

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education  
Oral History Project

**Robert Hernandez**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Miriam Vázquez Tapia

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Transcription by Nicholas Gosal and Technitype Transcripts

**Tapia** Please state your full name.

[00:00:10]

**Hernandez** Robert Hernandez.

**Tapia** Would you liked to be called Robert?

[00:00:13]

**Hernandez** Sure, Robert. El Bobby de la Loma, if you want to, but that's my gang name. [laughter]

**Tapia** So Robert, can you please provide your birthdate?

[00:00:22]

**Hernandez** May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1950.

**Tapia** And your marital status?

[00:00:27]

**Hernandez** Divorced.

**Tapia** Do you have any children?

[00:00:31]

**Hernandez** Yes, I do. I have three children.

**Tapia** So can you tell me where you were born and raised?

[00:00:31]

**Hernandez** I was born and raised in Davis, California.

**Tapia** What do you do for a living?

[00:00:43]

**Hernandez** I'm retired. I worked for the state of California for about thirty-five years.

**Tapia** So what did your parents do when you were growing up?

[00:00:51]

**Hernandez** Gosh, when I was growing up, my mother worked in the telephone company. She was a telephone operator and she worked a couple of retail jobs too. My father was an insurance salesman, he was a post office man, I guess, then he was a truck driver and he was a private businessowner of a Mexican restaurant.

**Tapia** So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

[00:01:20]

**Hernandez** Seven. Well, there's six. Including me, it'd be seven total.

**Tapia** Can you please describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and neighborhood?

[00:01:32]

**Hernandez** It was a very, very good childhood, very, very good childhood. My father and my mother never did hit us, so for kids, nice. They never did hit us. It was an extended family, Mexican family. We lived with my grandparents from time to

time, we lived with my uncles from time to time, we had that whole experience of people coming into the house and staying with us, visiting, popping up. They came in from Arizona and they would stay a month, two months, a year. So we had sort of a typical Chicano upbringing in that sense, when you have an extended family and the family's still intact.

My grandmother came from Sonora, and all her relatives, after the Mexican Revolution, they'd left Mexico and some of them settled on the border, on the Mexican side or the American side, depending on the family. Some lived in Arizona, some lived in Los Angeles, some lived in the Bay Area around Antioch and that area, that part of the Valley. But for the most part, a lot of them lived around here, around this part of the Valley, around Colusa or by Galt, Woodland. Davis was kind of like the head—Sacramento was the headquarters.

**Tapia** Were you part of a Felito Program during the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:03:25]

**Hernandez** Yes, I was a Felito. I was considered a Felito. I came from Sacramento City College and I transferred into Sac State.

Can I go back a little bit to how I was raised?

**Tapia** Sure.

[00:03:45]

**Hernandez** In terms of how it relates to Chicano Studies, because Chicano Studies has a whole thing about identity. I never went through some of the trials and tribulations that some of my peer group, my friends and other fellow Chicanos, went

through in terms of that identity crisis. I mean, I did question sometimes where I was from, but in my families, it has to do more with my grandmother and my grandfather and how they viewed themselves, especially my grandfather. My grandfather fought in the Mexican Revolution with Pancho Villa. As a matter of fact, I wrote a book about it, about the Mexican Revolution, and he's mentioned in my book just a tad.

In his view, we were not anything but Mexicanos, and he would always make sure—I evidently asked him one time, because I remember this conversation where he told me directly that where I was Mexicano. [Spanish] He told me a little about where he came from. He came from Zacatecas and that sort of thing. So that identity was an early reward that they gave me, and later on as I went through the Chicano Movement, it gave me an arrow in my quiver, so to speak, that I could hold on to. And my grandmother was the same sort of thing. She was very proud of her heritage and that sort of thing.

But there were no longer Mexicanos, okay? They came over right after the revolution because their villages were blasted to the ground, they were obliterated, they were set afire both in Zacatecas and both in Sonora. So they had made the transition to become Mexican Americans, even though they were never citizens of the United States, but all my uncles and aunts were born in the United States. So that gave me a perspective and passed on to me a different sort of identity, and my roots are a little different than some. You know, these days a lot of people are immigrating over here. So are some of my cousins. A lot of my cousins from Mexico are here now. But back in the day, right after the Mexican Revolution, the Mexicans, when they came here, they were foreigners, and that feeling of being a foreigner and how

you get along in this society was transferred down the generations through my uncles and aunts and then down to me, but, generally, the culture was real strong in my family, the food, the language, the habits, the little *dichos*, that sort of thing. So I was extremely privileged to get that. So identity was not really a big issue with me.

**Tapia** How did your participation in the Mexican American Education Project influence your thinking and involvement in the Chicano community?

[00:07:21]

**Hernandez** It's hard to describe it. It's almost a catalytic experience. It's like peeling off the layers of an onion and then getting to the sweet part in the center. The Mexican American Educational Project gave me the intellectual foundation for the things that I needed to exist in this society. Because what I was telling you about my identity, I knew that I wasn't an Anglo. In the town of Davis, we were probably one of the few Mexican families there, but I knew I wasn't Mexicano because I wasn't from Mexico. We would visit Mexico every once in a while, like when I was four or five years old, first time I went back to Mexico and then a couple times after that, and the Mexicanos would tell you right away, they'd tell you "*Pocho*," you know. The first thing they say to you [Spanish]. So I'd say, "Well, no."

**Tapia** So how did this influence your career and life goals?

[00:08:48]

**Hernandez** Well, when I got out of school, I had a Chicano Studies degree, and everybody or many, many people told me, "Well, what are you going to do with that? Chicano Studies? What is that? What's a Chicano?" That sort of thing.

So I got into government, state government, and ultimately ended up in affirmative action, which is a civil rights area, and it's all about Chicanismo. It's all about being aware of who you are, being aware of your people, their potential, their culture, their way of being, and how that translates into the workforce, see, because the doors in a building don't keep the culture out. The doors in a building that they go work in allow the culture to come in.

So in those days, there was not that many Mexicanos in the workforce. There was a growing population, but the state had to make a transition and open up their Equal Employment Opportunity Programs to everybody. So I was part of that group of workers that made that happen through the State Personnel Board. Later on, I became involved in discrimination complaints and that sort of thing. So everything that I learned in the Mexican American Educational Project, even though I was supposed to turn out a teacher, came to play, and ultimately, even though I wasn't a teacher, I was part of a training program that trained every single employee in Caltrans. There's about 20,000 employees in Caltrans. It taught them how to act towards each other. So the teaching skills that they try to inculcate in the Mexican American Project did come into play.

**Tapia** So would you say this participation in the cultural anthropology business, did it influence your involvement with the Chicano Movement?

[00:11:15]

**Hernandez** Yes, yes, because basically cultural anthropology has to do with the history of the culture, the development, the history of the people and their way of being in terms of how their culture influences their self. So you take one person and

you extrapolate that out to a community, and you begin to see certain patterns, certain things happening, and certain cultural signatures.

So the exposure to that cultural anthropology kind of brought it all together. I had a map to follow, I had books that I had read, I had history that I had read, I had art that I had seen, I had visited places, I knew the history of California and its relationship to Mexicans, just the whole relationship of the United States to Mexico. Because don't forget in 1845 there were no Mexican Americans. There was this many [demonstrates]. But in 1846, when the United States invaded Mexico and stole the land, well, then suddenly they created what's called a Mexican American.

So it gets back to that original item that I was talking to you about as we started to talk: identity. So all of a sudden, now Mexicans and, for sure, their children were Mexican Americans. They weren't going to be able to go to Mexico, and because of the racist, ethnocentric, xenophobic attitude that the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants had against those people, they weren't allowed to be Americans.

That struggle that they went through started in 1845 into 1846, and brought forth, roll forward and there were other struggles that spun off of that, that had been hidden from us a lot of times, because the history was created by the mainstream culture. So we don't know about Joaquin Murrieta and Tiburcio Vasquez, how they fought against the mainstream culture. We don't know about the hangings of the Chicanos during that period of time where Mexicans were hung on trees because they were trying to mine in the minefields. We don't know about the anti-greaser laws. We don't know about them not being able to vote, not being able to write a business contract. We don't know about that whole oppression that was laid out for them

because that's not what the mainstream wants to show you. What the mainstream wants to show you is that these civilized people from back east came over here and created the great state of California, the great state of Texas, and all that illusion that they have.

Being involved in the Mexican American Project, you learn to read the lies, you learn to scratch the surface, and when things don't measure up, there's something wrong here, it doesn't quite fit. So an example would be like, for instance, when Cortez came to Tenochtitlan, he had to report back to the King of España to say, "This is what I found." And he sent drawings of what he had found, of Tenochtitlan, of Mexico, of Aztlán, and in these drawings he shows these big castles with towers and that sort of building and a moat and that sort of thing. Well, that's because the Españolas had never seen a pyramid, so their brain didn't have the receptors to put that together. What they saw was towers. There's a big difference between this [demonstrates] and this [demonstrates], huge difference. When you look at the pictures of Tenochtitlan, what the Españolas saw, then you realize they didn't know what they saw. They didn't know what they were looking at. They have a ceremony called [Spanish], where they would bathe in a [Spanish]. They thought people were getting naked in there and having orgies. And they were taking a bath. It's a public bath.

So, again, it's all that whole legacy that was brought forth by the Western thought is essentially saying that "We came over here and we conquered and we discovered you," as if you didn't exist until we found you. Then the whole doctrine that follows that through and places them in the power seat, in pushing their power on



the local population is based on their perception, and that's a perception not founded in logic, not founded in physics, not founded in truth. So, again, getting back to the Mexican American Project, what was taught to me during my classes and that sort of thing was exactly that, that what you see and what's being presented, two different things.

I hope that answered your question. Sometimes I get off on a tangent. So just go like this [demonstrates]. "Come on back." [laughs]

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

[00:17:38]

**Hernandez** My earliest memories. Well, you know, I think it depends on what you call the Movimiento Chicano, right? Because, again, I think for me it came to the seed of identity, because I knew, and so did all my brothers, that we were called Mexicanos. But then that's when my dad first mentioned the word *Chicano* to me. [Spanish]. My dad is an old dude, but later on when I got older, I asked him, "When did you first hear that word?"

He said, "Well, around the 1930s, we called each other Chicanos." Because he and all his brothers and sisters were first-born American citizens here, see, and they had the same struggles of trying to assimilate and trying to get along and trying to stay out of jail and all that stuff, and trying to prosper during a very difficult time, during the 1930s with the Great Depression. My dad lived in tents and farmworked and that sort of thing.

So although that's not particularly related to my own personal thing, but it does come from my father and that was passed on again from my elders, from my grandfather to his son to me, see, which is the identity. So that's the first time that I remember asking my grandfather, "What am I? Am I Spanish? Am I Mexican?"

**Tapia** So being this term *Chicano*, it meant to you as a term of identity, a way to identify yourself.

[00:19:40]

**Hernandez** The first time I saw it on TV was Cesar Chavez, because Cesar Chavez was doing the *marchas*. Later on I learned this, that was one of the first social events that the media reported on. But later on, I learned that my family had participated in a couple of labor strikes in Los Angeles. It was just part of the Movimiento and being organized and that sort of thing.

On my mother's side of the family, they were involved with [Spanish]. So the Mexicanos that came over here, they had their own festivals, they had their own little organizations, they had a [Spanish] organization and they had the Mexican Center. They put up the Mexican Center here in Sacramento. So they were part of that first generation that began to pull together the community and form the community, and having [Spanish] and that sort of thing. So they're not the fist-pounding Chicano Movement, "We want our full civil rights," type of things, but they were, they were the seeds. They were the preliminary organization of getting the people together and then making sure they were going to survive under the conditions that were happening at that time.

**Tapia** So how did other Mexicans or Mexican Americans or Latinos react to the term *Chicano* or *Chicano Movement*?

[00:21:24]

**Hernandez** Well, in my family, it was the whole nine yards. I had an aunt that thought that I was a [Spanish]. [laughs] Beautiful woman, I mean, she was real strong. She was a businesswoman, that sort of thing. She thought I was a [Spanish], so that was her reaction.

My father himself, I got a lot of support from him because he supported Chavez, he supported anything that would organize the farmworkers. In my family, there were a lot of construction workers, so they were union-based, so they supported a lot of that labor stuff. And in reality, see, they remembered their struggles that they went through, being made fun of when they were speaking Spanish, and not really getting the good jobs. And even though it was Davis, California, which is more or less more open-minded than many other areas, it's not like South Texas. They did remember that they came through that crucible, so anything that was going to give more rights to the Chicanos was right on.

Then later on as the Movimiento began to take hold, like, for instance, I noticed a difference right after the East L.A. riots, that there was a lot of inquiry in my family, like, "What's going on there? What's up?" My family is a microcosm [laughs], very conservative and very liberal, like over-the-top anarchist-type stuff, okay? But through that, I think for sure they knew that there was a Chicano Movement. There's no denying that. They knew the well got clapped. [slaps hands together]

I had a cousin of mine that was involved with United Farm Workers, and he was an organizer in the lettuce boycott in Arizona. He was a real firebrand. His name was Gustavo Gutierrez. He's no longer alive now. He was longtime organizer, and he would periodically come over and get into these big arguments with my uncles and aunts and everything. So we would have these political discussions, and I was one of his allies because I kind of understood what he was saying.

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

[00:24:01]

**Hernandez** Yeah, yeah, definitely. Someone told me that they thought that I was steeped in the Chicano/Mexicano culture. That's kind of what the Chicano Movement did. It gave me a conduit, a conduit to all the information. And as the Movimiento took off, then there was more and more literature, there was more and more investigation, there was more and more question and research.

Part of that, to be honest with you, is just based on mathematics. It has to do with demographics. My grandfather came here and my father was born here. There was maybe a million, maybe 750,000 Mexicans during that time. From that, that population grew and grew, and then the demographics changed for various reasons. So, for instance, when I was part of the Movimiento, there was about 3.5 million Mexicans/Chicanos in California. Well, now it's 12 million. Now the, quote, unquote, "Hispanics," which of those, about 70 percent are Mexicanos, now we're the greatest thing since sliced bread. But the demographics have tilted everything. They call it the

tipping point. Well, the tipping point is past. It's already tipped, see, and, again, it has to do with the demographics, and that's what's really driving a lot of this.

The market has changed. So, for instance, if you were to look at the different population segments, for instance, like White Anglo-Saxons, they, for the most part, a significant, probably more than a majority of them, are double income, zero children. Another portion is double income, one child. Well, mathematically, you what that does, right? That means that every year smaller, smaller, smaller, smaller.

But Mexicanos, it's different, see, because we have the immigration process, we have just the regular birthing process, where we're more fertile, and so our population is growing, growing, growing, growing. Now, it's much younger than they are, so it changes the politics sometimes, because older people react different politically than younger people. And the other thing is that younger people cannot vote. If 40 percent of your population can't vote, well, then you're going to be treated accordingly. But in some populations, 60 to 70, 80 percent of their population can vote, so the politicians are going to go after them.

So when you see issues that are alienating to our people, to the [Spanish], a lot of that is driven by market forces. But, unfortunately, you see a perpetuation of certain stereotypes that come from past generations and even other centuries, where they bring forth these old images and these old references that aren't founded in truth. Again they see towers and castles, and we see pyramids.

**Tapia**            So what role do you think Chicanas played in the Movimiento?

[00:28:11]

**Hernandez** If it wasn't for the Chicanas, we wouldn't be here. [laughs] They were the driving force. I know a lot of dudes won't admit that, but it's the truth. They showed courage. They were the rallying segment. That's not to say that there weren't struggles, because there were some real true generational struggles with women being given a second-class reference, right?

You know, I don't want to push my book too much [laughs], but I wrote a book about the Mexican Revolution, and there's a chapter in there where I deal with the S\_\_\_\_\_ right? And the S\_\_\_\_\_, generally they're given short shrift in terms of their role in the Mexican Revolution. Well, it's the same thing with the Chicano Movement, right? The Chicanas, okay? Because the S\_\_\_\_\_ and the Chicanas, when the struggle was on, they would go forward to where the battle was, right? Because they were putting bullets in the gun, and when the person was wounded, they were tending to them. When it came time, when the battle was over, they fed the troops. They were the Quartermaster Corps.

Well, an army cannot run on just bullets, okay? When the Russians beat Napoleon, Napoleon ran out of food. So in the Mexican Revolution, the armies that sustained themselves, like Villa's army, had a lot of women participating in there. Those women, when those dudes were shot, they didn't give up their position militarily to the army that was attacking them. The women picked up the guns and fired, see, and there were a lot of women that were [Spanish] and commanded 500 troops and were very instrumental in that struggle.

The same analogy runs true for Chicanas. When the going got tough, they got tougher. There's no way you could get anything off the ground unless you had the

participation of women there. No way. It wasn't going to happen. Intellectually, physically, they do the hard hours. If it hadn't been for them, there wouldn't be a Chicano Movement. We would have nothing. We would have nothing. We've have a bunch of men grunting at each other. [laughs]

**Tapia**           What did you personally initiate or help initiate in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:31:19]

**Hernandez**    I had to write this down. Let's see. Where was I back in 1960? No, it doesn't go back that far.

                  Just generally, I try to involve myself with the leadership aspect. Here at Sacramento City College, we had an organization called MAYA, Mexican American Youth Association. So I affiliated myself with providing the leadership and getting involved at the officer level. Some of things we did, we sued the school [laughs], got the school to come across with some certain concessions. One of them was a College Awareness Program, and that essentially recruited students into Sacramento City College.

                  We formed a tutorial center where Chicano students could access tutors so they wouldn't drop out, essentially. There's a significant dropout problem with people going through two-year institutions because they're under a lot of pressure to go back to work. So we instituted that.

                  And this beautiful library here was a much different building. We bought a bunch of books and established the Chicano book section so we would have books to read that pertained to us.

What happened was during that time at San Francisco State, there was a Third World Liberation Front, riots and struggles, okay? Some of that political power got transferred over here to Sacramento City College, and we had our own Third World Liberation Front here. So we got the Los Rios board to set aside some time and to gather the faculty, student leaders, and administrators to try to sort of redo the college so that any potential issue for—the big word in those days was “make the experience relevant.” So they had some meetings off campus where all these groups got together.

So one of the things we formulated was getting involved with the Curriculum Committees, having a say-so in some of the resources, and establishment of Ethnic Studies, that sort of thing. So I was privileged to be part of that process.

I’m trying to think of what else. I wrote for the student newspaper; I was a columnist for them. They always wanted to know “What do you Mexicans have to say?” So I got to be the person who wrote the articles.

You ever heard of Angela Davis? Never? Okay. She was an organizer back in the day. She was a communist. She was a professor. There was a big ol’ stink about her being a professor and being a communist for the University of California. So what we did, we got her elected our honorary Homecoming Queen [laughs], and so it really upset the establishment types, got on the news and everything, where she was Sacramento City College’s honorary Homecoming Queen. To do that, you do these funny things.

So we had a princess elected, Chicana princess, right? And they tried to take that away from her, to cut away from her being the Homecoming Queen. So we had our princess walk out and she gave the salute and walked off stage. She wasn’t going



to participate in their Homecoming. So, they seem small, but they're little political statements that were made to make people aware that times were changing.

When they had the riots in East L.A., I was sent from MAYA. We had a group of people that went over there to East L.A., to march in East L.A. Later on when the riot happened, we got some pictures taken. We provided the information, I guess, from what really happened over there. We didn't start the riot, though. The cops did.

We got involved with high school events, trying to organize the high schools, have them come onto campus. We had social events for them where we got the Sacramento Concilio to rent out the Memorial Auditorium, and we provided a big community celebration using the high school students and Sacramento State College students to provide the entertainment, and we gave them the community recognition for their participation.

All the community organizations available at that time, there was probably about twenty-five or thirty viable Chicano organizations, and we all gave them awards and all that stuff, and gave them recognition for what they were doing in their area. It was very diverse. I mean, you had the [Spanish] doing their thing and you had the MEChA students doing their thing. You had the bilingual educators doing their thing. Well, they all got recognition, trying to bring them all together and say, "Hey, you guys are all doing a great job, whatever you're doing."

Got involved with boycotting certain classes. A couple of classes we shut down because the teacher was teaching irrelevant education.

What else did we do? We would visit the ex-offenders and the incarcerated people in Ione and in Vacaville, and make contact with them so they felt that there

was a community out there for them when they got out. We brought down about, gosh, must have been about a good thirty ex-offenders. “Ex-offenders.” They called them wards in those days. But they were CYA, California Youth Authority, to get them released from Ione, drove them down here. We had a big dance for them and they went back. Again, it’s to try to humanize them.

We did cultural display stuff. On the Quad over here, we’d always bring Chicano music out there. We would bring dancers and do all that stuff. In those days, they had a big ol’ festival for the students. We said, “This year we’re going to enter your guys’ festival.” And the people who were entering these festivals and these celebrations, they were mainstream, see, so they were all the fraternities and the various schools. Like, the aeronautics students had their thing.

Well, the MAYA students got together and we sold food, sold tacos, right? And we constructed a display that folded in on itself, but it was a big huge like mission building with arches and stuff like that. Anyway, we got first prize. These are small little—they appear to be nonpolitical, but they’re really political pushbacks saying, “Hey, we’re here and we can do it your way, and we can do it better than you.”

But the main focus was trying to recruit high school students for us, for our organization, try to get Chicano students in on campus, because the dropout problem was very live and it influenced a lot of our thinking, because even though it really hasn’t changed that much, but 50 percent of all Mexican students were dropping out. So that’s like educational genocide. That’s cutting their heads off. So we tried to come up with ways to remedy that sort of thing.

Then when I got involved at State College, I was involved in the student government, so I was trying to get the Association of Student Government to address its resources to make sure that we were included. For instance, we created *teatro* presentations. Before that, there were no Chicano *teatro* performances. We supported them. When I say we supported, I'm talking about money, because those activities are supported by the Associated Students. So we did that.

They were building the Student Union Building, so we made sure we were part of the various committees that created that Student Union Building, so the design, the rules, what was going on within that building, we were part of the decision-making. Part of that was the—see, before this time, the students were left out completely, but after the Movimiento, we were part of the inner workings of the university. For instance, every year the university mucky-mucks get together and they create the budget, right? And the reason that's important is because when you create the budget, you're setting up what you're going to do. Anything new is going to have to be paid for through this budget, right? Well, before, Chicano students were not involved, but we were given a seat at the table to create the budget for the university.

I remember one particular example where they were going to cut the EOP Program and create savings to move them over here, and because of our personal involvement, they didn't cut the program but they also augmented the slots. So if we hadn't been there, then it would have been a closed door sort of deal. Well, that upset a lot of people because that meant that maybe somebody's tennis team wasn't going to get their new racquets or something.

When I was involved at the Associated Students' level, we worked out a deal with the athletic department. They had owed the Associated Students several hundred thousand dollars for the lights around the football field, because the students paid for that. So what we did was we said, "We'll forgive you the loan. We're not going to increase your budget any," because they wanted us to increase their budget. They had this three-year plan to increase their budget for three years. "We're not going to do that. We'll forgive your loan. You have more income and you can do with that what you want, but we'll take that money that we saved and we'll move it over here to EOP."

So these little maneuvers was not directly associated with the Chicano Movement since I wasn't at that table saying, "*Viva la raza!*" but we got involved because we were part of the decision-making. The Chicanos elected us the leaders. We had president, vice president and student senate chair and a couple other senators on the Associated Students. We had money we controlled, so when you control a little money, then you got a little play, you know. You got things to do with your dough.

I wanted to make sure that I mentioned the *teatro* process, because we went to Mexico City, we went to the University of Anáhuac to present it. Sac State Chicano students presented a play over there at the Universidad de Anáhuac. It was produced here in Sacramento, and we produced [Spanish] also. That was a big deal.

We had music on campus, Latin music on campus. I remember this group of Latin students that had made contact with their friends. They were friends of friends that we knew, and they had a little Latin group. So I said, "Here, here's \$300. You come and you play for the lunchtime crowd."

So they came, and so they set up, and, man, they had a *huge* group. I mean, there was like sixteen elements in the band, right, because they had a full rhythm section, [Spanish], the whole thing, right? So they're blasting their music. So I notice this guy come over in my view, and he was the spokesperson, he was the public affairs person for the university. So he comes up to me and he says "Hey, who's that group?"

I said, "Oh, those guys are from Oak Park, man. They're a bunch of Chicanos from Oak Park."

"Oh, man, they're good, they're good, they're tight." So that told me that he knew music, right? And he says, "You know what? That music, *none* of these people," and he's pointing out to the public, to all these Anglo students, "none of these people have ever heard." That tells me that things are going to be different. Anyway, that's again personal involvement, right?

Oh, we did a childcare center for the women that wanted to come to campus and put their child in a childcare center. We funded that. La Raza Bookstore, which is now called Galleria Posada, the original money for that came from the students, the Sac State students, from the Associated Students, when the Chicanos took over the Associated Students. And we put police in the parking lots because we were having some problems with people getting assaulted, so we put that into the budget. I'm trying to think what else we did. We had film festivals, you know, stuff like that.

**Tapia** So how would you say these changes and your involvement impacted your life with your personal relationships with family, with peers?

[00:48:35]

**Hernandez** Well, as long as I was hanging out with Movimiento people and people that were politically aware and they were activists and stuff like that, things were interesting. But within my family, again, it's the spectrum. A lot of people just didn't understand, they really didn't. They thought that I was a wild-haired radical, and I wasn't. I was working within the system pretty much, getting involved with the existing institutional structures and putting leverage on the existing institutional processes to get what we wanted as a community.

There was an organization called COPA, which was headed up by a guy by the name of Joe Serna. Being part of that and seeing that develop and seeing that happen and seeing how he created the political interest and how he traded off with the various candidates and the political forces that were controlling Sacramento at that time, it was a real education. And personally getting involved with campaigns like Manuel Ferrales, councilman, and Debbie Ortiz when she got elected, Joe Serna when he got elected, that whole thing.

I got involved with other campaigns in other parts of the state for the Chicano assemblymen, because at one point, there was only one Chicano assemblyman. By the time that I stopped getting involved with politics, there was ten. I'm not saying that I personally created that, but there was a political movement that I participated in. We would do the things with scholarships, raise money for scholarships and that sort of thing. I think that about covers it, personal involvement.

**Tapia** How did this impact your career?

[00:50:48]

**Hernandez** My career? Well, see, when I was telling you my career turned out to be affirmative action and civil rights, so it just dovetailed right in. Everything that I had learned and everything that I used for processes to understand, it became relevant. It became relevant.

The state of California was trying to essentially open its doors to the public, but what that meant for us, because there was an organization of Chicano employees, CAFE, which, again, I helped participate in making that thing happen, it made sure that the state of California as a public employer using public taxpayers' monies were going to open their employment—there's 250,000 state employees—to make sure that we got an equal opportunity to those jobs.

So my career became being who I was. I would create these presentations and do computer analysis of the population and do projections and little things. Like for Caltrans, for instance, they wanted to create these parks that were addressing certain needs of certain population groups. Well, we were able to show, yeah, that's good, take care of those people because they're part of the population, but you've got to understand that in twenty years, most of the people were going to be families, Mexican families with children who want to go to a picnic. So you better have some picnic tables over there. You better not make that thing a four-wheeler ATV extravaganza. Again, so trying to take the institution and tailor it to what was the emerging population, which was Chicanos, see, because we're an emerging population. Again, when I say we tilt, we've already tilted, okay, and that's going to be the challenge for our people. Well, now that we have all this and we are the captains of the future, what are we going to do? How are we going to make sure that

we inherit what is ours, what belongs to us, which is an opportunity to live fully,  
without interference?

**Tapia** Well, thank you so much for your participation.

[End of interview]