

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

Rodrigo Mayorga

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Talía Cardenas and Diego Palacios

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Transcription by Ria Shah and Technitype Transcripts

Palacios So let's start with the usual name, date of birth, profession, anything like that.

[00:00:14]

Mayorga All right. Well, my name is Rodrigo Mayorga. My date of birth is 1/17/42, and I was born in León, Nicaragua. I'm an attorney here in Sacramento. I have been an attorney for about forty years.

Palacios If you don't mind me asking, what's your alma matter? What college did you go to and when did you graduate?

[00:00:39]

Mayorga I went to San Francisco City College and then I went to San Francisco State College, it was called at that time. It is now San Francisco State University, I believe. And I went to Berkeley, UC Berkeley Law School, where I graduated in 1972.

Palacios Interesting, pretty interesting. Can you provide us with your marital status?

[00:01:08]

Mayorga Yes, I'm married. I have four kids who are also married, and I have nine grandchildren.

Palacios That's impressive. So you have children. You had nine of them?

[00:01:24]

Mayorga No, I have four children and nine grandchildren.

Palacios So they're all married and have kids and stuff.

[00:01:31]

Mayorga They're all married and out of the house, but they live around the house and they're constantly at the house, which I really enjoy.

Palacios That's cool.

Cardenas What are their names?

[00:01:43]

Mayorga My kids?

Cardenas Yes.

[00:01:45]

Mayorga The oldest one is Antonio. Then I have a set of twin girls; one of them is Reina and the other one is Kristina. And the youngest one is Melisa Del Carmen.

Cardenas What's her middle name? Del Carmen?

[00:02:08]

Mayorga Del Carmen.

Interviewer 2: Oh, that's pretty.

[00:02:10]

Mayorga Right, right. Well, my Antonio is Alberto, and Reina, one of the twins, is Reina del Pilar, and the other twin is Kristina Alicia.

Palacios So what did your parents do for a living? Actually, let's go further back more. Were they immigrants into the United States or were they first generation, second generation?

[00:02:38]

Mayorga No. I was born, like I said, in Nicaragua. My father was an attorney in Nicaragua. My mother was a housewife. My dad died when I was fairly young in Nicaragua, and then I immigrated to the United States to come and live with an aunt of mine by the name of Pilar, so subsequently, my mom came after I had been here for a number of years, and she then passed away here in the United States.

Palacios When did you immigrate?

[00:03:15]

Mayorga I came to the United States in 1955. I was thirteen years old at that time. Basically, I had polio when I was a year old, and so when I came to the U.S., I went into the hospital, the Shriners Hospital which was located in San Francisco at that time. It has now moved to Sacramento. I spent about a year in the hospital and had several operations, and that's when I learned how to speak my bad English.

[laughter]

Cardenas Do you have any brothers or sisters?

[00:03:57]

Mayorga Yes, I do. I have two sisters and two brothers. My oldest sister lives in Nicaragua still; her name is Carmen. And I have a brother whose name is Cesar; he

also lives in Nicaragua. Then I have a sister here named Kristina; she lives in the Bay Area. My oldest brother lives in Miami; his name is José.

Cardenas Were any of them inspirations for your kids' names? I realize a lot of your children have their names.

[00:04:33]

Mayorga Yes, Kristina for my sister, and Del Carmen, Melisa Del Carmen for my oldest sister, and then Pilar for the aunt that I came to live with here when I came in 1955.

Cardenas Would you say those people were very inspirational or helpful towards you?

[00:04:55]

Mayorga Inspirational? You know, I mean, there was a lot of love between us and there still is. We're all still alive, thank goodness. So the inspiration really went back to my father, who died fairly young in Nicaragua.

Palacios Just rolling off on that, can you describe your childhood, growing up in Nicaragua?

[00:05:28]

Mayorga Yeah, we lived in León, like I said, León, Nicaragua, and went to school over there, to the La Salle Catholic School up through the sixth grade. Then my dad passed away, and so I came to the U.S., where I've indicated I was hospitalized for about a year. But I went to high school in San Francisco, I went to Balboa High School, then I went to San Francisco City College, then into San

Francisco State College, and then across the bay to—it's called Boalt Hall, the UC law school in Berkeley, where I graduated in 1972.

Palacios So we're going to shift gears a little bit. Were you a Fellow or Felito or were you actively involved in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:06:32]

Mayorga No.

Cardenas Were you aware of the Project?

[00:06:35]

Mayorga I was not.

Cardenas Did your study of cultural anthropology or your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:06:51]

Mayorga Yes, indeed. My involvement with the Chicano Movement began in San Francisco with the Third World Strike, which we, the students, the minority students, did back in the early sixties in order to make sure that more Chicanos, Hispanics, Blacks were admitted and to start studies like the Black Studies and Chicano Studies. So we did a major strike. We shut down the school. The police, of course, responded and they made many arrests, but the Chicano part of the strike, the main leaders were, in fact, Chicanos that lived in the Bay Area, and, of course, the Blacks also had their own leaders, but as far as we were concerned, our people, there were two—I can't recall their names right now, but there were two of them that were very active and very effective leaders.

The school shut down until the new president of San Francisco State, a man that became a senator subsequently, by the last name of Hayakawa, he's the one that brought in the tactical squad and everything, and eventually defeated the strike, but we were able to achieve things, though.

Palacios Could you mention a few things that you felt you guys were able to achieve?

[00:08:43]

Mayorga I think that basically we brought to the attention of the authorities and, of course, of the college the fact that we were not being admitted in the numbers that we thought we should be admitted, and they agreed to increase the enrollment of Chicanos, Latinos. We also wanted more professors. One of the leaders of the Movement, I believe his name was Juan Martinez. He was a professor there and he was sort of like our consultant. He was giving us ideas as to how to approach the college and what to demand and things of that nature.

Cardenas You said there were two leaders. Was the other one also a professor or was the other one a student?

[00:09:34]

Mayorga No, they were students. Those two young men, the leaders that I have mentioned, whose name I can't recall—this was back in the sixties—they were students.

Palacios What are your earliest memories of the Movimiento Chicano? What attracted you to this Movement?

[00:10:05]

Mayorga Well, as I indicated, what first attracted me and I participated was the Third World Strike in San Francisco. Thereafter, I was admitted to the law school in Berkeley, and under the leadership of one of the students by the name of Albert Moreno, we created the Chicano Law Students Association. We incorporated in Modesto, California, and this was in 1969, as I recall. Again, the aim of the Chicano Law Students Association was to increase the enrollment of Chicano/Latinos again in the law schools, which was very deficient and to an extent it still is. So then that's when we began in the law school area to get involved and to promote the interests for our community.

Palacios So growing up, Chicano and Chicano Movement, the term *Chicano* is used a lot. How did other people react to this term and you yourself, and how did other people react to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:11:30]

Mayorga Well, of course, I've always been a Chicano, just like I've always been a Latino. There were at that time seniors, you know, older people that reacted unfavorably to the term *Chicano*, and that included Mexicans and Mexican Americans and, of course, people from Latin America. They didn't want to be identified as Chicano. They didn't like the term. But for us, of course, it was a term of a movement that needed to be promoted and needed to continue and needed to be enhanced. So, to me, as I indicated, I am a Chicano, I am a Latino, I am for the community, the Spanish-speaking community of California.

Palacios One more question before we change gears to my partner. How did you hear about the Civil Rights Movement and the Chicano Movement, all of that? I think you mentioned that. And also how old were you when this took place?

[00:12:52]

Mayorga Of course, part of the strike at San Francisco State was during the Civil Rights Movement. Of course, we also supported the Civil Rights Movement as led by Martin Luther King and other people like Corky Gonzales. So right from the beginning when I got involved in the Third World Strike, I became more active in the Civil Rights Movement for our people and for everybody, in reality, in this society. But we were the ones that were being affected by the lack of civil rights at the time, of course, we, the Hispanic, the Chicanos, the Latinos, the Blacks, and so we had to take the lead and we wanted to push. So we followed Martin Luther King, of course, and all the things that he did on behalf of minorities. Of course, his aim was mainly Blacks, but, in reality, he helped us also, I think, in achieving the goals that eventually were achieved, like the Civil Rights and Voting Acts of 1965.

Palacios Interesting.

Cardenas When did you start identifying as Chicano?

[00:14:26]

Mayorga I think it was there in San Francisco when the Third World Strike— from that time on. I believe the strike took place—it was either '67 or '68. It was more or less at the same time that the People's Park in Berkeley was going on, the Free Speech Movement by Mario Savio, so we sort of coordinated between the two schools.

Cardenas Could you say a little more about the People's Park? What was that?

[00:15:03]

Mayorga Mario Savio started the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, and then the students took over a park in Berkeley and made it a park where things were being grown, food and things of that nature. Eventually it was also defeated.

Cardenas Were the cops against people just all uniting there or were there things going on that were causing trouble?

[00:15:35]

Mayorga Well, the police, of course, again reacted because the authorities called upon them. I do remember I was already in Berkeley on my first year of law school when the police came and just bombarded the demonstrations with gas and things of that nature, which created havoc not only in the students, but also in the faculty because they were being affected also.

Cardenas Did you feel that was wrong on their part, that there was no need for them to act that way?

[00:16:12]

Mayorga I think so. I think that they exaggerated, their reaction was exaggerated. There was no need for that. I mean, it was an exercise of constitutional rights, the free speech and things of this nature that they didn't like because the school was coming also to a stop because of all the activities of the students. So, yeah, but I think that there was overreaction on the part of the authorities and especially the police.

Cardenas Did your involvement in the Chicano Movement change you personally?

[00:16:58]

Mayorga I think so. After we created, and, like I say, it was under the leadership of Albert Moreno that we founded the Chicano Law Students Association, and right after that, we started visiting the different law schools throughout the Bay Area to make sure they were going to admit more students, more Chicano/Latino students into the law schools, and so I became more involved.

We expanded statewide. The Chicano Law Students Association expanded statewide. Eventually, I was elected vice president of the Chicano Law Students Association of California, and after the president, Richard Cruz, after he graduated—he was a year ahead of me—I became the president of the Chicano Law Students Association, which was subsequently changed to La Raza Law Students Association to make it a little more expansive. So we were visiting schools not only in the Bay Area, but also throughout California, in L.A., and I think we were able to get the schools to admit more Chicano/Latinos into law schools at that time.

Cardenas When you speak of them allowing more Chicano or minority students, how do you feel you were able to change that? Through the application process or just through more representation for those people?

[00:18:55]

Mayorga Through both, I think, but basically we were bringing to the attention of the schools the fact that we were being left out. People were being admitted on the basis of knowing somebody—

Cardenas Loans or something.

[00:19:16]

Mayorga —or contributors to funds in the schools, and not necessarily based on their academic achievements. And their argument was, “Well, you have to show some academic achievements.” Well, we eventually showed that we were able to compete and to graduate and to become lawyers and to become judges. So we were able to show them that their basis was not really valid. So we were able to achieve the fact that we were able to get more people into the law schools by putting a lot of pressure basically into the colleges—well, the law schools, basically.

Palacios I know you mentioned that you started a lot of the Association throughout California. Did it ever get to out of state?

[00:20:22]

Mayorga Yes, eventually. Let me just say this. There were three people that created La Raza Lawyers Association. Those people were Mario Obledo, who in the seventies became the Health and Welfare secretary of the state of California; Cruz Reynoso, who became a Supreme Court justice, he was appointed by Jerry Brown back in the seventies; and also a judge out of San Francisco, a Municipal Court judge by the name of Edward Garcia. They created the Association, the La Raza Association of California.

Then eventually after they created that Association, I became the president of La Raza Lawyers of California. I was president for four years of the Association, and we were again expanding our efforts to get, in this case, more judges appointed to the bench here in California. But through their efforts, the efforts of

Obledo, Reynoso, and Garcia, also an Association was created, an Association of La Raza Lawyers nationally, and apparently it is still—I'm not as involved as I used to be, but apparently it is still in existence and it is achieving things for Chicano/Latinos in the state and in the nation.

Cardenas That is very successful.

[00:22:19]

Mayorga We felt that we were. In 1974, I think it was, we held—well, let me go back. When I was a law student, I worked for California Rural Legal Assistance in the Santa Rosa area. There's a little town next to Santa Rosa called Healdsburg. I don't know if people know about Healdsburg. But Albert Moreno, the man who was the leader of the students, got CRLA, California Rural Legal Assistance, to move the office to Healdsburg. When I became president of the Chicano Law Students Association, what I did is I asked and I was able to get the Chicano Law Students Association to hold a convention in Healdsburg. People came from all over California and we held the convention over there, and we all slept in a school gym, I think it was. So people there who were mainly farmworkers in that area were very happy to see that we were, in fact, concerned about their well-being, and they welcomed us very enthusiastically.

Cardenas Was there a name for the convention?

[00:23:42]

Mayorga It was the Chicano Law Students Association. I think it was our first or second convention. When I became president of La Raza Lawyers Association, we held a couple of small conventions, and eventually in 1974, when Jerry Brown got

elected governor, we held our first major convention in San Francisco, and we had about four hundred lawyers, Hispanic, Chicano, Latino lawyers. Brown at that time was not attending very many things, but he attended our convention in San Francisco.

Palacios Can you elaborate more on that convention? It seemed like it's playing a big deal here.

[00:24:37]

Mayorga I mean, we wanted the governor to be there because we wanted him to notice us more, and he was beginning to notice. He was beginning to appoint judges, Latino/Chicano judges to the bench, and he also began appointing Blacks and women. In fact, Brown appointed Rose Bird to the California Supreme Court, and she became the chief judge of the California Supreme Court. Brown also appointed Cruz Reynoso to the California Supreme Court. He also appointed a judge by the name of Brezard [phonetic], a Black judge, to the California Supreme Court, which never had been done before.

Then judges throughout California, Superior Court judges, a friend of mine that graduate a year ahead of me, Mario Olmos, was appointed to the Superior Court in Fresno, and it got bigger and bigger like that. So, yeah, we were able to achieve, I think, many things.

And, of course, when Brown came to the convention in San Francisco, I think he was impressed by the fact that there were so many Chicano/Latino lawyers. We had, like, I said, about four hundred people there in San Francisco.

Palacios Impressive. So it did get national recognition then, right?

[00:26:19]

Mayorga Eventually, like I say, I think through the efforts of Obledo, Reynoso, and Garcia, eventually the Association, which was California, became national also.

Palacios Interesting. So kind of like shift gears a little bit. So what role did women play in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:26:51]

Mayorga I really think that women played very important roles. In the legal field, for example, we elected the first women president of La Raza Lawyers Association, a woman who lives in Southern California; her name is Jeannie Raya [phonetic]. When I was president of La Raza Lawyers, the vice president was a woman who was very active also; her name was Sylvia Cano [phonetic].

Here in Sacramento, women began asserting themselves. For example, there was a woman by the name of Antonia Lopez [phonetic], who really was very active. She was able to, for example, create the Washington Neighborhood Barrio Education Project, which was related to this very institution, the City College of Sacramento. We were able to teach people at the Barrio, at the Washington Neighborhood Center.

There was a woman whose name, unfortunately, I can't recall, but she approached me about creating WEAVE. Have you heard of WEAVE? Women Escaping a Violent Environment. It's become a huge project here in Sacramento. It's been taken over now by Anglos, but was that Chicano woman that had that idea, and she and I sat down and we created the corporation WEAVE, which is very important in this area.

So, yeah, women started playing a large role in the Movimiento. Here in Sacramento, again through the efforts of Antonia and other women, we incorporated an association called ARCOIDES [phonetic] for the rights of women.

And then, of course, since women began going to law schools also, they began also asserting themselves and getting better positions in the judicial branch of government. Here in Sacramento, right now, for example, we have a judge whose name is Emily Vasquez, who's been a judge for about five years, very intelligent, very, *very* good judge.

Palacios To elaborate more on that, where are these projects at right now, and can you elaborate on the success that these projects have had throughout the time?

[00:29:48]

Mayorga WEAVE has become very successful. Like I say, now it's being handled mainly by Anglos, but it's a very important institution that helps women that are physically abused. They have centers where women can go if they get abused. That was a creation mainly of that Chicano woman who worked with me in incorporating the association WEAVE. So that is *very* important. It is an ongoing project and it is a very important project. The courts refer women to WEAVE for protection and assistance.

ARCOIDES, I don't know if it's functioning anymore. I know that the Washington Neighborhood Barrio Project elapsed, but when it was going, we would teach. I was one of the professors also. We would teach at the Barrio so people didn't have to travel to the college, and we would teach at night so that working people, working men and women, would come to the Barrio Center to get classes. So I think

that the impacts that have been made by our women and continued to be made, I think is very important.

Cardenas Could you repeat what WEAVE stood for?

[00:31:42]

Mayorga Women Escaping a Violent Environment, WEAVE.

Cardenas Thank you. Can you describe your experience as a Chicano attorney here in Sacramento?

[00:32:00]

Mayorga I have dedicated quite a bit of efforts and free services in the past, to the point that I was given an award by the California Bar Association for providing legal services to people who don't have the moneys in the past.

I worked for CRLA, California Rural Legal Assistance, as an attorney. After I left California Rural Legal Assistance, I worked for the Sacramento Legal Services, which is, again, to help indigent people. And since I'm Spanish-speaking, we used to get quite a bit of people coming in with the need for legal services that couldn't communicate very well with other lawyers, so I would be the one that would be handling people that were in need of legal services, the Chicano/Latino community.

Then I worked for the Sacramento County Public Defender's Office, again providing legal services to people that are indigent that cannot afford a lawyer.

So, yeah, I have been involved as an attorney. As a community person, I was president of the Washington Neighborhood Center for a number of years, two years or three years, I think. Of course, we cooperated with the Concilio of

Sacramento that was headed by Henry Lopez, who has since passed away, and other people that participated in the Concilio, including a person by the name of David Rasul and many other people that were providing social services for the Spanish-speaking community. The Washington Neighborhood Center and the Concilio cooperated in some of those things. Of course, the Washington Neighborhood Center was mainly aimed at young people. Concilio, of course, was aimed at helping the community in general.

Cardenas When you would defend people as an attorney, did you see there was a common issue that most people seemed to be facing or did everyone seem to have their own different—

[00:35:05]

Mayorga Are you saying people charged with criminal acts? Is that what you're saying? Well, when I was at the Legal Aid Society, that mainly dealt with civil matters like rent, people being thrown out of houses, and things of that nature. With the public defender, it's mainly defending people charged with criminal activities. I think that at the Legal Aid Society, there was a common thread, like people that needed to fight being thrown out of their homes, welfare, being denied welfare benefits and things of that nature. In the criminal area, of course, there's just multiple—

Cardenas *Do todo.* [laughs]

[00:36:03]

Mayorga *De todo un poquito.* Yes, that's right. [laughs]

Cardenas I know you mentioned ARCOIDES and WEAVE, but what else did you personally initiate or helped initiate during the Chicano Movement?

[00:36:17]

Mayorga I mentioned already the Chicano Law Students Association, of course, and La Raza Law Students Association and La Raza Lawyers Association. Basically, those are the ones that I can think of, but, of course, then personally I would help people. When I was teaching at the Barrio Project, of course, I would help young Chicano/Latinos to understand the necessity of an education. I also taught, I think it was for a year, at Sacramento State University, teaching basic legal rights, basic law course, nothing elaborate, not the courses taught at law school, but basic legal rights like the rights of people, the civil rights, the right to remain silent, and things of that nature. That's about it, I think, that I have done.

Cardenas Why did you find it necessary to teach these people about their basic legal rights? Did you feel they didn't have background with that?

[00:36:17]

Mayorga Well, not only that, but they would be abused. Especially non-English-speaking people would not know their rights. Still, many of them don't know their rights. In fact, people don't know that you don't have to speak to the police if you get stopped by the police and they start questioning you without giving you the Miranda rights, so called, the right to have an attorney, the right to remain silent. And so people, especially first-time immigrants who come here, they think that they have to speak to the police. They get intimidated, they speak to the police, they incriminate themselves unnecessarily. So I still think that even now there is a necessity for people

to be taught that in this country you have the right to remain silent, and you don't have to speak to the police, you don't have to be afraid of the police, and you can assert your rights. So, yes, yes.

Palacios Interesting topics here. So back to the Chicano Movement, did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, and political lines?

[00:39:19]

Mayorga Of course, yes, yes, and I think I've already mentioned some of them, i.e., you know, getting more people into law schools, getting people to have legal representation, because I know that people were being abused to a large extent, trying to defend people from being abused not only by the police. For example, in Santa Rosa when I was a law student with California Rural Legal Assistance, we were finding out that growers would make people work, you know, Hispanics, Chicanos, Mexicans that were working in the fields, and they would tell them that they would pay them at the end of the month. Well, at the end of the month, the growers would call the *migra* and people would get picked up and thrown out without being paid, after contributing so much in picking up the harvests. So those were the people that we were defending at California Rural Legal Assistance. So, yes, the Chicano Movement gave me a lot of incentive in the political area and in the educational area. So, yes. In answer to your question, yes.

Palacios So it lit a fire in you, right, to drive you forward, basically, right?

[00:41:05]

Mayorga Right. And you also mentioned cultural, I believe?

Palacios Yeah.

[00:41:08]

Mayorga For example, here in Sacramento, I'd been an admirer of the Royal Chicano Air Force. You've heard of that, right? José Montoya, for example, was a leader in demonstrating that we have valuable arts to contribute. José Montoya, Esteban Villa, Armando Cid, and people of that category that taught our community here locally about how we should appreciate the art of the Chicano, the Latino, the Mexican, art that they were providing the community.

Palacios Interesting. So did any of these changes affect your personal relationships with peers, family, or any other sort?

[00:42:15]

Mayorga Well, I mean, with my friends, with my colleagues, we became closer, we became a very tight group, so in that sense, yes, it helped me become closer with people that were concerned just like I've been about the status of our people here in California and in the United States.

Palacios So from what I'm getting is that this Chicano Movement had a positive impact. But looking at the cons, were there any consequences or anything that was like, "Oh, this could have gone better," or anything like that?

[00:43:01]

Mayorga Adverse consequences? Is that what you're talking about?

Palacios Yeah, something like that.

[00:43:05]

Mayorga No, because as Bob Dylan used to say, “When you are down for so long, you’re beginning to look like it’s up.” And so, no. We had a long ways to go up, we had a long ways to get to the top of the mountain, and we’re still not there, friends, believe me. We still need to keep fighting for the rights of our people. We’re still not totally there. We’re still not represented adequately in many areas of society. So that’s my answer.

Palacios Were there any times in which you told yourself, “Maybe I should just give up,” or something like that, or anything cross your mind?

[00:43:59]

Mayorga Oh, no, no, no, no, no, because we have to think not only at that time of ourselves, but also of our kids and the kids after that and the kids after that. No, we never said that we were going to give up. Quite to the contrary, we decided that we were going to fight, we were going to continue pushing.

For example, there’s a semi-funny story. We went to USF to talk to the head of the University of San Francisco, which is a Jesuit school, as you know, and it’s got a law school. We were trying to convince the head priest there to allow us to get more people in there, and he was really reluctant and he was somewhat adverse to us.

So one of our members said, “Let’s get together here.” Then he said, “Let’s kidnap this son of a bitch.” [laughter]

We said, “No, we can’t do that.” But, you know, that’s the type of thing we were not going to give up. We were even going to kidnap a priest! [laughter]

Interviewer 2: Find a way.

Palacios So what is your motivation to keep on fighting? And to add on top of that, how do you know when the fight is finally over? You said we're not there yet, but how would you know when the fight is over?

[00:45:42]

Mayorga I don't know if we can say for sure, "Now we've achieved our goal." I don't think we ought to be satisfied ever and say, "Yes, now I became an attorney. Now the goal has been achieved. Now we have maybe four judges in Sacramento. We shouldn't rock the boat anymore." No, no, I don't think there is a given measure that we can say, "Now we have achieved our goals." Because being myself an attorney doesn't mean that our people have achieved what they need to achieve.

Look, for example, right now the immigration question. Look at the fights that the reactionaries in Congress are doing to our people. The Dreamers— what is it? CARA [Act]? The dream is for the young people who came here when they were young, they were brought in, so now President [Barack] Obama has given them some relief by allowing them to apply for a job and to give them a, quote, "legal status," unquote, for two years. Well, the same thing Obama was trying to do for the parents of these people, and you have seen the reaction in Congress against that. People that have lived here for thirty, forty, fifty years, and because they don't have the documents, they're being shunned. So, you see that there is no goal per se that you can say, "Now we have achieved our place in society." You know, you can't be satisfied. You have to keep pushing.

Palacios I think that's it for me.

Cardenas Can you describe a little of how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento or where you lived?

[00:48:02]

Mayorga Well, as I indicated, people like Antonia Lopez, people like Henry Lopez, people like David Rasul and Senon [Valadez], people like José Montoya that were part of the Chicano Movement, they were able to at least move us a little bit into a better position in this society by the Royal Chicano Air Force, for example, Antonia by pushing for the Barrio Project, Henry Lopez with the Concilio providing services to our people. Those were achievements that arose out of the Chicano Movement, and they have been somewhat dissipated lately, unfortunately, so they need to be revived.

Young people like you, the two of you that are questioning me, have to take the leadership and have to make sure that we don't fall to the bottom again. And so, yes, in this community, the Chicano Movement was able to achieve many, many good things for us and, hopefully, we can continue.

Palacios You mentioned a lot of people. Was there any individual that had a major impact on you or the Chicano Movement?

[00:49:52]

Mayorga Yes, specifically Mario Obledo, who passed away a couple of years ago, who I've already mentioned he was the Health and Welfare secretary of the state of California, he had a definite impact on us. Mario was able to get the Ford Foundation to fund the MALDEF, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, and through that institution, he was able to provide young Chicanos like myself with financial help to go to law schools.

Cruz Reynoso, who was our mentor, really, at Berkeley Law School, he has been at the forefront of the Chicano Movement and has inspired so many people, so many who were young then, because we're not young anymore, but those were the inspirational folks that led us to continue with the struggle.

Here locally in Sacramento, there was a person by the name of Manuel Ferrales, who the first city councilman of this city. He was supported by Joe Serna, who then, as you know, became the mayor of Sacramento. The achievements of Joe are to such an extent that people really remember him and even a statue was dedicated to him by city hall. So those are people that you say, "They've done it, they continue to do it. Let's follow their footsteps."

Palacios Interesting.

Cardenas I know you mentioned that there are still a few things that are unresolved, but if you could mention specifically, what do you see as current or future challenges for the Chicano Movement?

[00:52:18]

Mayorga I think that education is still an issue. I don't think that we're getting our young people educated the way that they should, especially in high schools. There's a great deal of dropouts, unfortunately. Our young people are not understanding that we need education, especially in this age of such technology that is being developed, computers and all of those things. We need our young people to keep getting educated. Still, we need to get people into higher education, colleges and universities. So, yes, I really think that that's an area.

Another area I think also is the voting rights. Many of us, unfortunately, even after we become citizens, we don't vote as much as we should. Recently in a TV show, I saw a pastor, a Protestant pastor, speaking about the fact that the Latino community in the United States doesn't get united to fight for their rights. There are many states, as you probably know, that are trying to pose obstacles for people to vote by requiring them to have some sort of identification that many people are not able to get. So we still need those in that area, so politically.

We also need to obtain better jobs, better-paying jobs for our people so that we get better income for us. And, of course, the ultimate and most pressing issue right now, of course, is immigration. Congress is just not willing—I mean the majority of Congress, especially the Republican Party, apparently, is not willing to bend with the times and allow our people to become residents and eventually citizens of this country. So we need to become voting members of our society so that we can go ahead and push those people that are so reluctant to allow us to become citizens, to allow us to do so. So I think that in education, economic, and political, I think we're still behind the eight ball.

Cardenas Do you see yourself as staying involved with meeting these challenges?

[00:55:32]

Mayorga I have been involved since San Francisco State, and what I keep telling young lawyers is that it's their turn now, like I'm telling the two of you here, it's your turn now. I think that I still do things, but I really think that the future belongs mainly right now to you, the future. The needs of our people belongs to you. It doesn't mean

that I'm just saying, well, you know, I'm going to sit back and enjoy the laurels of what we have achieved. No. But what I'm saying to you is that, like I tell the young lawyers that are coming into the profession, "*You* need to take the initiative. *You* need to take the lead." You just can't sit back and say, "Well, now I'm the attorney," or, "I'm the judge," or "I'm—," whatever.

The classical example of a person that never gives up is Cruz Reynoso. He became a Supreme Court justice in California, and yet he continues to get involved and to push and to inspire people. So, yeah, I still do some things, but not as much as I used to because I'm getting older, of course, and you guys have not only the youth, but also the energy, and you should force yourselves.

Cardenas Advocating.

Mayorga You should force yourselves and force other students like you to get involved and push for people to get into educational institutions and get better jobs and make sure that Congress listens to our voices.

Palacios So any advice for us then?

[00:57:36]

Mayorga Get involved! Get involved and don't give up. Don't give up. Even if things look bad, even if the Republicans win the presidency in 2016, we can't give up. We have to push for it. I think that even though we still need to achieve more politically, I think that now this society is beginning to realize that we are an upcoming community and they know that we can make a difference. But the most important thing is for *us* to know that we can make a difference. So let's make a difference, people.

[End of interview]