

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

Pedro John Hernández

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Susan Azeredo
May 28, 2014

Transcription by Jiangfeng Situ and Technitype Transcripts

Azeredo I am Susan Azeredo from UC Davis, undergraduate research assistant.

Let's start off with state your full name.

[00:00:10]

Hernández I am Pedro John Hernández.

Azeredo Your birthdate and your marital status?

[00:00:16]

Hernández 3/18/47, and married.

Azeredo Do you have any children?

[00:00:22]

Hernández Two children, a girl and a boy.

Azeredo Let's start with your early life. Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:32]

Hernández I was born in Lincoln, California, and shortly after a couple of years we moved, Yuba City, Marysville, Woodland, Stockton, Modesto, Elk Grove, and finally in Rio Linda. My father was a farmworker.

Azeredo What did your parents do for a living?

[00:01:04]

Hernández My dad was a farmworker. He also worked on the Sacramento railroad when he first got married, and then after that, he went to work in the fields. Then my mother was born in the United States, in Colorado, so when they got together in Lincoln is when life began, for me, anyway.

Azeredo Do you have any brothers and sisters?

[00:01:35]

Hernández Yes, I do. I had one older brother, myself, a younger brother, and then one more younger brother, and three sisters.

Azeredo That's a nice-size family.

[00:01:49]

Hernández Yes.

Azeredo Let's see. How about describing your experiences as a child, youth, and your family and your neighborhood.

[00:02:00]

Hernández Sure. The early years in Lincoln, California, was like anybody else's childhood; it was the fun time. It was the time that we lived with our grandmother and my mother and my father, but the beautiful thing about it, my older brother was born in my grandmother's house, I was born in my grandmother's house, and my younger brother was born in my grandmother's house. We didn't have a doctor. All we had was Grandma, who delivered us, and then the doctor showed up a week later and said, "That'll be five bucks."

And my grandmother said, "But you weren't even here."

He goes, “Well, the paperwork costs five bucks.” So we had to pay him five bucks.

Azeredo Wow. That’s pretty interesting.

[00:02:56]

Hernández Yes.

Azeredo So let’s see the next question. How about were you a Fellow or a Felito during the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:03:06]

Hernández No, as a matter of fact, I wasn’t. What ended up happening after coming back from Vietnam, I went to American River and I failed that. I flunked out. I guess my mind wasn’t ready after coming back from war.

Then what ended up happening, Joe Serna and the EOP Program showed up at our school and said, “You know, this program EOP may be something you would fit into because you seem to be a candidate.” I found out that all my weak points were strengthened by the EOP Program, and I went from flunking out, Ds and Cs, now to getting As and Bs, and during that time period I became the president or chairman of MEChA and I worked with the Felitos Program, which was Carlos Gonzalez and Steve Arvizu. So I knew a lot of the students that were going through that program to become teachers, so it was nice.

Azeredo Can you elaborate a little bit further?

[00:04:42]

Hernández Yeah, I think part of why the Felitos Program was there was to give them the skills that were necessary, because you got to remember we were going

through a metamorphosis in education. The first time students had left Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego, and they were being put together under this program that was going to give them all the tools that were necessary so that they could go back and start teaching and start motivating and being role models for students that would want to continue the education and be teachers and anthropologists and you name it, but they were very successful at what they did.

Azeredo So what about in the cultural, anthropology perspective and influence? Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

[00:06:00]

Hernández Yeah, I think for all of us those were terms of “What does that mean?” For all of us that were attending college, we were starting to get to know how we became part of this craziness of coming to the United States or being part of the process of finding out who we were, and it was through the research and anthropology that we were able to start putting A and B and C and D and F and G, and it kind of gave us a history of where we came from, how we got there, and what we were hoping to do in the future by learning by our previous mistakes and also learning how this thing called anthropology and how it could be used as an important tool.

Because you got to remember, we were in a very different situation back then. Either we were in trouble all the time or we were struggling or we were really brilliant individuals but didn't know how to connect someplace. For some students, the thought of going to a university was like, “Wow! That's way up here. We'll *never* achieve that.” And yet somehow by learning that we could do those things, we were

able to achieve those goals, but it took the anthropologists to kind of set us up into how this all came about. I mean, a very good example, the Mayans, the Aztecs and learning some of that stuff, but what is the culture? What is the important things of the culture, and how does that contribute to ourselves in the modern world?

[00:08:19]

Azeredo So how did your participation in the Mexican American Education Project influence your thinking and involvement in the Chicano community overall?

[00:08:29]

Hernández I came back from Vietnam, I had a lot of hatred, but yet it was that time period where civil rights was taking action in the Nonviolent Movement, it was the time period where cultures, Native Americans, Asians, Latinos, Blacks, were kind of rediscovering and going home and getting nourishment from your roots.

The White community was like the Civil War; they were fighting each other. And out of that fight came the ugliness of—the best way to put it is the racism, and also those that were saying, “No, we can’t do that to these people any longer because they’re not going to go along with that ideology that we’re the masters and they’re supposed to be the peasants.”

So during that time period, I remember that when we were over here, we were treated like shit by the White society, but when we got overseas, then things changed because they were then saying, “Hey, now we’re brothers and you got to cover my back!”

Well, that wasn’t my thinking. I said, “I’m covering myself and I’ll see you later.” Because I knew that soon as we got back to the United States, they were going

to revert to their own self, racist attitudes, and that was engrained in them. It wasn't something that you could just like go to the car wash and wash it off. No, it wasn't.

So the Chicano Movement became a reality for me in the sixties as I watched it on television, because you got to remember I'm overseas, and once we got back, then I started to be part of this Movement, and it was like a big wave coming in and sucking you out to, like, an ocean, drawing you into it, but the difference was that it was warm, it was comfortable, and it smelled good, it tasted good, and you couldn't help but being swept into it.

So during that time period, after I failed at American River and was taken in by Sac State, I became the chairman of MEChA, so then that gave me an opportunity to utilize my skills, because prior to that, I was going into the high schools and saying, "Don't join the service because we're being killed like flies and nobody gives a damn about us."

I found a way through that time period to start taking the negative energy and putting it out in a positive way of not only saving lives, but doing something good for our culture, because, to me, the culture is important. Some people leave the culture and other people go—well, they think they're White. But you got to remember, in the long run, they will come back. Why? Because they need the nourishment that goes with the culture, and that's what's important.

So I got involved shortly after that. It was José Montoya and Esteban Villa who said, "Hey, Pedro, you seem to have a lot of violence in you." I used to fist-fight on a daily basis. It almost became easier than doing my laundry. [laughter] So what

ended up happening, they said, “You got to come and meet this guy that’s nonviolent.”

So I said, “I’ll go wherever you want me to go meet this guy, whoever he may be.”

And they said, “Well, we want you to go to the Washington Neighborhood Center and meet him.”

So I went over there and I said, “Okay, José, where’s this guy you want me to talk to?”

He goes, “He’s standing right behind you.”

I turned around. Without knowing, I just looked and I could see this blue aura around his body, and yet when he spoke to me, he made me feel warm and comfortable, and I relaxed for the first time. I wasn’t in the fighting mood. I was just amazed, because the first thought that came into my mind was, “He’s not from this world.” And that was Cesar Chavez.

Cesar Chavez then proceeded to say, “I’ve talked to José and Esteban, and you have what seems to be a lot of energy that’s being used wrong. So why don’t you come and be part of the UFW struggle. I’d like for you to be part of my security and bodyguard.”

And I said, “Hey, anything you want,” because I was just taken by him and I felt comfortable around him.

Just to show you, later on that night, there used to be a club here in Sacramento which was called The Matador. We students used to call it Mata-ratas. [laughter] We’d go over there to relax, and I’m going, “Wow! I’m nonviolent now,”

or so I thought. I walked in, opened the door, and this guy is just bad-mouthing Cesar, and I go, "Oh, my god." Just when I thought I had gone nonviolent, I walk in, beat the shit out of him.

I go back to Cesar in the morning and I said, "Cesar, when I'm around you, I'll practice nonviolence, but when I'm on my own, I got to do what I got to do!"

So I think in the long run, there's two people I can thank in this world. One of them was Cesar, of course. The other one was Carlos Santana, because I ended up naming one of my kids after him. But it was those individuals who were able to reach me in my hour of need and empower me to do the things I would do later on in life, because it was my mother who told me, "You know what, Pedro? You're different."

And I said, "Mom, I want to be a priest!"

And she goes, "No, *mijo*, there's a different calling for you in life."

And I go, "What do you mean? Being a priest is a big thing in our culture."

And she goes, "No, that's not your calling."

So after coming back from Vietnam, that only cemented that idea that I wasn't going to be a priest, and so now I had a different calling. And, like, parents, they tell you these things when you get older, "You'll know what it is to be a parent," but they don't give you the full answer, so you got to struggle to find it out, and then when you hit the hole, you go, "Oh. Is that what she meant?" [laughter]

So from there on, I got totally involved in the Chicano Movement. For me, the Chicano Movement was something where, in fact, there was a lot of things. It wasn't just one thing. There was politics, there was a total immersion into your own culture

and pride and self-esteem and being proud of not only who you were, but what your culture had to offer this world.

My study in college was sociology and government, and I totally emerged myself, because in sociology, you don't try to change the individual; you change the environment around that individual so that individual can conform to that. So I want to at this point thank Andrés, because it was he that instilled that in me, and I would later utilize that in my life time after time and after time, and became very successful in utilizing that.

It was Joe Serna that helped me with politics. We were taking politics. We didn't know that much about it. Some of us were born Democrats and some of us didn't even know what a Republican was. All we knew, that it was a two-party system, and here it was, we were going into politics and learning the process of election and how government worked and how you brought change to a society, a city, a community, whatever it may be.

And I think by doing that, without really realizing, we were also learning how to bring change, but the *process* of change, and that's important, because we assumed during that time period which was we could just storm in and tell them what was on our mind, and that was going to be the change. Well, no. There has to be some writing, there has to be some getting the vote out. There's got to be a lot of things in the process of bringing change to society if you're talking about Latino issues, Native American issues, because you got to remember, those elements, Native American, Asian, Latinos, Blacks, poor Whites, were all in the tub all being mixed together, and yet we were separated because of our different cultures and needs.

We learned things about Blacks, we learned things about Native Americans, we learned things about Asians, we learned even stuff about our own selves. So as we proceeded to do that, it was refreshing. I can look back and say now, “Wow! How did you survive?” Because a lot of people don’t survive; they end up dying. They end up not achieving everything they wanted in life.

Azeredo If you were to include all that information that you just said that your biggest influences, if we were to narrow it down to the Mexican American Education Project fellowship, how did that influence your career or your life’s work?

[00:21:45]

Hernández You know, the beautiful thing about that was there was bookwork and then there was ourselves, and you had to rely on yourselves. It’s a good thing that you read a book, but a book doesn’t always tell you how to do stuff. As an example, I was working with a stipend and I had to work, so I was working at a Head Start Program. So I would go see Cecilia Guajardo and I would say, “Cecilia, I know you’re in early education. I got a kid that you know he’s climbing the walls and he’s got me climbing the walls alongside him. How do I get him to do the things that are necessary so that he can learn?” And you got to remember this was before Ritalin and ADAD and all of that stuff came about, being dyslexic.

She says, “Well, tell me something about him.”

I go, “Well, number one, he’s very hyperactive, and when I tell him to do something, I find myself climbing the walls with him because I can’t get to him.”

She goes, “Well, you got to get the individual. You don’t shake him. You just move him back and forth and to the sides.” And what ends up happening, the rhythm

in his brain is stopped for a second and then he has to concentrate on what you're doing to him and without him realizing as you're talking to him, "Kevin,"—I even still remember the kid's name—"Kevin, you know what we're going to do today?" He couldn't. He couldn't say it because I had interrupted his brain thought. So I said, "We're going to do artwork, and then after artwork, you're going to go out and play. Would you like to start drawing now, Kevin?"

And then I'd stop, and he would immediately just go down, sit at his desk, start drawing. For me, I had then been able to get to this kid. But I have to give thanks to Cecilia because we were depending on each other.

You got to remember, again I go back to this was a time period where we were coming from everywhere and we had different things that we believed in, different things that we had learned, and the beautiful thing is that some of our upbringings, some of our own family were part of that process, and as we learned to utilize each other's strength, it was like when I came from flunking out, now going from Cs and Ds to As, well, what Cecilia did was gave me a bridge to strengthen those areas, and the Felitos Program was basically doing the same thing.

Azeredo So let's move on to the Movimiento Chicano as a perspective. How did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally, or your role? What role do you believe that Chicanas played in the Movement? Let's go with that first.

[00:25:50]

Hernández I think that kind of hits at home, especially because if you remember—perhaps you don't, but Chicanas, they were coming to the United States. Some of

them were under the influence that it was better to marry a White guy and move up the ladder that way, because marrying your own kind, there was no moving up in that direction. And those that did wouldn't say that they were Mexican first; they would say that they were Italians, they would say anything except who they were.

It was a time where the men and women were learning about themselves. Women were getting together and saying, "You know what? I'm not gonna take that beating from that son of a bitch any longer. I don't deserve it." And that was healthy, and it was healthy for them, and they were learning—I think that's the beautiful thing when you're in a struggle like that, that don't have to be Chicano or Mexicano, you can be Asian, you can be Filipino, you can be Native American, and you learn from each other's ways of life.

For me, how does it help me now? It's played a major role in my life, because now they have to accept me on *my* terms. "Pedro, we have a problem with gangs and drugs in this area."

"Well, nice. Go pay somebody \$40,000."

"Yeah, but you can do it for nothing."

I go, "You know what? I've done that for years, and yet somehow I'm still sub-level. You still don't treat me like I should be treated."

I've learned to say back to them what I'm thinking. I do not hold back any longer, because I'm a proud individual, I have a daughter that has a master's, I have a son that emulates his father, he's a professional bodyguard, carries three guns. I've met my responsibility as a father. I put them through colleges all the way. Why is it

important? Because I take what I've learned about my culture, the things that I've done.

A very good example, we had yesterday five new California Medal of Honor recipients, and three of the family members were going to come. Two of them couldn't make it, so somebody was asked to be the fourth individual to receive the proclamation and the stuff from the governor and the legislature. They said, "Pedro, would you and Lupe [phonetic] please accept the material that's going to be given to the Medal of Honor recipient?"

And I said, "You know, I would love to. It would be more than an honor." Because again, when I speak today, number one, we have the most number of Chicanos and Chicanas that are going to college. We have the largest number of people. We have something to be proud of. Now, society can either help to educate us or they can be led by individuals that are not educated, but given the facts that I've said right now, it would be in everybody's interest to get Latinos educated. We no longer follow; we lead. When you become the dominant culture in society, you must remember that we must accept the responsibilities that come with that, and that's a lot. Drugs and gangs? Don't need them, could care less for them. What I do want to see is that after I leave the world, that we continue educating and producing the most brilliant minds, because we have so much to offer.

Azeredo Let's see. How about what were some of the organizations that you were involved with in the Chicano Movement?

[00:31:53]

Hernández Well, as I said, I was the chairman of MEChA, but I'm also a cofounder of La Raza Bookstore. There was Philip Santos, Luis "The Foot" González, Anita Ramos. There was a lot of other people that were involved in becoming. Despite what others may say, we put on an event and made \$1,500. It's interesting, where we held the band where we got the \$1,500 was underneath a cathedral, so the priests were complaining they couldn't go to sleep because they were too busy rocking in bed. [laughter] But we had a fun time.

And with that money, I know that José and company came to me and said, "Pedro, Cesar's coming to town and we need money for paper."

And I said, "Well, how much you need?"

And he goes, "Oh, about 250 bucks."

I said, "Oh, okay."

It just so happened, María Macías, who was the treasurer, I said, "Get a hold of Phillip Santos. Tell him to come and pick up the \$1,500 because José and company want money." I didn't tell José that I had 2,000 bucks, because if I would've said that, they would've wanted more, and we wouldn't have been able to start La Raza Bookstore.

But, nevertheless, that's the beautiful thing, because the process there was not only to sell books to students so that they could have a more reasonable cost, but we also took another aspect of the bookstore, and that was to provide material for our parents, from the standpoint that we were not only educating the students with material, but we were also educating that community. Therefore, you had two elements raising at the same time, not that they'd, whatever, be equal, or that I would

even want to try and judge what equal is, but there was a process happening there in terms of not only books, in terms of culture, in terms of plays, in terms of everybody learning, because we were all learning. Oh, god, this was like a playland for us, you know. We were learning so much about different cultures, we were learning about our own culture, and yet we were being successful, and that was the key, being successful.

But I wanted also to touch that the Chicano Movement to me represents something special. As I would later on in life learn—when I told my mother I wanted to be a priest, she says, “No, there’s another calling for you.”—I’ve learned what that calling is, and I’m living it today. I’m not ashamed of my culture. I’m not ashamed of my color. I’m not ashamed of anything. If anybody should be, it’s those prejudiced individuals that are out there. They should be ashamed. I do the things that is in the best interest for my community.

When the park district said, “Hey, we got a bunch of Blacks and Mexicans and they want to start a lunch program, but we don’t have time for that.”

So I said, “Why don’t you give it to me.” And I went out there. This is the same time period that I’m dealing with gangs and drugs.

I had a gun put to my head one time, and they said, “We don’t like you because you’re interrupting our business of making money.”

I said, “The business of providing drugs to your own brothers and sisters, getting them hooked, then what? They become prostitutes, alcoholics, drug addicts? And that’s good?”

I later on in life had this gentleman, 6'6", come up to me after I had set up this program to feed the kids in the neighborhood, and I was at a liquor store getting my stuff ready, my candies, whatever I needed to go see my son's football game. This guy was 6'6". He goes, "Pedro, I know you. You're that guy that lives on that corner over there."

I go, "No, no, no, no. I'm just a guy buying my candy and soda and stuff here."

He goes, "No, no, no." Because I had made a remark, he had two cans of Old English and two popsicles, and I said, "Oh, that's probably going to taste pretty good, huh?"

He goes, "No, no, no! The popsicles are for my kids. The beer is for us." And that's when he said, "Hey, I know who you are." And he says, "You're that guy that lives on that corner and your name is Hernández."

And I'm going, "Oh, my god, he's going to beat me until I'm whatever color's on the other side of blue." [laughter]

But he didn't. He says, "I want to tell you something. Because of you, I used to be a Crip, I now own an upholstery business in South Sacramento, and I just wanted to say thank you."

And I go, "Whew! Thank God."

But for me, I demand respect. And when we became a city, I got the last \$35,000 two weeks before we would've had to raise another 150,000. I have been a community leader in Rancho Cordova for more than twenty years. I have been recognized by two presidents. I've been recognized by two governors, attorney

general, the Assembly and the Senate, the Board of Supervisors in Sacramento, the Board of Education in Sacramento and in Folsom. I helped raise \$10 million for our schools.

That's why I'm saying, "What have you done?" I've done that as a Chicano, I've done that as a Latino, I've done that as a Mexican, I've done that as a Mexican American. Because I don't care what you want to call me, you know and I know because of the system that when you were going through the school system, they gave you all of these labels. Spanish was better than being Mexican, Mexican was better than being Mexican American, and that was better than being Latino, and so on and so on. And I have always said we come in fifty-seven different flavors.

I know what I am, I know what I've achieved, and that's the most important thing. Because we have kids that are out there who have gone off to college, that have come back to me and said, "You know, Pedro, I just graduated from Harvard," or, "I've graduated from UCLA," or, "I've done this." And all they've said was nothing much, other than, "Thank you." And that's worth to me better than any plaque, any written paper, because *that's* what it is to be a Latino, Chicano, Spanish, whatever you want to call us, you know. That's what's more important, because that's the foundation. It's like that cabinet behind you. There's another cabinet with little drawers on top of that, and the foundation for the other one to hold the weight of the one on top is very strong.

So I've taken everything that my parents have taught me, I've taken everything that Cesar has taught me, I've taken everything that my fellow Latino

veterans have given me, I've taken everything that the educational system has given me, and I've also taken what the culture has given me.

But you got to remember, in my time period, I went from Christian Brothers to Rio Linda. My first day there, this guy comes up to me, he says, "There's going to be a fight."

And I go, "Wow, I don't know nobody here. This is my first day."

He goes, "I want you to come to the fight."

I go, "Why? I don't know nobody here."

He goes, "The guy named Danny is saying he wants to fight you."

I go, "Wait a minute. I don't know nobody here."

He goes, "Show up, because you're in the fight."

So I go to the fight. There's 200 people. I take my cousin and three brothers and somebody else with me, and we go to the fight. We pull into this place called The Clique, and I look and I tell everybody in the crowd, "Oh, we're gonna get killed."

So immediately I walk up to the head of the group there and I said, "Who's this guy I'm supposed to fight?"

He goes, "He's standing right there." That's the first thing I hit, and I laid him out. And after that, because I just kept beating him, finally, they broke us up. I then got back in my car and took everybody with me.

On the way back, this guy kept flashing something, but I couldn't tell because he kept driving next to me. And he had a gun. All I remember is seeing the tip of the barrel, and I figured the rest of it must be about this big. [demonstrates]

He said, "Pull over. I want to talk."

So I pulled over, and he pulled out the gun and stuck it to my head. He goes, "I want to talk."

I said, "You got the gun. I'm a real damn good listener."

So he goes, "Danny wants to fight you again."

"For what? So I can beat him again? So I can beat him again?"

The following year, the Blacks were bused from Grant over to Rio Linda. They were met by two individuals, with sheets. Believe it. This is California. With sheets and hoods, *Ku Klux Klan* on their shirts right here. [demonstrates] Three other individuals, total of five individuals, three jackets, the Klan. In the back, the symbol of the Klan.

At the end of the year, there was a riot. Society was coming to a turmoil. Why does that play a part in my Latino is because I had enough guts to fight for what I believed in, and they were fighting for the same thing. What they wanted was not to be with a White woman; what they wanted was respect. This is the time period where everything is being thrown into this big washer and it's turning and churning and ripping and tearing, and somehow out of that that big mesh, it instilled a foundation for me when, in fact, I could've walked away and been like the educators during that time period who were at the university level and said, "Oh, no, I'm not Mexican. I'm Italian," "I'm Greek." No. It's instilled in me. And I thank God for the color I have, because I wouldn't want another color.

I have my son who married a girl from Wisconsin, actually Iowa, and she's a Norwegian. I had my grandson come to me the other day, and he said "Grandpa!"

I go, "Yes, *mijo*."

He goes, "I'm a Mexican White boy."

I go, "Really? What about your grandma? She's American Indian." And so I said, "*Mijo*, be proud of who you are. Be proud of what each of your cultures give you." So am I proud of who I am? Yeah, because I want him to be successful. I don't care if it's any other color. I want them to be successful too.

We spent too much time beating up each other and fighting, and that's the problem that I still see in Chicanos today from a sociological point of view, from a political view, is that they haven't learned by their mistakes. When one starts to raise up in the political arena or in an educational system or working their way in whatever he does, the first thing we do is tear him down. Tear him down! And that's sad.

We can be doctors, we can be lawyers, we can be teachers. We can have Ph.D.s, MAs, BAs, whatever it may be. We've got to learn that we're not being successful at that portion, and that's the downside of what I feel needs to be expressed about our culture.

Azeredo So we're kind of wrapping up. What do you think about future challenges for the Chicano community? What do you see for the Chicano community now?

[00:49:08]

Hernández As I've stated, we've got the largest amount of kids going through the university system. I hope that we don't lose that. We have great family values. We have drugs and gangs, and that, I hope, we lose, and I hope that we lose as well the selfishness that keeps us from achieving all the good things.

I would want my kids to do what I have done and more, and I want them to proud of their father and their Native American mother. I want each of our cultures, whether you call us Puertorriqueños, Salvadorian, Cubano, Puertorriqueño, or whatever, that we be proud of our achievements.

Let me give you an example. When you say, “What do you want to see for the future?” Let me give it to you as a veteran. There’s a guy by the name of Roy Benavidez who fought in Vietnam. He received the Medal of Honor. But this is what they don’t know: he was wounded sixty-three times in one day. That means bayonet, mortar, machine gun fire, knives, you name it, and probably the kitchen sink. And yet I ask myself, “Oh, my god, what possesses that individual to be wounded sixty-three times and not lay down?” If it had been me, after the second wound, I would’ve gone to the lieutenant and said, “You know what? I’m pretty sure I’m not coming back in the afternoon.” But it is that sixty-three times, the courage, the pride, the honor, all of that stuff is what makes us who we are. We cannot afford to lose that. We can take that and double it and double it, because that’s something that we are warriors. But you can use that same philosophy in education, nursing, doctors, whatever it may be, and we have so much to offer as engineers, and we seem to achieve in that area quite a bit.

Like my wife’s family that comes from Mexico, they’re Indian, but her father was American Indian, Tiwa, which is part of the Navajo. On her side there are doctors, engineers, and you name it, something everybody can be proud of.

On my side, heroes like my uncle who fought in Europe and was a medic, and he ran out in an open field and he picked up this guy and he was coming back. He

was hit by a zip gun, which is makes the sound of [demonstrates], and it hit him in the heel. And he turned around, even though he was wounded, helped the guy that he was carrying, but he couldn't because that zip gun had cut his head off.

They take my uncle and they give him the million-dollar wound. Because of his wound, he got the million dollar. What that means is he's sent home. And instead of being nobody in society, guess what he becomes. He becomes the mayor of Lincoln, California, my hometown, my uncle. My other uncles in that town, Brown Stars, one, two, and we have one that has three.

The chief of police in that town, Jiménez was his name, he was in the Second World War as well. He got a Silver Star. They made him the chief of police.

So can we run a city? Yeah. Can we raise \$10 million? Yes. Can we do the impossible? Yes. And we're doing that, because I'm the historian for the Mexican American Memorial, and coming September, we're going to break ground and accomplish what the mothers gave us: a soldier. When you look at the photo, you'll see about fifty, seventy-five mothers who lost their sons in the Second World War, and they gave us this statue and they raised something like \$50,000. And they did it because they didn't want society to forget their sons, and we will accomplish that.

But the most beautiful thing that comes out of this is when you go, when this thing is built, there's a walkway that goes like this [demonstrates], like two arms greeting you, and in the middle of that is tribute to the society of mothers. Behind that is the statue that they gave us. Let me interpret it for you: culture, pride, honor. You got to go through the mothers to get to the son. Is it important? They seem to think it was important. They seem to think their family was important.

So I think when I look back at the things that I have achieved, it's due to my culture and the pride. You can't take it away from me, and you never will.

[End of interview]