The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Juan Antonio Lezama

Oral History Memoir

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Cuacuil Can you please state your full name, provide your birthdate, your marital status? Do you have children? If yes, how many do you have?

[00:00:18]

Lezama My name is Juan Antonio Lezama. I was born in 1933, March 2nd, and I'm single and I don't have any kids.

Cuacuil So what did your parents do for a living? How many brothers and sisters do you have? And please describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and neighborhood.

[00:00:49]

Lezama My father was a rancher down south, Mexico in Tabasco, and at that time we lived almost in the jungle, and the only way to get out the ranch was by boat, and it took us about five hours to get to the nearest town.

I have two sisters and three brothers, so we are six total. My mother died when I was ten years old, so I have to go and live with an aunt in Veracruz, and one of my sister and one of my brother, the three of us went to live with my aunt in

Veracruz. It was my mother's sister. So we went to school there, and every summer we went to the ranch to see my father. He already got married again, so I have half brothers and sister also. But I had a happy childhood. It was nice living with my aunt, my grandmother, and I didn't feel the loss of my mother, you know? And my father was really a great guy.

Cuacuil So were you raised in Veracruz?

[00:02:11]

Lezama Yes, I was raised in Veracruz until I was about twenty years old. Then my father spoke English and he was working at the time for an American company, oil company down south, so he asked me if I wanted to work there, so I went and worked there. At that time, I only had elementary school, so I went at night to get my junior high school, but in Mexico it's three years. It's not like here, two years. But over there it's three years. It was almost like high school at that time because we took a lot of courses in different areas. So that was all my education. I didn't go to college or anything.

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

[00:03:09]

Lezama I was a Felito. Let me tell you how I got to the States, because I worked for that company for about nine years, so I was about twenty-seven when I decided I didn't want to stay there. I had the idea that I would like to learn English. My father didn't have an education, but he was getting a good job there because he

spoke English. So I said, “Well, if I learn English, I might get a very good job than what I have now.”

So I met some people from Oregon and I asked them if they could help me to come to the States, and they said, “Sure, we will help you.” They were an American family, an elderly couple. So, like a year later, they helped me to come, and I was in Oregon like a couple of years learning English, but every summer I would come to California and work in the field because I have to earn some money. So I had a friend in Modesto, and I came over her house and I stay there and I went to the fields to work the whole summer, and then back to Oregon. I did that for a couple of years.

Then I met some people in Modesto, and they helped me go into the migrant program, into the Head Start migrant program as a social worker, so I start working for the migrant program there. Then three or four years later, I learned about the Mexican American Project, and I applied to it, and so they accept me and that’s how I started as a Felito.

Cuacuil So what fields did you work in?

[00:05:03]

Lezama Education. At that time when I got into the program, I decided I wanted to be a teacher. So we were taking several classes. I took lot of classes in social science and also in anthropology and then the education classes that we were taking, but when we finish, I decided to go into administration, in the administration area, so I got a job with one of the Fellows, Armando Ayala [phonetic], he had a grant for bilingual education, and I start working for him, for the project, for this bilingual project as a resource teacher.

I work there for about four years as a resource teacher, and I had to cover several counties, going to the schools and meeting with the teachers, observing the kids and giving them ideas on how to do it bilingually. So that was really great. I learned a lot. Because I was just out of college, I didn't have that much experience, but going to the schools, you learn from the teachers and you learn from your peers. So it was really great experience.

There was another person working also as a resource teacher, and what we were doing, it was like we pair and she was doing the English part and I was doing the Spanish part, so we will go into this classroom and we show the teachers how to work in Spanish. I was the Spanish model, and then in English, she was the English model. So we did that for a long time.

Then we wrote a paper called "The Dual Language Model," and it was well accepted by the teachers. As a matter of fact, I used that later on in down south, California. The Lennox School District, they asked me if I wanted to be the director of the bilingual program. They have a grant, a federal grant for $2 billion. I said, "Yeah, I would like to do it, but if I take the job, I want to do the Dual Language Model. That's it. If you don't want to do it the way I want it, then I don't want the job."

And the superintendent of the school bought the idea. He said, "Okay. This is something new, this is something really exciting, and I want to have the best bilingual program."

So I said, "Okay, you will have the best bilingual program." So I did that for about five years and worked with them.

But when I was going to school over here, at that time was the Movement, the Chicano Movement, and we will go and picket the—well, we didn't have that much time because we have to go to school, you know, but like on Saturday or Sunday, we will go and picket the store, the Safeway store, or we go to marches. It was the Vietnam era also, so we will go to the walks at night with the candles. So it was a good time. I really enjoy it.

Then I was in a play. Maestro Serrano [phonetic] wanted to do a play, and I said, "Yeah, I would like to be in it." So we did *Unrooted*, it was called, *Los Desarraigados*. It was about the people that come from Mexico, live here, and how the kids, when they are growing up and they were born here, there was like a break in communication with the parents and all that. So it was a good play, and we run it for about a week or so.

Then I decided to form a group in the *barrio* with some of the students, Chicano students, to do a more Chicano type of play. So I did that a couple of times, you know. We have the play—I don't remember the name of the play, of course, you know, it would be such a long time. But it was a lot of fun and we had a lot of people in the community and the place where, you know, in Chicano language or half English, half Spanish. So it was just depicting the situation of the kids and the *barrio*, more or less. So that was really good. I really enjoy doing that.

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

[00:10:26]

Lezama Well, it did, because remember I came from Mexico, so I have a different thinking, and the *Chicano* word, to me, was like—I don't know what a Chicano means, you know. It's just a word, probably like for the kids who were born here. But later on, you know, being involved in the program and being involved with people here, I know that I learned, but it came to me that it was more than a word; it was a way of thinking. It was a way of thinking. It was a way that you have to be aware who you are in this very moment and who do you want to be from here later on.

So it really changed my way of thinking, because I was thinking as a Mexican from Mexico. I wasn't thinking as a Mexican American or a person born here, but then being involved in the program, going to the community, going to the *barrio*s, meeting people that didn't think the way I was thinking, changed my way of thinking, and my way of thinking changed as good, because I felt that I had to do something for my people. They were my people, too, and I was their people, and they accept me. Because at first they did not accept me that much, you know. I was a foreigner, in a way, and I was a foreigner the way I thought, but later my thinking changed and things start changing for me, too, and I felt that I have to do something for the kids and everybody. Probably that's reason that I got involved with the theatre and I got involved in the *barrio*s going and talking to kids, you know, small kids.

Cuacuil So what role did your knowledge of cultural anthropology influence your involvement and participation in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:12:43]

Lezama You know, I took a lot of courses in anthropology, and I don't think were the courses that changed me; it was just my involvement with people, touching bases with the bases. I think that's what changed my way of thinking, you know. As a matter of fact, in one of my anthropology courses, I have to go and live with a family, with a Chicano family. I don't remember the name of the little town, because it's far away from Sacramento. I have to choose a place far away from the area. [Spanish] I don't know. I can't remember, it been such a long time.

I went and lived there for a month, and I have to record everything and be part of the family, you know, like I wasn't a visitor or I wasn't somebody that was observing from up here down. I have to do it with them. I have to get up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning, go with a guy to see the sheeps, because he was a sheepherder, and do whatever he was doing.

Of course, I have to be recording all these things, but it was like not from a point of view of somebody that comes from outside, but from a point of view of somebody who is *inside* of the family, part of the family. So it was a great experience for me. So, anyway, I was saying I really had a great time living with those people. I say "those people" because I don't remember their name, but it was like my family, living with my family, doing whatever they doing, and helping the kids in the evening, you know, that they were going to school, with their English and things like that. It was just something that probably was part of my growing up, growing up and learning about myself and about who I was and what I wanted to do with my life and with the life of other people that I want to touch. And I think along my whole life

here in the States, I touch a lot of people, but it was because I was touched before by other people, see? So it makes a difference for me.

Cuacuil So what are your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:15:41]

Lezama Well, it was something like I was telling you before, you know. It's being here and being part of the Mexican American Project, I think, was probably a catalyst for many people, because I can remember a lot of the kids were just coming from high school. I was older, so probably that's what makes my thinking differently from the kids that were coming from high school, because they were like brand new in the new world which was the university. So I also learn from them, you know, what it was to be born in this country and go through the system and being able to go to the university, to college, when if that program hasn't been there, probably no one of the group that I belonged at the time have gone to the school because we didn't have the money, see? So, many of those kids were also changed because they didn't think about being Chicano. They were Mexican American kids, you know, clean-cut, all-American, but being in the project changed their mind also, you know. And I guess I have kept in touch with several of them that were my closest friend, and they work in education their whole lives. They were teachers or they were principals or they were superintendents, see? The project made a change in their lives as well as in my life.

Cuacuil Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally? Please explain. What role do you believe that Chicanas played in the Movimiento?

[00:17:51]

Lezama I think it was the same role that we men were having. They were just friends, they were just students like us. They were participating in anything that happened at the time. They were going to marches or they were going to picketing. They were doing all kind of things that probably if they have stay at home, they will never done it, see? So I think that also changed their mind, also see themself as somebody that could do same thing as a man was doing. So, I mean, I didn't see them as women; I saw them as my friends. I saw them as part of the learning process that we were going through, see? I think that was the most important part for many of the women.

Some of them were more—what I can call it—outspoken, you know, or more to the left. I remember a couple of them that belonged to the Brown Berets, which was the really radical part, you know. They were radicals, but they were part of us. I didn't care whether she was shooting people. I mean, she was my friend, she was in the project, she was part of us, as well as the one who liked to dress really well and she didn't want to go to marches, but she might go picketing, you know, that type of thing. They were the extremes, but who care? They were part of a group of young people who was growing up in a different set of mind, see?

Cuacuil And did you ever experience, like, some of your *compañeras* being treated differently because they were women in the Movimiento?

[00:20:18]

Lezama Probably, probably so. I think so. Probably there were men who were really *macho* type of person, you know, and they didn't care whether you were in the Movimiento or not. It's just that's the way their thinking was. But in our group, in the Felito group that I belong, that we came together, I think that we were just like brothers and sisters, you know. I think that there wasn't any difference. Of course, we would joke and we would play around and we would have fun, but I don't think—I can't remember anyone making, you know, distinction because, "Oh, no, you can't go with us because you are a woman."

Cuacuil What did you personally initiate or help initiate in this Movimiento Chicano? What were some of the organizations you were involved in?

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Lezama Well, I was involved in MEChA. That was the only one at that time that I got involved with, but as I said before, I participate in the theatre, doing the plays that were, like, Chicano plays.

And then I also try to go to different places and talk about bilingual education. Since that was my field, I felt very comfortable doing it. As a matter of fact, I went through all California doing that. I was called to do some workshops on Bilingual Ed, and I think I went to—I don't know how many districts doing that. In the summertime that I wasn't working, I was doing that also, talking to parents, because many of the parents didn't think that they want the kids to be in bilingual education. They didn't care. They said, "We speak Spanish at home. Why he's going to learn Spanish in the school?" So we have to convince them that going to school and learning in your own

language was very beneficial while they were learning English at the same time. No, it might take three years to learn English, but they weren't behind their schooling, you know? They were ahead. When they finally learn English, you know, they were there at the level that they supposed to be. And that's something that you have to convince some of the parents. They were not convinced that that's what they wanted. They wanted to immerse the kid in English, learn English, and then you will succeed, which wasn't true. It wasn't true. So that's some of the things that I was doing.

Later on, when I work as a director of the migrant Head Start Program, also we explain the parents, you know, that they have to bring the kids to the centers while they were in the fields, because the kids were going to be better there, and we show them that it was better for the kids to be in the classroom with the teachers and being taken care of.

Cuacuil And then in what community were you director of the migrant program?

[00:24:03]

Lezama I was in Lennox first, and I was in Merced and Madera Counties. I was in that area, mostly in that area and Modesto. Those were the areas that I move back and forth, you know. There's a lot of agricultural workers there, you know, that are Mexican or Chicano, whatever they call themselves, because sometimes you have to be very careful what you said. Otherwise they might get kind of upset. "I'm not Chicano! I'm from Mexico." Or you call them Mexican, say, "Hey! I was born in this country." [laughs] So you have to be careful of those things, really.

Cuacuil You said you were a part of MEChA. Did you take any leadership position in that?

[00:25:00]

Lezama No, no, I was just going to the meetings and listening to what we have to do, "We are going to picket such and such a place," or, "We are going to do this," or, "We have a meeting at the college" and things like that. No, I didn't have any leadership position.

Also it was really hard to be involved in a lot of things in the community because for me especially, I didn't speak the language very well, you know. I have to really be careful when I was reading, to understand what I was reading. I remember one semester I was carrying about eighteen units, because I wanted to get through college as fastest that I could. So I made it in three years instead of four because I was taking courses in the summertime also, a lot of units. So it was hard to do both things, you know. You have to get good grades, you know. So I was getting good grades.

Cuacuil Where did you do your undergraduate?

[00:26:16]

Lezama It was in Spanish Literature and also Chicano Studies, both.

Cuacuil And what school did you go to?

[00:26:30]

Lezama Sacramento State. That's where the program was, the Fellow programs, the Mexican American Project. And then in Southern California University I got my administrative credential, and also I came to Sacramento to do my master in social science.

Cuacuil How did these changes impact your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:27:06]

Lezama Well, what I can say? I was by myself here. My sister was the only family that I had here, and she was living in Modesto, so I usually would go there like once a month to see them, but after I got really involved with the program, I stopped going to see my sister and her kids, but we would call each other. Then I was living with a girl, and it was like, you know, okay, because she was involved also in same thing that I was involved. So, no, really I didn't have any particular problems with the family, because all my family was in Mexico, so I was, like, by myself.

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

[00:28:11]

Lezama Well, it was like I said, you know, it's just the impact was like—probably the impact on the community was that there were more students now that were aware of what's happening in the community, and being aware, you are able to go back into the community, and I'm sure that many of the kids that came, you know, like high school kids, when their mind changes, when they went back to the communities, they were looking at things differently. They were more critical about. *I* was more critical about, you know? When I went to the schools, I really looked very careful what were they doing to these kids, or when I went to the community also, I was more critical about it. And I think that's what happened with the rest of the people that was in the project, you know, that they were more critical about what was

happening in their own community. Some of them got more involved, some of them were just, you know, involved in a way that they could do a change. So you become like a change agent, in a way, if you have changed your thinking, you know. And a lot of us changed our thinking for good, I will say.

Cuacuil Did you consider yourself as an activist while you were involved with different programs?

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Lezama Well, all depend what you mean by an activist, because different connotations, you know. I will say, yes, I was an activist because I was very much active participating in bilingual education. That was my field. But I was an activist going to the streets and doing other things, you know. So I will say, yes, I was very active in changing things when I was the director of the program or when I was a teacher in the classroom, yes, I was, because I was able to change some of the things that were happening at that time.

Probably you didn't go through these situations that the kids at that time were going through, because a lot of teachers were against it and they were afraid also. When I go through the Lennox program down south, I say 90 percent of the teachers were Anglo. So you have to change their mind too. I mean, you just don't go into there and say, "I want to bring all these bilingual teachers," because, anyway, we didn't have those bilingual teachers at that time. So with the Dual Language Model I had developed, what I did was to bring good Spanish model as a teacher aide to work with that Anglo teacher. But, see, first you have to change their way of thinking of the

Anglo teachers to let the teacher aide do what she supposed to be doing in the classroom, because now I'm putting this person equal as this other person here.

So have to work with them, and it was hard, have meeting, explaining and explaining, and show them the benefit that the kids were going to have, know the benefit that she has as a teacher, because she already have her benefits. "But what do you want for those kids? Do you want to be better educated? Then we have to do this." And I was able to do it. One of the teachers in that district were really with the program. They were really with the program, and they were Anglo teachers. But you have to work in the system, inside of the system. That's what we were doing—well, *I* was doing. I'm sure that some of my friends were doing that, too, working inside the system. You can't fight the system from outside; you have to fight it from inside and then you make those changes.

Cuacuil And can you go into more detail about the dual—

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Lezama Language model? Well, see, the idea is that you have two teachers in the classroom. One is going to speak only Spanish and the other is going to speak only English. So the kids who speak Spanish are going to learn their concepts in their own language. The kids who are English speakers are going to learn the concept in their own language. But later on, this teacher is going to take these kids and is going to reinforce the concepts that they already learn in English. Now, if the English-speaking parents wants the kids to learn Spanish, then they will go to the Spanish model. If they don't want them, they just stay in the English track. And also the Spanish-speaking kids are going to learn English as a Second Language, the English-

speaking kids are going to learn Spanish as a Second Language, the ones who want to learn the language, see?

In three years, if they are starting kindergarten, first grade, second grade, by the end of second grade, the Spanish-speaking kids are ahead of the English-speaking kids, because by then they know two languages, they have all their concepts in here and they have learned English. So they transfer the knowledge that they have, they transfer into the English language and they can go ahead. Basically, it's that, you know. It's more complicated than that, but basically it's that. That's the idea, to have the two models. But she never is going to speak English even if she does, and this one, of course, if he's an Anglo, she's not going to speak Spanish. The kids are going to be listening to the language, because you immerse the kids in the second language at the same time they are immerse in the first language about the knowledge that they have to have. So, basically, that's it. I don't know if it's in Internet or not, but look for the "Dual Language Model, Juan Lezama." Eileen Gonzales was my friend.

Cuacuil And what year did it start implementing the program?

[00:35:22]

Lezama When? Guess it was 1970 or something like that. I can't remember now, but it was after I went out of school and I start working with Armando as a resource teacher. In talking to this other lady that was working with me, we start thinking, "How we can make it better for the kids? How we can make something? Because people is talking about Bilingual Ed, but nobody knows what Bilingual Ed is."

I did a lot of research. I read a lot of books. In Canada, there was a study done. I can't remember now the name, but it was done with the French-speaking kids in Canada. So I read about that and do a lot of research, and finally we came to this idea, you know, well, if you immerse kids in one language, but you don't have the support of the other language, they are going to miss in the concept area. So what we have to do is to develop the concept area in their own language and immerse them in the second language without losing time, you know, just go ahead.

So while we were going and doing the resource teacher thing, we were thinking and writing about it, writing about our experiences and looking at what the teachers were doing, you know, how they were doing it. They had already some bilingual teachers in some classrooms, and I didn't like what I saw, you know? She will go over one concept in Spanish and they will repeat in English, and back and forth, back and forth. That doesn't go well, you know. So that's how we came about thinking and writing this paper. We present the paper in Puerto Rico, and once we went over there. It was really great. It went really well and people like it. As a matter of fact, years later, I was asked to go and do presentations in Arizona and Texas and different places and like that.

Cuacuil How long did it take you and your other colleagues to came up with the model?

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Lezama Well, it took us about year to write the paper and to implement it and see if it will work, because we have the time. Since we were resource teachers, so we were able to say, "Okay, you're going to do this, you're going to do that, and I'm

going to observe you, how you're doing it," and get the materials ready for one of the teachers and for the other teachers in the second language and the first language, you know. So it took about a year that we could implement that, but we had the classrooms to do it, see?

Cuacuil Did you encounter any barriers?

[00:38:37]

Lezama Oh, many. [laughs] Yeah, many barriers. A lot of people, they don't want to do it. As I said, when I was in Lennox, some of the Anglo teachers said, "No, I won't let the teacher aide do. I'm the one who knows. I went to school to do this." Or in another districts, you know, when they ask me to do some presentation, it was like, "No way," you know.

Then when we start having bilingual teachers, we have to change also the model in a way that will feed the bilingual teacher, because I'm not going have you speaking only Spanish all day or English. So sometimes what we did was, okay, we will get one classroom will speak English and one classroom will speak Spanish. So this bilingual teacher is not going to speak English but is going to speak Spanish with the kids. And then the kids are going to go to the other classroom, and these kids are going to come to this classroom. So you have to adapt.

But, yeah, there were a lot of people—as a matter of fact, I guess up today there are people who are against the bilingual education. "You are in this country. Learn English." And that's it. I mean, of course, I mean if you want to succeed, you have to learn English. But, see, that's the mentality. It's a Republican mentality. [laughter]

Cuacuil So in what counties were the Dual Project implemented?

[00:40:10]

Lezama Oh, in many counties. I don't know how many, but as I said, you know, throughout all California. I went from the north, and they really—as a matter of fact, I just saw somebody in Visalia last week and they said, "Juan, do you remember when you came to my district to do your Dual Language Model?"

I said, "Yes, sure, I remember."

Here I went to so many districts, San Bernardino, many counties, many, many counties. So I don't know whatever happened, because then I moved to do something else. I was working for the University of Southern California as a teacher and also supervising student-teaching classes there.

Cuacuil Was this project also implemented in other states in the U.S.?

[00:41:11]

Lezama Yeah, as I said, I went to Arizona to different school districts, and in Texas also I went to different school districts, you know. Whenever they ask me to come, I did it. And Tennessee, I was involved in Tennessee, which was kind of interesting, you know, to go there. They have some Mexican American kids or Mexicans, whatever you want to call them, you know. They didn't speak English, so they heard about it and they asked me if I could go and talk to the teachers. But it was a small group of kids, so it wasn't too hard to convince them how they could help the kids.

Also when I was with the migrant program, I was asked to go also to show them how we were doing with the kids, how we were working with the kids while the

parents were in the fields. So it was great. I had a great time. And then I have to retire.

Cuacuil Were you involved in any policymaking in education?

[00:42:26]

Lezama Yes. As a matter of fact, that's good that you asked me. The State Department of Education asked me to be in different committees and different type of committees, actually, yeah, yeah. I have to fly from down south to Sacramento several times during the year because we were meeting with the different type of committees that they were there about bilingual, about different aspects of education. Yeah, it's right. I don't remember the name at that time of that people that was involved over here. Mike Navarette was there. I don't know if you heard about Mike. And I don't remember the other guys. But, yeah, I was involved with some of the things that were happening at the time at the state level.

Cuacuil And how was your experience being part of these committees during that time?

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Lezama I'm very vocal. [laughs] So sometimes it didn't come out too well, because I start shouting and screaming and saying, "This is just a bunch of—." It's just politics and politics, and politics don't help the kids and all. But finally, you know, just a lot of people who were friends, so they just, "Calm down, Juan. Just relax." [laughs] So, yeah, it was great. It was fun to be doing that.

Also with the school districts, sometime they ask me to go and talk to the board. Talking to the board, it was like talking to the wall, you know? Because at that

time, most of them were Anglo, older people, they didn't want to change, they didn't want to listen what was happen to the kids. So it was hard. It was hard.

But, luckily, in another district they were really open and they really were there for the kids, so they listen and make changes. You know, maybe they didn't have the Dual Language, but they would hire bilingual teachers. Actually, I was sort of pushing for the model. I was pushing to get bilingual teachers in the classroom because they were going to make the difference. The kids need a model. And I think that's what happened with many of the young kids at that time, that they didn't have models. They didn't see a face like mine in the classroom or as a principal, see? "So how can I be a teacher if they are nobody like me being a teacher?" And also that was part of the changes that we want to make at that time, that the kids have role models. So it was a good time. It was great growing up here. [laughs]

Cuacuil Were you involved in—was there any, like, legislative—

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Lezama I can't remember which one, but, yes, we wrote letters. I think there was one time that they were talking about cutting at the Washington level the bilingual programs, so we start getting together all the directors. By then we were a lot of directors who were Chicanos, so we got together and start writing letters to the congressmens, and maybe that help, I don't know, but the money start keeping coming, you know.

I went to Washington several times to talk to my manager. Also when I was with the University of California, Southern California, I went to a conference and I was doing a paper, and some people from Mexico, from Indian education, came to the

conference and they ask me if I wanted to go to Mexico and work there for the government, for the state government, federal government, as a matter of fact, because they were starting bilingual education with the Indian population throughout all the regions in Mexico. So I said, "Yeah, sure." So I went and did some consultant work there.

Cuacuil And for how long was that?

[00:47:48]

Lezama About three years, about three years. At that time they have fifty-three languages, Indian languages, so it was interesting. It was something different.

Cuacuil Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience?

[00:48:09]

Lezama What I can say, it just change my life. Being in the project change my life, change my way of thinking, change many of the things that probably I never have done, so it was great. But, you know, the reason that I got in the project was because I was in Modesto teaching in a Head Start Program, one of the labor camps, and some of the older brother will come and pick up the kids, and they were finish high school, so I was talking to them that they should go to college, not just back to the field. "Now you have a high school education, you should go to college."

They say, "Well, I don't know. We don't have the money."

I say, "But city college, you can go to the city college."

So I start looking around and writing to different universities for different programs and city colleges, so I have a lot of brochures, and I got a brochure from

Sacramento State about the Mexican American Project. So I told the kids, "Look. You get pay for everything."

"No, it's too far to go to Sacramento. My parents won't let me."

So I said, "Well, maybe if I write and apply for it, I will get it." And that's why I got it. If you help other people, you help yourself.

Okay. I think that's enough. Fine. I don't know. Do we have time?

Cuacuil We have eight more minutes.

[00:49:58]

Lezama Okay. I also taught in several colleges, like one course. I never was like full-time teacher in a college. I always was an administrator in some program, you know. But they always ask me like at the city colleges to come and teach a course in Chicano Studies or Bilingual Ed or Early Childhood, Child and the Family, the Community, things like that. So different colleges around the area of Merced, Madera, Modesto. When I was in down south, also the University of—there's a Catholic university. I can't remember the name. They also ask me to teach several semesters Chicano Studies and Bilingual Ed, so I was involved in that too, you know, doing that.

Cuacuil And how was your experience being in that administrative level?

[00:51:18]

Lezama Yeah, it's a lot of competition, so you have to be on your toe all the time. So I guess most of the people working there were getting those, so you have to compete in a way with them and be better than them to be equal. And that's

something that you will learn later. You have to be better to be equal. So you learn a lot when you go into the world.

Alguna cosa mas? *No, es todo? Gracias*.

[End of interview]