

**Garcia** Maximino Garcia.

**Contreras** Provide your birthdate.

[00:00:14]

**Garcia** December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941.

**Contreras** Your marital status?

[00:00:26]

**Garcia** I'm single, was married. I have two children, and like I told you early off camera, my daughter is an architectural engineer. She's thirty-six years old. She lives in the state of Arizona. My son is a thirty-three-year-old lawyer for the Immigration Department of the government in Arizona, and he's helping what we're trying to do with immigration reform. And I'm very proud of the two of them. So like I said to you young people, please continue your education, because it's very important.

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

[00:01:05]

**Garcia** I was born in Los Reyes in the country of Mexico. It's about 30, 40 miles south of Urapan, and there's a famous volcano that blew up about six months before my birth; it's Parícutin. But nobody knows the Indian translation. I'm Tarascan Indian. Then they brought me to the United States at six months old, my parents. So that's how I got into the United States. I didn't jump the fence or anything, but my parents brought me in legally and they came in legally. That seems to be a problem as we get into this back-and-forth with the border and Mexicanos, Chicanos, whatever we are.

**Contreras** Where did you settle after coming here?

[00:01:57]

**Garcia** Well, my parents settled around Pomona, California, and I went to grammar school there. It was kind of an experience, if I can have the liberty, they used to hit me on the head, the teachers. They'd go, "You've got to learn English, not Spanish." And they would hit me on the head, and the other little *gabachito* kids would laugh and laugh and laugh. Well, it's not good for a child to be hit on the head in kindergarten entering, you know, but I think she did me a favor, the lady teacher. I went into drawing. Nobody could take that away from me. Keep laughing. [laughs]

**Contreras** So what did your parents do for a living?

[00:02:45]

**Garcia** Well, my dad was a producer, and somewhere down the line, I became a producer too. In his younger years, he worked for Walt Disney Studios as a young man in 1948, but then we moved to Sacramento, and, sadly to say, he drowned

in the Sacramento River here at thirty years old, kind of changed my life, my mother's life, my sister's life, but I put it as part of faith, you know, because we either believe in an afterlife or we don't, or what we try to do with our lives here as individuals.

A lot of people that I've known, they already passed away. Particularly one that hits me hard is Professor José Montoya, a very wonderful man, but he had bouts with cancer. But I think about him every day, because he was very instrumental in me continuing my education, in learning how to work with the community, in how to be better at whatever skills I have, advertising, public relations, television, and media. So there's a lot of individuals I will not be able to thank on this interview that have made me a better person, I hope.

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

[00:04:18]

**Garcia** I have one sister, and she just beat cancer. She went to chemo for two years in Santa Clara, and she's sixty-two, but a wonderful sister. We've never been in a fight in our entire lives. People go, "Wait a minute! You're siblings. You're a little bit older. You've got—." No. Why fight with your sister? You only have one.

[laughs]

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

[00:04:54]

**Garcia** Well, I try to answer that as best I could on these preliminary questions. The only thing I can think that I was doing in the neighborhood

prematurely after the teacher hit me on the head, I kind of withdraw into myself. I lied to my dad. “*Mijo*, how did it go at school?”

“Oh, wonderful!” That was a complete lie. If I had told him that the teacher was hitting me on the head, he would probably be down in somebody’s face. I don’t mean to close my eyes, but I’m thinking to recollect this. Because he was already working for Walt Disney, and I’m sure if I had told him that the teacher was hitting me on the head, because later on, I understand there was in L.A. County *Brown v. Brown*, where they actually took that to the California Supreme Court, and the Chicanos won, or the Mexican Americans won in that particular case.

So I’m particularly proud to be—I will continue through this interview to be—who we are, Chicanos, Mexicanos. I have anthropology friends that go, “What is a Chicano?”

“Hmm. Well, ain’t you guys supposed to know?” [laughs]

But I think we’re a very unique grouping of individuals, because another friend of mine, Louie “the Foot” [Gonzalez], says we’re about four diverse thoughts of culture. One, *conquistadores*. Those are nice guys. Second, maybe we’re *Indios*, or there are certain Indian groups that have not intermixed with the Spanish at all. That’s hard to believe. Then we come across the border and we are called Mexican Americans. Hmm. Some people like us, some don’t, okay? Then we gravitated into this thing the Chicano Movement, and we call ourselves Chicanos. I’m very proud to be whatever is the correct analogy for the political people to put us into. Latino, that’s cool in a way, but it kind of diversifies Chicano to a lesser point in time and space. But I don’t hate Puerto Ricans or people from Guatemala who have gravitated here to

the United States. They're all welcome. And particularly as we express ourselves with ideas with art, music, and theatre, I think what makes us a cut above what everybody else is talking their culture, is not that we're better, but we use art and music as a vehicle to transcend in the other cultures, and that makes us pretty good guys and good ladies, and I hope that we continue to do that, and you young people too.

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

[00:08:13]

**Garcia** No, but I had some art pieces that Steve Arvizu, I think was the project director for that, and I think he asked me to design a poster for that particular project. It was used at a conference that I think Senon [Valadez] was in charge of out of Sac State last November, and they used that as the centerpiece with some of my other Chicano friends' art. It was very honorable that they used it as a centerpiece for the conference.

**Contreras** What were your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:08:54]

**Garcia** Well, I was already involved in the seventies in Los Angeles with stopping the Vietnam War, and I won't elaborate on that because it takes a real long time, but it gravitated me over back out of Los Angeles and into San Francisco and back into Sacramento, where I started at City College here in the art department. I ran into Esteban Villa, José Montoya at Sacramento State College, where they attended and taught for approximately thirty years out there, and they formed a group called

the Royal Chicano Air Force, which is a whole ‘nother lengthy story. [laughs] I’m not laughing at the situation of that, but it got me to know José Montoya, which was an icon even in those days, towards the Farm Workers Union and then the spill-off into the Chicano Movement, because the Chicano Movement was already beginning to formulate throughout the western United States, not only Los Angeles, Denver.

Corky Gonzales and a lot of other people were gathering their community organizations to put massive marches together in various parts of the country, and I think one of the biggest was in Los Angeles, which we were there. Then it just sprang into other incidents to “We can’t take this police thing on because all we’re going to do is get beat up and hurt.” So my suggestion was that we come back and analyze how to combat the forces that we think are bigotry towards us and won’t let us into the educational systems. And I’ll jump back to why did the teacher hit me on the head, you know? But we can do better than that. We can enter into intelligent conversations with our young people, our legislative people, and good people that are working out in the community, again that I cannot name all of them, but their hearts and their *corazóns* are into keeping this culture alive, Chicano, Mexicano, whatever we want to call it.

**Contreras** How did other Mexican Americans, Latinos react to the term *Chicano* and *Movimiento Chicano*?

[00:11:23]

**Garcia** Well, again, almost I’m getting repetitive. There’s people that go, “Oh, you Chicanos, oh, my god,” you know, and particularly you can’t prove racism in this country unless it’s so blatant. And I don’t think I want to say this on camera, but,

“Hey, why don’t you Mexicans go back to Mexico?” Well, wait a minute. All you other people came from Ireland, England, and other various parts of the world. Why are you calling us immigrants when you guys are the ones that immigrated here, and now you’re wanting us, hey, to go back, you know? And I don’t want to get into a philosophical conversation about going back to what, you know, but when you start thinking about it, who *are* the immigrants here? It isn’t the Native Americans. It isn’t the *Indios*. It’s those guys that came from Spain that were half of—in joking, I called them *conquistadores*. Hmm.

**Contreras** Had you heard of the Civil Rights Movement at the time?

[00:12:35]

**Garcia** Yes, I had heard of the Civil Rights Movement at the time. Like I said, as a young man in Los Angeles in the seventies, we were involved with a *lot* of things. If you’ve ever attended conferences down in Los Angeles or southern California, there’s not a different thinking process, it’s just that the miles and distance in those days, we didn’t have cell phones to call each other up and go, “Hey, *órale!* What’s happening, man?” blah, blah, blah. Now it’s all there, you know, the convenience of the cell phone, so I would assume that there’s better communications with the young people, there’s more elaboration of how do to things correctly, and that’s what I’m betting on, that you young people are the next generation of whatever they’re going to call you, millennials. Understand I went through some of this at Sac State. They go, “Oh, we’re the millennials.”

“Well, great. What happened to Chicano?”

“Oh, those are the old guys.” I’m not trying to be funny. It’s just that I’ve heard this in conversations at Sac State with some of the younger people, and the only thing is that—again I’ll be repetitive—I don’t care what they call you, never let your guard down to who you are, because you’re very important as a human being on this planet, and to educate yourself makes you a better human being so that you can deal with other cultures and other people across the planet, and education’s the only thing that does that.

**Contreras** Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally?

[00:14:17]

**Garcia** Well, I think people said it made me crazier, but they already know I’m crazy, so as an artist, I get away with a lot of very joking mannerisms, but I’m very serious underneath, whatever I do.

I should probably mention I produced a show for Channel 13 for five years, called *Progreso*. I was executive producer. It was a *heck* of a lot of hard work, but very enjoyable, you know. When you go into the creative aspects of art and music, people, “Oh, that’s so easy!”

“Yeah, it’s real easy. Well, why don’t you come and try it?” [laughs] It’s not as easy as you think. That’s why I went to school in advertising, public relations, so that I knew what I was talking about. I don’t just go, “Oh, I know how to do TV,” never been to school for it. Nobody would hire me. But if I come out of some of the best schools in the United States, “Oh, maybe this guy has a possibility of being something,” a director, a producer, my own businesses, you know. And again, the



opportunity was given to myself as an individual because I sought out higher education.

**Contreras** What role do you believe Chicanas played in the Movement?

[00:15:41]

**Garcia** I tried to answer that question in my mind before I came last evening and several days ago. Some of the young, older Chicanas are outrageously wonderful. They are almost like the heart and soul of any movement; I don't care if you call it Chicano, Mexicano. You probably know your mother and how she encouraged you to go to school, be a nice young lady, maintain your culture. But without a Chicana next to a Chicano, we got nothing. So I think the women, as much as certain cultures run them up and down, I'm almost positive that Mexicanos, Chicanos, Mexican Americans, love their women and we call them Chicanas, right on! [laughs]

**Contreras** What did you personally initiate or help initiates in this Movimiento Chicano?

[00:16:42]

**Garcia** I hope that I've done something correct in my life, because I really felt that I'm gifted. I've had some of the best friends in the world in this community. I won't be able to name them all, but we kind of know who we are. We know who does what, and it's usually the same five or ten individuals that contribute to a movement, a cause. And even as you get into your own student affairs stuff, if you look around the table, it's usually about the same five people, yourself and other good friends. That is a strength, you know. The other 100 people that are out there saying, "Oh, we're going to show up for this," well, maybe they're preoccupied with work, trying

to maintain an economy to pay the bills and all that kind of stuff, and so you can't knock them, okay, but you can invite them. But if they don't show up, that's on them, because it is very important to contribute to whatever you're talking about as a collective group of a community or an idea or a student affairs or whatever. So continue to ask your friends to come by. If they don't come by, don't get on their case; they're up to something else.

We just had a celebration at Southside Park on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. About 5,000 people were there. Grandmas were dancing, little kids were dancing. Mano that I know, the man Mano. And then some young people that I didn't see them in the crowd, I don't recognize everybody, they had a valid excuse of why they didn't make it to the celebration. They were studying for finals. Beautiful.

**Contreras** So you mentioned some of the organizations you were involved in. Do you want to elaborate on that?

[00:18:37]

**Garcia** Well, I tried to remember at the get-go, as I got involved back into Sacramento, there was a community organization called Concilio, which did a *lot* of very good things. They'd get jobs for people that were coming out of college. It was in the seventies, '75. Getting involved with the—and it's still there, I'm helping them now, the Washington Neighborhood Center. They had programs where they would actually feed the kids in the morning. A lady by the name—I call her Angel—Jennie Baca, she fed fifty kids in the morning and fifty in the afternoon, and she went out and hustled the food from Raley's, Safeway, and brought it back in her little car and

cooked it. Now, there isn't too many people—she worked fifteen years without pay, okay? Anybody going to do that these days? I don't think so. But that's one group.

Then Sac State, I was involved with Sacramento State University with José Montoya, Esteban Villa, Richard Favela, and did a lot of work over in Davis, the University of Davis, and we'd get various invitations through the auspices of the Royal Chicano Air Force to go to other universities. And it isn't just always the Royal Chicano Air Force; it's somebody that's got a good band.

David Rasul is up to something really good with education. He works a long time here at City College. A lot of people--I ran into some young lady I didn't even know, said if it wasn't for David Rasul, she would have never continued to go to school, okay? And there's other people beyond David. He's a wonderful man and he's got a wonderful heart, wonderful *corazón*, but there's all kinds of people in our community that are doing very good things, very strong, making us be a culture that they're not going to dismantle.

**Contreras** So I'm not so sure what the Royal Chicano Air Force was.

[00:20:51]

**Garcia** Well, actually I've done some writings on it, and I'd be glad to give people the actual writings. We started a group, and it was started by José Montoya and Esteban Villa in the Bay Area, and it was called the Royal Chicano Rebel Front, and that seemed not to—they didn't like the name. Then they moved on to like, “Oh, let's try something in Sacramento, the Royal Chicano Air Force.” People said, “Oh, no. When you write it out, RCAF, the Royal Canadian Air Force?”

But we started to elaborate on TV and our posters, and we're pretty well-known for silkscreens, murals. The Southside Park was painted by the Royal Chicano Air Force, the various teachers in the community. And it was quite an honor to be down there on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May and people were just dancing in front of the mural, and, wow, me as a participating artist, it makes me feel good to see the children out there dancing, the grandmothers dancing, Mano's out there providing wonderful Chicano music, Mexicano. It's an honor to be associated with my art and music, and hopefully—I think you asked earlier what have I done to contribute to the Chicano Movement, my whole heart, my whole mind, my whole *corazón*, and I can't do any more than that.

**Contreras**     What significance did the activities or organizations created play in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:22:44]

**Garcia**       Well, again, I think we all contributed. If we're not out front, like we became friends with Cesar Chavez, well-known civil rights leader. The Royal Chicano Air Force seemed to be an avenue. He would come to Sacramento and say, "Oh, where are those crazy guys that make my posters? And where's those guys that make me laugh?" And he'd come to do legislative stuff at the Capitol to try to get better conditions for farmworkers and stuff, but it was almost like after hours, "Can I come and visit with you guys, play guitars and maybe laugh over a few jokes?" and stuff like that.

And again, student organizations throughout the nation have contributed to making the Chicano Movement better. Like I said, I hope you young people, mainly

your organizations—we were involved with MEChA. I don't know, I think maybe Richard Favela or one of the RCAF guys designed the logo for MEChA, and various other things that we've done to kind of hope that we contributed to the educational aspects of our *cultura*.

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

[00:24:14]

**Garcia** Well, I think I semi-answered that already, you know. Not to try to get deceptive with your questions, yeah, I repeat I think it's made me a better artist being associated with José Montoya, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta. These are some of the names that I think you young people already know. If you don't, go to your text phone or your iPad and find out who they are, you know. I'm not trying to get insulting, but I think that you guys and young people know who these icons are, because they're wonderful, wonderful people, and I'm very fortunate to be able to work with them and to know them on a personal basis.

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

[00:25:12]

**Garcia** Well, most people that know me, they think I've gone crazy, and I have, with love and concern, like my grandmother taught me. She was ninety-six years old, crippled from the legs down. She raised twelve children. I think she transposed some of our genes into me and my kids [unclear] and has made me a

stronger individual. She lived to be ninety-six years old. [laughs] And she thought she was a bad person. I'm not laughing at you, Grandma.

But then on the other side, my sister and some of my nephews and nieces, they think, "Oh, that guy's crazy. All he does is draw all the time and he does these ridiculously wonderful posters," that only people that know me can kind of relate to them and what the symbolism is in them. But I think they're pretty straightforward. Again, I hope when people look at them, they see a piece of art that is meaningful to them, because, again I repeat, the people I've known—and some of them have passed on, Armando Cid, Richard Favela, José Montoya, absolute geniuses at the craft of doing silkscreen posters, helping the community, and hopefully our families are proud of us.

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

[00:26:53]

**Garcia** Well, it kind of brought me around full circle after getting involved in the Vietnam War protests and everything, the Chicano Movement. I really think that some young people are studying communications, television production, film, the creation of film, but I think it's all done digitally now, and you should probably consider exploring some of those avenues. Of course, everybody's an individual in this country, thank God, and you go off and study what you want to study.

But I started to think how what I was doing with statistics for high-level advertising, because I was in charge of Texaco, which is a very high oil community. I think they got bought out by Standard now. The agency I was working with was

getting paid something like \$10 million a week. [laughs] I was working under them. But I had to come with statistics to figure out demographics of how to put advertising in positions, and then as I come over into dealing with Chicanos, Blacks, Greens, Purples, ah, might be pretty smart if I can use this television thing to put out positive images of ourselves, our community, our young people, our legislative people. Cesar Chavez, when I was doing the television show, he made appearances regularly and didn't talk about overturning the world with hate and guns and all this stuff; peaceful protests, you know.

So there's studies of what you study should make you happier in your life, in your community, and make life more pleasant for yourself and all the people that we deal with here on this planet Earth, called Chicano culture, Mexicano, this and that, but never fall into the pitfalls of you're better than the other culture, because that is a no-no. The way my mother and grandmother taught me, and a lot of other Chicano families, they don't teach you go over there and hate the guy you're going to school with or some other individual from another country.

That's what is hopefully important to the next generation, that we can put all this hate and non-concern to the side and begin to incorporate hearts and minds into a better-thinking planet so that we might be able to eliminate war somewhere down the road, but it's too profitable for the people that run the wars. They don't care about killing Chicano kids or Black kids or Green kids. Why should they? Their kids aren't usually out there. It's always the poor kids, you know. So it's something to be more desired. Again I throw the ball back into the young people's court. It's your ballgame, you know. We're getting old. We barely know how to bounce the ball. [laughs] But

don't believe it. There's some people out there that are eighty, ninety years old and they're still doing wonderful things for the Chicano community.

**Contreras** Looking back at your experience in the Movimiento Chicano, do you feel that there are any issues that were left unresolved?

[00:30:46]

**Garcia** There's always something unresolved. It's almost like the Earth turns, and yesterday there was a hurricane in Yuba City, today there probably won't be. But unresolvedness in the mind of education hopefully gets better, you know. I can't pinpoint anything that is unresolved as far as I'm concerned. There's always going to be something that has unresolving, you know, and go forward towards the next generation or whatever your guys' ideas are, and then there'll be somebody someday asking *you* the questions and say, "What is unresolved?" But that's a manipulative kind of a word, and I don't mean to try to get funny, unresolved this or that or whatever.

I did repeat that you guys are the next generation to unresolve this, and I think you guys are doing wonderful. The young people that I've been involved with in all aspects of going to a wider, broader community, travel out of town, I don't care if it's to Los Angeles or Monterey or Santa Barbara or where, they seem to know that we're part of an Art Movement, Chicano Movement. We don't go with badges and say, "Hey, my name is so-and-so." There's an aura and a feeling that they can go, and it doesn't take us long to go into a community and find out what's actually going on there, you know. And in most cases, it's all positive, with the exception of—I don't



want to get started on the gang stuff, because everybody's got a gang of some kind, you know, but that's a negative part of whoever's culture.

I want to deal with the positive side of our culture, and I think the music and the arts and the community people that I've mentioned, and the Honor Roll of José Montoya and Richard Favela, Armando Cid, sometimes I get up in the morning with a cup of coffee or maybe on a Saturday or Sunday with a shot of tequila, and go, "Hey, *órale*, you guys! I'm down here working the best I can with my artforms and my community, and hopefully you're proud of me," and my mother and my grandmother and all the people that have gone to another space, because we only get a one-time thing through here, and let's try to do the best we can, you know.

It seems to me to be maybe oversimplified on my part. Hey, why do I want to come up and start a hassle with you? I don't even know you. I don't mean you as the camera lady, but theoretically out there, if I'm walking down the street, why I want to go up and, "Hey, I don't like your face"? Come on! I don't know that individual. He doesn't know me. "How you doing? Hey, having a nice day? How you doing, *señorita*? A nice day?" Yeah, you know? And it's part of projecting more positive.

There's a lot of stuff going on out in the United States of America right now. You can see it in people's eyes. I'm a good photographer. I can almost read your eyes and your mind and your brain. There's so much hurt going on out there in the country. *We're* not doing it, but there's other aspects of the culture that you're in that somehow make you feel like you can't make it through a day or this or that. No, not when we're around and we have the art and the music.

If you were not at Southside Park, there'll be more events. Again I repeat myself, seeing grandmother out there dancing and little kids and stuff like that, and it wasn't just Chicanos. There were Blacks and *gabachos* out there and Russians and all these other people that I know throughout the community. And you don't think it makes me feel good to see all the different people in Sacramento community at large? But I know they're Russian and I know they're Filipinos, and I was dancing with some of these other people from other cultures. Why not?

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

[00:35:38]

**Garcia** Well, I think I kind of mentioned it at the tail end of that last question, but you can't push culture down people's throat, because that turns them off, right? But I always come back to the arts and music, and I think, if I read my newspaper and television, Santana has a new record out as of May 6<sup>th</sup>, and most young people on this planet know who Jorge Santana is. The name of his album, *Corazón*. It's all in Spanish, I want to go down to my record store to get it, because he's one of my friends, you know.

Again I'm getting repetitive about my answers and stuff. I think that the art and music transcends into other people's cultures without offending them. Of course, it's got to be kind of in Russian or something, although I worked with some Russian people about ten years ago out in Rio Linda, and he was a supervisor. We were riding in his car, and he's got a Mexican radio station on, and I says, "Hey." I can't

remember his name, Stanley or whatever, Russian guy. I said, “Do you understand this Spanish stuff that’s coming out this radio?”

“No, but I like the melody because it’s almost Russian.” [demonstrates] He didn’t understand the verbiage, but the sound, the music, they’re making him happy, you know, and I *know* that does it to other cultures. We may not understand the language, but if you go dissect music experts, Russian polkas, German polka, they kind of sound like Chicano polkas. But, you know, if you study the scales and the writing of it, they do it just like they do in Germany, you know, but it makes them happy.

So, again, art and music, to me, is the key to get into making other people feel better with cultures, and not jamming Chicano culture down their throat or Mexican American, because anytime you jam something down somebody’s throat, unless you’re a parent and your kid ain’t eating, then you have to force the food down him so that he gets to be bigger and maybe will make it to City College or Davis or the University of Southern California or wherever he wishes to attend. And it is sometimes money in that cases, but there are universities out there that give scholarships and stuff of that nature, although sometimes it takes a long time to fill out the forms or your family may not make enough money or too much money. There was a young girl, she didn’t get a scholarship because her parents were making too much money, and they wouldn’t support her going to college either, which I think—I didn’t talk to the parents, but to me that seemed like a no-no.

But again, I’m very proud to be who I am, Maximino Garcia.

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

[00:39:24]

**Garcia** [sighs] That's almost like a philosophical question, and I've been trained by some of the good philosophers on this planet. It's really up to you young people to define that question of what is next, you know, because if it wasn't for some of the people that I have run into here in Sacramento, without trying to mention them all, if they didn't push the system to get more Chicanos into Sac State or City College, you young people wouldn't be here. And I don't mean to be negative. It's just that it took these individuals to push the system, to say, "Hey, it's about time that you let more Chicanos in here, Blacks, Greens, Purples, Russian, Asian." The system is not just owned by—I don't like the word *Anglo*, but the power dominance of whoever runs all these systems. That'll be the downfall to the system, when they shut people off. But you have to learn the policies and procedures to go forward into the next millennia, into the next student body meeting, or the next city council or the next legislative person at the Capitol.

There's a whole lot of young Chicanos down there, and Mexicans, whatever they call themselves, and some of are very good-hearted, except when one or two get caught with their hand in the piggy bank, they go to jail [laughs], and they deserve it. If they can't tell the truth to young people or the students, then you're lying to them. Do not lie to people when their hearts and their minds are the same, because it'll come back on you, right? But if you can tell people the truth, you have nothing to worry about, you know. Sounds oversimplified, some of the things I'm talking about,

but it has worked for me, you know. And when my dad was alive, he said, “*Mijo*, you have a lot of work. If you do good work, your craft or whatever it is, you tell people that you’re going to make a profit at it, and you’re honest to the individual or the community or the situation, you’ll have work all the time, *mijo*.” That’s not real strange kind of thinking. It’s honest thinking. It doesn’t have to be at the corporate level, but an honest level, you know.

There’s people opening businesses right now. The status department of a small business, “Oh, this is the right time, the recession and the depression.” Oh, two- and three-person businesses, oh, that’s great. What about a one-person business? [laughs] Hey, the arts and music, I’ve been able to provide for myself after I came out of college, but if I hadn’t gone to college, I wouldn’t know how to do all this wonderful thing called advertising, public relations, drawing, you know. And it’s fun. People go, “You’re a workaholic!” No, it’s not.

But I’m glad the teacher hit me on the head, because it made me draw and attend university studies that I thought I would like, music and art. I’m not an English major and I still don’t know how to read, and I just put my own dunce hat on once in a while and I let the kids laugh at me. Laugh all you want, because you made me stronger in the resistance of thinking that you’re one up. Hitting me on the head, teacher, you did me a favor. [laughs]

**Contreras** Do you see yourself staying involved with meeting these challenges, the future challenges?

[00:43:43]

**Garcia** Well, again, some of these questions sound interrelated, okay? The challenges, again I repeat, is what you young people decide with good counselors and stuff. You can't go up to the administration and say, "Oh, we're student body!" You need an ally over here, like a good counselor. Like I continue to repeat, I know over at City College, David Rasul is one of the best persons that have ever come through this university, and he helped so many people, and he's not really concerned about how many people. It was his attitude. He never turned off on you, okay? "How can I help you, young lady? How can I help you, young man? Let's talk about it." I'm in a better position than I was five or ten years ago, you know. You know, he's helped, but he wasn't beat up by his parents and go, "You do this and you do that." He developed his own mind, his own thinking, and he's got a beautiful mind, a beautiful heart, and a beautiful *familia*, and that is the underlying factor of all your studies. Please continue to be strong with your families. That's what I saw at Southside Park on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. We weren't celebrating throwing this *conquistador* out, the French or the Spanish. We were celebrating Sacramento because we all know each other, and it makes us a stronger community.

The challenges are not always put in front of you. The Civil Rights Movement, that's a whole discussion unto itself, but it's all interrelated as we talk about the right and the wrong of the United States of America or various other countries, because they have a magic way, governments, of not caring about the people when they talk about, "Oh, we really love you." [laughs] Well, why do they still have signs up in Texas "Mexicans Not Welcome Here" in restaurants and stuff? And I'm not trying to pick on that issue. It's just that, come on, you young people are

able to understand who your friends are and who they're not, and you don't want to hang around with the bad kids, because it's just going to get you in worse trouble, so you hang around with the better kids. You know who's making good grades in college, in school. You know who studies in the library. You know who isn't. And if you're that kind of student that wants to succeed in life, you'll hang around with the kids who are doing what you like to do, and then you find out, "Oh, my god, we've got good grades!" [laughs]

But it's a lot of hard work. Everybody thinks going to college is easy. I had an aunt—my cousin graduated from Berkeley with honors, but at his birthday party, a Chicano party, "*Mijo*, go to school." Well, she's not up—I love my *tía*, but she's ninety-three years old and she was in World War II as a nurse. Of course, she got married, had my cousins and this and that. Graduated from Berkeley with honors, you know. But I said, "*Tía*, you're not up doing the term papers and everything." It's great to encourage our young students to go to school, but the parents or the aunt or the people that are being supported in general cases, they don't have the money in a lots of cases. They have good attitudes. "Go to school, *mijo*, go to school!" But you know they're not doing the term papers. *You* are. And that's who gets the better grades: you. I think those are part of the challenges that you young people already know, and learn how to get where you want to get to, and it's not easy. It's a heck of a lot of hard work.

**Contreras** So is there anything that you have not yet mentioned that you would like to say?

[00:47:58]

**Garcia** I just think, again I repeat, you young people, I can't say anything more than keep going forward up the ladders of your own mind, your own consciousness, and never deviate from the truth, okay, because that will get you in a lot of trouble. So continue to have fun, study hard, and be good young people that you are. It's not a hard formula, you know. Some, "Oh, man," [demonstrates]. They make all kind of excuses of why they can't do things.

My dad passed away, I was ten years old. Had a wonderful mother, wonderful grandmother, but I had it make it through life to try to be a better person over here, and my community filled that void, so, hey, I got some wonderful friends out here and wonderful students that make me so proud. When we get invited to Sac State or City College for graduation, and all the work that we've done and all the elaboration and verbiage and words, it paid off!

My god, these are wonderful students. And some of them fail; they don't make it. Not everybody's a college graduate degree, but don't put them down either. Try to help them. If they have a desire to come to college and they've been in the joint or this or that or whatever, help them if you can, you know. Put some *corazón* out there, "Hey, I know the counselor. He was there a few years ago, and I still know the dude. He still works. Let's go over and talk to him straight up."

Because if you find out, generally speaking, whatever minority you're dealing with, the counselors, they know exactly if you're telling the truth or lying or whatever, and they'll get you into the system, but it's up to you to get the good grades again, you know. Your cousin may have come out of the joint or this or that, and he gets into college. You find out later he flunked, you know. But don't put him down.



Even in failing is succeeding, as long as that individual is kind of happy somewhere in the community, he doesn't go around cause trouble. We have stories within our own communities how our cousins have caused trouble, our best friends have caused trouble, but we, as a family unit within a community, we never give up on individuals, generally speaking. I'm not saying it's set in stone. But we have compassion and *corazón*. And I'm sure other cultures do too.

I'm working with a gallery called the Brick House, and it's primarily Black. I was raised in Oak Park, but I love it. I was over there last week helping them. The lady director, she just thinks that's wonderful I come in and help. I don't have to, but I feel good. It's more art from a different culture, different perspective, but it's interwoven with all art, you know.

So hopefully I answered your questions.

[End of interview]