

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

Gregoria Miranda

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Brenda Hernández
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Transcription by Paola Estrada Tena and Technitype Transcripts

Hernández Please state your full name.

[00:00:09]

Miranda My name is Gregoria Miranda.

Hernández Please provide your birth date.

[00:00:14]

Miranda March 12th, 1949.

Hernández Please provide your marital status.

[00:00:19]

Miranda Single.

Hernández Do you have children, and if yes, how many do you have?

[00:00:25]

Miranda I have two children, a girl and a boy.

Hernández Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:32]

Miranda I was born in Raymondville, Texas.

Hernández What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:39]

Miranda My dad, my father, was a farmworker, as well as my older brothers and sisters.

Hernández Please describe your experiences as a child in your family and neighborhood.

[00:00:55]

Miranda I believe I was a pretty happy child. We migrated from Texas to California, went to school at different schools, and far as I know, I think I did okay.

Hernández What part of California did you come to?

[00:01:19]

Miranda We settled in Le Grand, California.

Hernández And were you a Fellow or Felito during the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:01:29]

Miranda I was a Felito.

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

[00:01:41]

Miranda Well, when I arrived as a junior here at Sac State, I was already involved and going to Merced College freshman and sophomore year, and we had a

Chicano Student Union over there and I was a member, and we did a lot of things that were activities, events. Even before that, I had that year, 1970, I believe it was, or 1969, I was in a California Mini-Corps, a student with the California Mini-Corps. It's a program for students that want to become teachers in the long run. That got me pretty excited about school and college and just going ahead. I had already heard more of the word *Chicano*, and it didn't bother me it. It encouraged me to do a lot of good things for the community.

Hernández As far as your career goes?

[00:03:08]

Miranda Pardon me?

Hernández Your career?

[00:03:10]

Miranda Yeah, teaching.

Hernández And do you find yourself that within your career, that being a part of the Mexican American Education Project, that that part of you shines in your career in teaching?

[00:03:23]

Miranda Yes, I think so. I think the Mexican American Project was a means to just get ahead and get my credentials and become aware of more things that were going around back in those years, becoming involved with United Farm Workers Movement and other events.

Hernández Mind if I ask, were you a general teacher and where did you teach?

[00:04:02]

Miranda I became a teacher in 1978. I moved to Salinas; I got my first job there. I used to sub here in Sacramento, but then I got a real job in Salinas. So I was there for about eight years. I used to teach elementary and it was a great—I loved living in Salinas. I got a good, I don't know, I just got a good feeling. I really loved my job, I loved the students that I had, and it was just wonderful.

Hernández What role did your knowledge of cultural anthropology influence your involvement and participation in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:04:58]

Miranda Well, historically it's just by looking at historical events and things like that. I think that the Movement would also be something that would be historical and that it would involve a lot of people getting involved, and like other movements in the past, they come and go and they have their own strength during those years, and hopefully people can eventually look back and say, "Well, that was great. Let's just keep doing more things that will become part of that movement but in a different way."

Hernández What are the earlier memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:06:10]

Miranda Well, like I said, I think it was when I was going to Merced College and I got involved with the Student Union over there. The California Mini-Corps also did a lot of eye-opening for me, because I came from a little high school that I just

didn't know anything about what was going on, and to all of a sudden see a lot of Chicanos in education or in college, I said, "Wow! That's great." I mean, it just got me more motivated to be a participant and, I think, my career focused, more focused on my career.

Hernández Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally? Please explain.

[00:07:11]

Miranda I don't know if it really changed me. I've kind of like always been like that. I just like the way I am, you know. [laughs] It's pretty stable, my way of feeling or thinking. I guess my parents did a good job bringing me up.

Hernández And what role did you believe that Chicanas played in the Movimiento?

[00:07:49]

Miranda Well, also like historically speaking, you know, the Mexican Revolution and even before then, women have always been part of the movements, and in the church, a lot of women are the first ones to be there, to be involved in a lot of events that the church has and also the schools, the colleges. Women are there and they're more like the ones that get up and go. UFW, the United Farm Workers Movement, also women have been very strong and so have men, but, I mean, women have done their part in the Chicano Movement.

Hernández And where do you see yourself as a Chicana in the Movimiento, like the impact that you've had and how your parents may have influenced you from their upbringing and your upbringing as well?

[00:08:57]

Miranda Well, my father really influenced me a lot. He was very active in the church and he used to belong to all kinds of probably movements in the past. Cristeros, I used to hear him talk about that, and Guadalupana Society and the Cursillo Movement. A lot of times they would take us to all those events, and so I kind of grew up with a lot of those things. Then when the United Farm Workers Movement started in 1965, my dad was also a participant, my mother too. They were very influential in me.

Hernández Is it okay if I ask that considering that your father was a part of the United Farm Workers and him being a part of that and you seeing that, is that what encouraged you? Because you mentioned that you also worked somewhat with the United Farm Workers.

[00:10:22]

Miranda I was in college mostly as a college student. I would help out, more of a participant.

Hernández Was that through a particular organization?

[00:10:33]

Miranda Through MEChA here at Sac State.

Hernández And what did your personality initiate or help initiate in this Movimiento Chicano? You mentioned that you're a pretty stable person, so being that you became involved in the Mexican American Education Project and you say that that's what encouraged you into your teaching career, but do you want to further talk about your personality and what got you involved in that particularly?

[00:11:04]

Miranda Well, I liked teaching. I thought that maybe becoming a teacher would be a good role model for the students. I went to Sacramento State College, got my credentials there. I thought that maybe also knowing how to talk to the kids would be an advantage, so I got into counseling to further be able to communicate with children and know some of the problems even within teaching. I thought that that would be very helpful in what I wanted to be.

Hernández You've mentioned some of the organizations that you were involved in. Are there any others that particularly stood out to you in becoming who you are today and who you were becoming then?

[00:12:13]

Miranda Well, when I was a teacher, I used to belong to California Bilingual Education Association and Mexican American Education, AME. Those organizations were educational, that helped me to become a better teacher. I would go to them, and whether the district paid for them or not, I would still go. I mean, the district never paid for them. I would always pay for my own way, and they were very helpful.

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

[00:13:01]

Miranda Well, I'm hoping that my nephews and nieces become more involved, and they are, some. Family-wise, I think I'm pretty—I really don't know how to say it. [laughs] Well, they just know who I am. I just become involved when an issue comes up. They know that I'm for that particular thing, whatever it is, has to do with justice or has to do with farmworkers, it has to do with a good cause. My daughter became a vice principal. I think I might have maybe helped her out or she might have looked up to me. I don't know. [laughs]

Hernández And what roles did you play in the organizations and projects that you were in? Did you, per se, like to take the lead, or was there something particularly about certain projects that you took?

[00:14:47]

Miranda No, like I said, I was just a participant. I went to the meetings, and if there was leaflets to pass out or campaigns to participate in, I'd go, marches, conferences, whatever. I'd be there, take my kids with me. They also did a lot of walking and passing out papers and things like that.

Hernández Did you ever get, as a teacher, your students involved, encouraged them to participate, and, say, if you were participating in something in particular or did you—because you say you wanted to get into teaching, you know, to teach them

about it as well. How do you see yourself as being a part of the Chicano Movimiento and your teaching career?

[00:15:50]

Miranda Well, I taught elementary, mostly first, second, and third. I've been retired for two years, but looking back, I always talked about current events with them and made sure that the history was told perhaps the right way, involved a lot of things that were happening during those years. Also during the summers, I continued working for the California Mini-Corps as a team leader. This was years afterwards. So I was in charge of college students and training them to become teachers, and I encouraged them to get involved in bilingual education, and that was my push.

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

[00:17:22]

Miranda Well, back in the early years, seventies, it was pretty strong. There were a lot of events going on. After that, I moved to Salinas, where I taught for about eight years, and the United Farm Workers Movement was very strong there too. But in general, I don't know. I think the colleges have been pretty strong in the Chicano Movement. Well, back then. I don't know about now. I really don't know.

Hernández What do you see current or future challenges for the Chicano community?

[00:18:20]

Miranda Well, right now the way I see it, it's immigration. The undocumented students, for example, there are just so many problems, I wish the laws would change and help them out, and, of course, that's a big issue. In the schools, there's still a lot of problems. Graduation should be a lot higher education, more numbers for Chicanos. I don't think that there's enough graduating and still with college degrees, and we need to help them out, even when they're there going to college, financially.

Hernández In what roles do you see yourself taking place now or in the future where the quality of education plays in as far as sometimes teaching, like you say, the right history or certain things that may not be taught. Like Chicano Movements, right, they're not really taught that much in high school, but in colleges if you choose to take that, that's what you'll learn about. Do you see yourself in any way somewhat become a participant or activist in changing those things?

[00:20:07]

Miranda Well, I can support somebody doing something like that. I don't see myself yet doing anything. Right now I'm a babysitter. [laughs] But in the Internet, I look at a lot of things that are going on with authors. There's a lot of Chicano authors that are coming up and getting together and writing books, and I read a lot of those articles. There's hope. Like, I think it's in Texas where there's a lot of things going on in terms of Chicano authors, poets, and things like that. I don't know if I can write something. I do have some notes that I've written when my mother was alive. I took care of my mother for eight years before she died, and she was ninety-nine, so I

would write down a lot of her stories. So someday maybe I'll write them down, make a little booklet, at least for family.

Hernández Definitely. You mentioned that you lived in Texas. Was that just as a child?

[00:21:45]

Miranda As a child. I think I only went first grade there.

Hernández And could you tell me a little bit more about living in Salinas with the United Farm Workers Movement being strong there?

[00:22:00]

Miranda Well, I was a beginning teacher there, taught bilingual education, and I had a lot of students that were migrant, 99 percent in my classroom. The events that I would go that had to do with United Farm Workers were the marches there, speakers, anybody running for council or school, whatever, I would help out.

Hernández Do you have anything in particular that you want to add about the Movement or your personal experiences in any of the organizations or projects that you've been in?

[00:22:56]

Miranda Well, not really.

Hernández I know we've talked about the Chicano Movement and you as being a teacher, but what role did your knowledge of cultural anthropology influence your involvement as far as your teaching went and all that stuff?

[00:23:42]

Miranda Well, I loved history, social sciences, you know, multicultural. Those were a lot of the things that kind of would be the starters for a lot of my lessons, just wanted my students to identify with them themselves and be proud and at the same time excel and be the best and be comfortable with themselves and just keep on working.

Hernández How did you see yourself as a Chicana in the Movement and growing up seeing your parents involved? You say your father was somewhat involved with the United Farm Workers or in certain other organizations How did you see them growing up? Is that what inspired you?

[00:25:00]

Miranda I think that's what inspired me. I used to see my dad speak in front of—well, he had meetings at the house that had to do with the church, or even talk a lot of things that were related to religion, and I'd go, "Wow! Where does he get all that?" [laughs] But he used to read a lot. He read a lot and he was very wise. I think I even had a blackboard, chalkboard at home, so when he had little meetings, he would diagram things there, and everything was just way above me, so I didn't understand a lot of the things that he would talk about. So he was very good with the Bible too. He came from way over here to way over there in terms of his knowledge, so that influenced me a lot. I really looked up to him.

Hernández So, being that he was involved in some of the things, some of the projects and organizations that he was in, but at the time you didn't quite understand

it, what was that point where you finally understood what he was doing and what you wanted to do with what he was doing and what you learned from it?

[00:26:32]

Miranda Well, I still don't understand some of the things he used to say [laughs], because he read a lot of things that had to do more with religion. But with social justice, he was right there too. I mean, when there was a march, I always picked him up and he would always go with me. And I know that he loved me. [laughs] He was a great person.

I did a lot of—went down to Livingston to some of the boycotts that they had there, grape boycotts, and I got in jail once, twice, and so they were there; my parents were there to support me. I mean it wasn't bad. They were very supportive because they knew that I was doing the good things.

Hernández Would you like to elaborate what you went to jail for? Was it like as part of the Movement?

[00:28:00]

Miranda That was the Gallo strike in Livingston 1973. A lot of farmworkers got jailed, about eighty or so. They were in jail for about seven days or more; I don't know. But it was just for failure to disperse, which was nothing, you know, but that was it.

Hernández And as far as you say your dad went to the church and he was really influenced by that, I'm sure there was a lot of things that influenced you about that as

well. Do you think that growing up in the church, as far as social justice went, that's also where you got your inspiration from?

[00:28:48]

Miranda Mm-hmm. I think that was part of it, yeah, I'm sure.

Hernández Anything in particular from that?

[00:28:56]

Miranda Well, as I recall, one time he said that he had heard one of the priests say, "Well, Cesar Chavez is a communist," blah, blah, you know. He overheard him. He overheard the priest say that. So he went up to him and said, "Well, if he's a communist, then—." Something or other; I don't know what. "You can excommunicate me too." [laughs]

I said "Oooh!" [laughter] I didn't hear him, but that was part of one of the little conversations, because my dad was really for the United Farm Workers also.

Hernández So he was front and center there, too, being in the walks?

[00:29:45]

Miranda Yeah, he walked from Chowchilla to Sacramento in the 1965 march.

Hernández Were you there with him?

[00:29:53]

Miranda No, I was in high school.

Hernández And as far as growing up went, what was it in particular that got you into teaching or was that just something that you always wanted to do?

[00:30:11]

Miranda I think being in the California Mini-Corps, that was a good start. We lived in migrant camps, and that was part of the summer experience. And also teaching, being an aide in the classroom, and, I don't know, just orientations that we had with other college students that were Chicanos that were also going into education, that inspired me.

Hernández You were in the California Mini-Corps in college?

[00:30:56]

Miranda Mm-hmm. As a student, I was in the California Mini-Corps, and then *years* later, after I was a teacher, I mean during the times that I was a teacher, I was a team leader then and in charge of college students like back when I was just starting.

Hernández How did you find the California Mini-Corps?

[00:31:24]

Miranda When I was going to Merced College, at the counseling office there was a card, like an application, so I filled it out and I got accepted.

Hernández What was it that struck you about the California Mini-Corps that made you want to apply?

[00:31:58]

Miranda Being that I was already involved in the Chicano Club there and we had been going to some of the colleges just to look, and having events, I thought that maybe being away—it was a job. That was the main one, summer job, so that was good. Actually, that was the thing.

Hernández Could you talk about more your experiences during the summer that year with the California Mini-Corps?

[00:32:42]

Miranda As a student or as a team leader?

Hernández Well, both.

[00:32:46]

Miranda Well, as a student, we did home visits for the little kids we had. In the evenings, we taught ESL or events or games with the kids at the camps. I did that for three years, or three summers.

Years later, as a team leader, then I was in charge of college students and I had to supervise them and give them workshops on how to teach in the classroom, how to do this and that. I would go to different schools to place them with the principals and talk to the teachers, and I would encourage them to go ahead and be more involved with bilingual education, just events in the community. That's about it.

Hernández What did you do in the home visits?

[00:34:07]

Miranda We would talk to the parents about their child, how they were doing in school.

Hernández What ages were the children?

[00:34:21]

Miranda These were little kids.

Hernández Were there any particular grades that you focused on as far as elementary, middle school?

[00:34:29]

Miranda Most of my years that I taught was second grade.

Hernández Would you like to talk more about the changes that you went through through the Chicano Movement and your personal relationships? You mentioned you have two daughters? Or, no, you have—

[00:34:59]

Miranda A son and a daughter.

Hernández You say that your daughter became a vice principal and possibly she could have been influenced by—

[00:35:10]

Miranda Hopefully. I hope I did something. [laughter]

Hernández —by the Movement that you've done.

[00:35:14]

Miranda Yeah, she's a high school vice principal here in Sacramento.

Hernández Did you tell them about all your experiences that you went through, like sit them down and talk to them?

[00:35:25]

Miranda No, I just took them along and just immersed them in whatever we did.

Hernández Any particular movements that you were involved in that you took your children to?

[00:35:37]

Miranda UFW.

Hernández UFW?

[00:35:40]

Miranda Yeah, some of the some of the CAPA meetings or campaigns that I went to, they came along.

Hernández Did your parents go with you as well?

[00:35:55]

Miranda No? My parents?

Hernández Yeah.

[00:36:00]

Miranda No.

Hernández Could you talk a little bit more about community life either in Texas, if you remember anything, or in Salinas?

[00:36:15]

Miranda I don't remember anything in Texas.

Hernández In Modesto too. You went to school in Modesto?

[00:36:26]

Miranda Merced.

Hernández Merced. Sorry.

[00:36:27]

Miranda Well, settled in Le Grand when I was in the fourth grade. Before that, we lived in Mesa, Arizona, for a while, went to school there, I don't know, very vaguely. Santa Maria, Santa Ynez, Soledad. Came to [unclear] there in Le Grand.

Hernández What was the reason for moving?

[00:37:05]

Miranda My parents, my brothers, because they had to work in the fields.

Hernández Your brothers and your father?

[00:37:17]

Miranda Yeah, four brothers. Well, my older brothers and sisters.

Hernández Were you the youngest?

[00:37:25]

Miranda One of the youngest, not the youngest, but third to the youngest.

Hernández How many brothers and sisters did you have?

[00:37:31]

Miranda We were nine.

Hernández And four of your older brothers worked in the fields with your dad?

[00:37:38]

Miranda Yeah.

Hernández Any of your sisters?

[00:37:41]

Miranda Yeah, two of my sisters, my oldest sisters, the oldest ones, yeah, they worked with my dad and my two other brothers with my dad. We lived in Lodi also. They worked in the grapes.

Hernández It was just grapes or other—

[00:38:05]

Miranda No, I think in Texas they picked cotton, and in Fresno. Around Fresno they picked cotton. We picked it, but only on weekends, Saturdays, or after school; I don't know.

Hernández So, you have some experience?

[00:38:27]

Miranda Yeah, yeah, picking tomatoes, figs, strawberries. We used to go to Oregon too. A couple of summers we went up to Oregon.

Hernández And how did you feel having to go to work in the fields?

[00:38:42]

Miranda Well, I don't know. We just went. [laughs] I mean, we had to do what our parents said. I guess that was part of our growing up. Had no choice, just had to go.

Hernández During what years did you work in the fields?

[00:39:04]

Miranda Probably up until I was in high school.

Hernández Do you see now that having worked in the fields, it's impacted you or has changed you in some ways?

[00:39:23]

Miranda Well, it's given me that experience, yes.

Hernández Definitely. What about having seen your dad and your brothers work?

[00:39:35]

Miranda Well, I know it was hard work, yeah, and, unfortunately, they had a very hard life, and my older brothers and sisters didn't have the education that I had but, but it's because of them that I had it.

Hernández Did any of your other sisters or brothers finish high school and go to college?

[00:40:07]

Miranda Yes, the first one that finished high school, he went to the service and went to a few years of college. He's older than me. And there's another one older than me the one next to me, he also went to college. He became a teacher, retired. And then me.

Hernández Have you ever talked to your older brothers and sisters about them having worked in the fields and the impact it's had on them?

[00:40:53]

Miranda No, not specifically. No, not specifically. Well, I know we share a common interest, I mean common knowledge about what it was. We know what it meant. I mean, I know what it meant.

Hernández Did you see yourself looking more into you yourself personally as searching more about how the farmworkers worked and lived and all the experiences,

being that you have that personal experience? Like, did you search into it, all the injustices that were going on?

[00:41:44]

Miranda I read some of it, but it's something that I already knew or experienced.

Hernández Anything else you'd like to add?

[00:42:18]

Miranda That's it? That's all? No.

[End of interview]