

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

María De Jesus Landeros Miranda

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Adrian Botello
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Transcription by Axel Hernández and Technitype Transcripts

Botello Hi. Good morning.

[00:00:08]

Miranda Hi. Good morning.

Botello For the record, can you please state your full name?

[00:00:09]

Miranda It's María De Jesus Landeros Miranda.

Botello And your birthdate?

[00:00:14]

Miranda August 28th, 1955.

Botello Are you married?

[00:00:18]

Miranda Single.

Botello Do you have any children?

[00:00:23]

Miranda Yes, I have three children Xochitl, Joaquin [unclear], and [unclear].

Botello Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:33]

Miranda I was born in San Juan, Tejas. Let me see. We lived in California, we worked the fields out here, and then we moved to Oregon, so I was raised in Oregon.

Botello Did you always work in the fields?

[00:00:46]

Miranda Yeah, my family, we were migrant farmworkers.

Botello So your parents were migrant farmworkers?

[00:00:53]

Miranda Yes.

Botello So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

[00:00:56]

Miranda Nine siblings; five women and four men.

Botello Can you please describe your experiences as a child, such as your family and your neighborhood?

[00:01:07]

Miranda Okay. Let me see. I was born in Tejas. We were migrant farmworkers, so we worked in California and in the grape fields and in the tomatoes and, gosh, raisins, you name it, here in California. And then we worked in the labor camps out here for a little while, and then my dad decided to move us to Oregon to get away from a lot of the gang. At that time, it already had started, and so he didn't want us to be raised out here, so he took us to Oregon.

Then in Oregon, that was in the early sixties, so we went and lived in some of the most horrible labor camps you could ever think of there in Oregon, in North

Plains, Oregon, and around the Hillsboro area. Then at that time, there was a lot of *Tejanos*, a lot of our families. We were from *Tejas*, so a lot of *Tejanos* were there in the labor camps in Oregon.

In the sixties, that's when the whole *movimiento* of the United Farm Workers began, and because the conditions were so horrible there in Oregon and the labor camps were so bad, our little cabin, what they called a cabin, was probably the size of right here where we're at. They were terrible, of course, rat infested and all that, so every time that we got there, we had to clean them. That was one thing, because, you know, as *familias* we all worked together to clean and have everything sanitized, but that wasn't the worst of the conditions, but it was the abuse of the growers. They were so abusive with the families, and that was really bad.

Then at that time, everybody started hearing about the United Farm Workers and the *Movimiento*, so my dad, being "Mr. Huelgista" that he was, and organizer, he started listening. Then after work, they would come onto the labor camp, but they had to sneak in there because if the ranchers found out, you know, it wouldn't be a good thing.

So what they would do is then we decided when the ranchers got wind, they started meeting at church, because all of us *raza*, that's where we'd congregate in the churches. Then that's where they would do their [Spanish] and all their different [Spanish], and that, and I remember being a little girl and our dads being real involved with the United Farm Workers. There were some people from California that had gone down there and started organizing, so all the men, all the dads started getting together and getting all of us kids. Of course, we were one of the smaller

families with nine kids. You know, you had ten, twelve. There was even a family that had—they called them the *ratones*. They had like eighteen, I think, a lot of kids.

So that was the beginning of our awakening of the Movimiento and of growing up as a child in the fields and being aware of our surroundings and the injustices that were happening.

Botello So were you a Fellow or a Felito or were you actively involved in the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:04:29]

Miranda No. Well, in Oregon, it was after the union came in, there was a big move for migrant education. So I guess I was, for migrant education. Then at that time—that's right. And then later on in the late sixties, the beginning of the seventies, Colegio Cesar Chavez was born, and then there was a big move to help educate some of the families. And then again, you know, there was a lot of the abuse and stuff, so a lot of the money that came in, that trickled down, really didn't get to the *raza*, not like it did here in California, you know. Yeah, so a little bit.

Botello Was the Colegio Cesar Chavez in Oregon?

[00:05:18]

Miranda Yes.

Botello So would you say there was more Chicano Movement in Oregon or California, or the same?

[00:05:25]

Miranda Most definitely in California, yeah. In California was a big boom, and then from here and it—

Botello It spread out.

[00:05:32]

Miranda Spread out, yeah.

Botello I know you talked about being united by the church. So did your culture influence your knowledge of the Movement?

[00:05:42]

Miranda Most definitely. I think it was not so much the church; it was our families and especially my dad. He was he would always tell us, you know, “Always be proud of that you are. You have strong blood in you, and it doesn’t matter if you’re poor, you have rights. You could do anything anybody else can do.”

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

[00:06:15]

Miranda I’ve got to say again my dad and picketing against Safeway and getting all the families organized, all the making of the tacos and, you know, just big sense of community. But it was pretty rough back then back in the sixties, especially in Oregon, where it’s mainly white, and especially in the sixties when you still couldn’t speak Spanish at school. But it was always a really beautiful sense of community when we would all come together and picket and then organize in the church.

Botello So did your community in Oregon all identify as Chicano or did you use a different term?

[00:07:09]

Miranda You know, I think for me that was the beginning of the use of the word *raza*. I always knew, even back then as a little girl, that there was something different about us as Mexicanos, Chicanos, Hispanics, whatever we want to call ourselves, but there was something that somebody wasn't telling us. Then it wasn't until I left Oregon and I came to California, I came to school out here—first I was living in San Jose and I was at San Jose City and then I was working for San Jose State in school social work. Anyways, I went there first and then really got involved with the Movimiento, the Chicano Movement, and with the Black Berets and with Casa Legal. The Brown Berets started coming around then, too, but I was a Black Beret. And then the American Indian Movement. Then all of this kind of blended.

Then I kept hearing “the indigenous.” I kept hearing that, and it just kept just drawing me. I said, “What is that? What is that?” So I met some students from D-Q University, so they were talking to me and they were telling me about it, and they were *raza* like me, but many *que soy Zapoteca, que soy Chichimeca*, and I was like, “Wow! But where are you from?” I thought somewhere north.

They go, “No, man, my family's from Guanajuato.” So they started telling me all that. So I was really intrigued. That *really* got my attention.

Then as I got more involved with the Movimiento and with AIM, we would come out to Davis to meetings with the American Indian Movement and the Black Berets and the whole *raza* of the Chicano Movimiento to collaborate. Then at that time, after a little while, after coming to the meetings and coming to D-Q, I was really intrigued with the school, so I started attending D-Q University, which that was the base for AIM.

But at that time, too, the United Farm Workers were *really* present there at D-Q, and they had rented like, oh, I don't know, a couple hundred acres, and they had a really cool program that all the farmworkers would work on the land, and then everything that they would grow, they were able to sell, so they were able to rent the land from D-Q University.

At that time, I was given an assignment because the Sun Dance was going to begin, so Dennis Banks and some of the AIM people gave me an assignment to come and meet this group of *vatos* from Sacramento, something that they were called the Royal Chicano Air Force. I said, "Who are those guys?"

So anyways, so here I come, a Chicanita farmworker. So they sent me out here, and so I had called and had set up a meeting, and that's when my *compadre* José and all them would meet. They had the little school right there in back of the Guadalupe Church. So I show up, and they were expecting somebody older, so I walk in, my little skirt, a teenager, and they look at me *y los salude*. I mean, I was there on a mission to reunite, because at that time something had happened with RCAF and D-Q and AIM, and I didn't quite know what had happened, but my job was to bring everyone together.

So I met with them, and that was my first time meeting José Montoya, Ricardo Favela, Esteban Villa, Juan Cervantes, my *compadre* Juanismo Orozco. That was my first time meeting them all, and that meeting took about, gosh, at least two, three hours. I was there on a mission and I accomplished my mission, and that was the beginning of the collaboration, again, for us as the Black Berets, American Indian

Movement, and the Chicano Movement, and bringing us all together. So anyway, that answers your question.

Botello So you talked a lot about AIM and bringing people together, but you also talked about being a Chicanita and sounding almost intimidated.

[00:12:02]

Miranda No, not intimidated. I never said intimidated, but what I did say was intrigued, intrigued that there was something missing for us as Chicanos. What was that? I know that my grandfather was from Spain and I knew that my grandma, there was something, because she didn't look like a Spaniard, and it wasn't until I was at D-Q that I found out that I also had Chichimeca blood in me. So that was, like, the beginning of a whole new world had opened up for me.

Botello So when you first started attending D-Q, would you say that's the beginning of your involvement in the Chicano Movement?

[00:12:42]

Miranda No. I would say that for me it started in the sixties with the United Farm Workers with my family and my dad, but, I mean, it definitely opened my eyes more to a lot more things. And then working with Casa Legal and some of the other organizations, you know, it really opened my eyes to a lot of the injustices and a lot things that were going on.

Botello What role do you think that Chicanas played in the Movement?

[00:13:11]

Miranda You guys need to learn this. Back in the early seventies, we didn't know that at the time according to the indigenous traditions and oral history that was

taught to us, there was a cycle and there was a prophecy that was fulfilled back in the early seventies. We didn't know it at the time. There was a secret pipe from Mexico that had been hidden for 500 years, so those of us that were at D-Q were very privileged and honored to meet medicine people like Thomas Piñaka, like Andres Segura, like Ernie Peters. I could go on and on naming all these different medicine people.

Of all the places in the United States, that pipe was sent to D-Q at that time. Our ancestors knew why, because of, again, that prophecy and that cycle, because there's cycles within the Meshica or Azteca, or whatever you want to call it, calendar. So at that time we fulfilled a cycle and a prophecy, and that pipe was sent, but what that told us was that as Chicanos or indigenous people, we had gone through a stage of darkness for 500 years, and that after that stage of darkness—and that's why the butterfly is so symbolic to us. It was like we were in a cocoon. We were being transformed. We were going through a metamorphosis, and there would come a time, when this prophecy was fulfilled, that we would come out of our cocoon the same, our genes and everything the same, but transformed, transformed into a beautiful butterfly, a *papalote*.

So at that time, I think the Movimiento, the Chicano Movement, that was the beginning of the awakening of our indigenous side. That was so important, because as *raza*, I mean, okay, we identify as Chicanos, but what is a Chicano? What is a Chicano? It's somebody that has indigenous blood. But nobody has told us! Then the generations, those of us in the seventies that were really immersed, in the eighties and that, it was important, it was knowledgeable.

But I think unless if you have parents that continue in those traditions and continue understanding how important that is to the future generations and for whatever our ancestors suffered and went through and what they hid and what they died so to hide, you know, so we could have the information, I feel a big sense of responsibility, and I feel that a lot of us took it really serious, such as José Montoya, people like that, that I love and admire, Señora Cobb, different people who helped maintain the indigenous traditions.

We're just now barely starting to uncover more information, and it's going to take you guys, this next generation, and that's why for me it's been so important for me to raise my children and my grandchildren in these ways, because we're just beginning to know. I still consider myself a baby as far as learning, even though I've been a *dánzante* for quite a while.

At D-Q, that's when I first saw the Danza Azteca. I use to do *ballet folklórico*, but then when I saw the Danza Azteca, I said, "Whoa!" It was like somebody pulled me. It was like, "This that is I am. This is what I need to be." And I believe with all my heart that Creator chose me to be a *dánzante*, and I have been. Now I'm responsible for a couple of the big *ceremonias* here in Sacramento.

You guys got to remember that here in Sacramento is where the Movement— all the cakes were being baked here, you know, if you want to look at it that way. Then they were dispersed all over. So the first *ceremonias*, the first ceremonies of our indigenous ceremonies and *because* of the Chicano Movement, *because* of the movements that were going on in the sixties and in the seventies, they were birthed here. So from here, so this will be our forty-first anniversary of our Shilolen

Ceremony that takes place in August, and I think that's pretty good. And then from here, now there's ceremony all over the United States, but it happened here in Sacramento. That's how important this area has been for the Movimiento.

Botello So who started the Shilolen ceremonies?

[00:18:47]

Miranda Remember back then I was a student, so I use to be one of the garbage picker-uppers and serving water and all that. From what I remember, it was the *centro*—what the heck was it called? Well, I know the first Muertos was the Washington Neighborhood Center. They were the ones that got that all going.

The Shilolen, I remember at that time the California Arts Council would give out money for different programs, and I believe RCAF had gotten some money, so the first Shilolen was a collaboration of the Royal Chicano Air Force, a lot of us students. I mean, we didn't put in any money, but we went and helped. Royal Chicano Air Force, Washington Neighborhood Center, the community, and, of course, the *danza*.

Señora Cobb was the one that introduced us to the *danza*. I remember her and Maestro Florenzo Yezcas, who first came. In fact, Maestro Yezcas also was the first one that taught us how to make the *altares* and the little *mequislis*, the little sugar skulls that now everybody knows about now. That was the very first time that he showed us. That had to been in about 1970—I know we've had this discussion between the Rasuls and the Portillos about the year, but we're thinking about—well, were saying forty-first anniversary. Some people say it's been a couple of more years, but we all agree forty-one years.

Botello So you collaborated with the Washington Neighborhood Center. Were they also a Chicano Movement group?

[00:20:55]

Miranda I remember back then the Alkali Flats and there were a lot of things going on with the *raza* in that area, development going on, and I remember Martha Bustamante and some other folks, Manuela Serna, some folks that are not here anymore. I remember that being an important gathering place for us. The RCAF and the Washington Neighborhood Center here in Sacramento, those are probably our most important gathering places. The RCAF to us was like home away from home. A bunch of us students used to come from D-Q and were able to hang out there and do art and learn all kinds of cool things.

Botello So did the Chicano Movement groups work often with non-Chicano organizations such as other civil rights groups?

[00:22:05]

Miranda Yeah, we had to. We had to. Well, yeah, we had to work with all the different groups. I remember being in San Jose—now, this is going back again to before I went to D-Q and to Sacramento—when I was involved with the Black Berets and with Casa Legal, we had to work with the different organizations until some of them got a bit too radical and they were just like doing things that they weren't supposed to. It was more of a divide and conquer. We thought they were put in there to create dissention and stuff, so we had to oust some of them out. Especially when we would organize big marches like of 7,000 people, you know, you can't play around and have people going over there and disturbing and creating all kinds of

havoc. So we had to eliminate some of them, but, yeah, for the most part, everybody was peaceful and tried to work together.

Botello Going back to being a *dánzante*, who introduced you to *danza*?

[00:23:17]

Miranda When I was a student at D-Q, it was Señora Cobb. It was Señora Cobb that introduced me to the *danzas*. I used to dance with her. I danced *ballet folklórico* and *danza*. Even though she begs to differ with me, but it was a little bit more Conchero style back then. Conchero style is more we wore longer skirts, we had ostrich feathers. And then when I saw Maestro Yezcas, that was a *whole* different ballgame right there. It was more of the beginning of the awakening of “This is who we are, and this is what runs through our blood,” more the Meshica, more of the *guerrero/guerrera* aspect of our tradition.

At that time, too, though, in Mexico later on I found out that there was a *big movimiento*, and it was called the Mexicallo Movimiento. It was the Meshica Movement where—because remember the Concheros, how they dance is real timid, with their heads down. I mean, all due respect all and due respect to them, because they’re the ones that kept the traditions going. If wasn’t for them, we wouldn’t have anything. But it was time for our people not to be so submissive. It was time for us to say, “No, we’re intelligent. We come from a brilliant *raza*, mathematics, everything, astronomy, *artisana*, everything, arts.”

So that’s why the Movimiento happened in Mexico and then it spread over here. Maestro Yezcas, when he came, that’s why his group was Esplendor Azteca. You can’t get more of a beautiful name than that. The way that they danced, here we

were with our little ostrich feathers, and they were with their beautiful *plumas* and lots of turquoise and jade and everything. We were like, “Wow!” That’s when it all just exploded at that time.

There’s still a few of us from back then. Mario Aguilar from San Diego, Gerardo Salinas from San Jose, Lazero Alvizo from Los Angeles, there are still a few of us that are still *danzantes* from that time, so we’re the ones that helped with that explosion of “Yes, we’re here and we’re not going anywhere.”

Botello So the Dánzante Movement rejuvenated your sense of Mexican pride, I would say?

[00:25:58]

Miranda Yeah, it’s like that was a missing piece. That was a missing piece. Yeah, okay, we have Spanish blood in us and all that, but to me, that is what runs in our blood and that we have to identify with that. You guys, this generation, not to let all your ancestors die in vain, it’s up to you guys to keep this going, and if you don’t know about it, find out about it. There’s many different areas from our indigenous side that we can go, many different areas, whatever your interest is, but it’s your responsibility.

Remember some of us, we had to go through a little bit of battles, you know, to keep things going. A really quick little story—and Señora Cobb will tell you the same story—forty years ago when we danced at the Guadalupe Church for the first time, the priest that was there, he kicked us out of the church. “*Vámonos bola de encuerados*. And at the time we were more dressed than we do now. He kicked us out of the church.

So we went right there in front of the Guadalupe Church and we started dancing there. Then when we started dancing, he comes out the church again. “*Vamos a la fregada*.” So he kicked us out to the street. So we were going to dance in the street, but the cars were coming. Señora Cobb said, “Let’s go to the park.” That was the beginning of us dancing at the park for the ceremonies, and now *everybody* wants us in there. I think I’ve been in Baptist churches, I’ve been in—the only ones I haven’t been in is the Jehovah Witness, but everybody else. [laughs]

Botello So even though you were kicked out of churches, was it difficult to keep a peaceful mindset?

[00:27:41]

Miranda You know, the *danza* is more than just jumping around and dressing as a *danzante*. The *danza* is meditation; the *danza* is a spiritual base; the *danza* is *curanderismo*. What we would call *curanderismo*, that’s like the umbrella of the Danza Azteca. In there you have medicine, natural medicines, whether there’s tinctures and liniments or all that, learning the *hierbas*, why we use them, why we eat them, why we—everything. It’s meditation. It’s how to bring yourself in, how to rejuvenate yourself. Gosh, it’s the understanding “as above, so below,” how the cosmos are. We’re a replica of that as *danzantes*. So with astronomy, art, dance, music. There’s no borders in music. There’s no class. There’s nothing. Music is a vibration, *verdad?* And that’s healing. So that’s also the healing arts through music, through song, through dance, through the arts. There’s *so* much. I mean, we can do hours just on that alone.

Botello How important do you think art played a role in the whole Chicano Movement?

[00:29:13]

Miranda I think art has and is very important. In our *vestaurio* that we wear, in our regalia that we wear, it's very important what the colors mean, what the symbols mean. And I love it when the youth ask, "What is that? Why do you wear that? What does that mean?" I mean, it's one thing if we give you guys everything, you know, "Here it is. Here it is." You read it and then you put it to the side. But when you *look* for it and when you *work* for it, I think that that's when people preserve things more.

Botello You spoke about Maestro Yezcas and Cobbs. How important were those figures for you and what were they like?

[00:29:59]

Miranda Well, I think very, very important. Like I said, Señora Cobb was the one that raised the awareness of our indigenous side, but Maestro Yezcas, he took it to that next level. But, you know, there was also other *maestros*, you know. One thing I've got to say, and I think everybody in the *danza* community will agree with me, later on we found out that there is a lot more to the *danza*, that there's organizing. You have your *capitanes*, your *sargentos*, your *samnadoras*, your *alferez*, you know. We didn't know that there was different positions. Maestro, he just helped raise the love, the pride. It was like our little fire was this little [demonstrates], and it was like Maestro came with a whole big barrel of wood and just threw it on there, and that flame just rose up. He helped with that.

It wasn't until later on, people like Andres Segura, Pedro España, different *maestros* from Mexico that came, that taught us the hierarchy and the chain of command. Not that there's rules in *danza*, but there's *disciplina*. When we started learning the *disciplina*, that is what really, to me, has kept it alive and kept it going. And then going to Mexico and learning from some of the other *maestros*, and going and seeing other *danzantes* and some of the *mesas*, and then how there's *mesas*, and we didn't know that there was *mesas*. What a mesa is, is a group of maybe twenty, thirty groups that belong to this *mesa* that have been existence for 100, 200, 300, 400, 500 years. So there's different *mesas* that are old. So then we started learning more and then we *really* started digging. "What is this?" So through that and then again that whole piece right there, we can go a few more hours just talking about that alone.

Botello So do you think that the youth were very interested in learning about *danza* and their indigenous culture?

[00:32:35]

Miranda Definitely. I mean, I think at all these years that I've been a *danzante*, that's what keeps me going and it's what keeps me alive, is that I see hope in our youth, I see hope for our people, and that the *danza* is a *very*, very important part of— if you don't want to be a *danzante*, but at least to know your history. Who are you? What did your people do? What did they stand for? What was their specialty? Was it mathematics? What is that? For you guys to start asking, "Who am I? Who were my ancestors?" Not everybody is Azteca. It depends on what state of Mexico your family is from, is what you are. Remember the Azteca was, like, the best of the best from *all* of the region, and remember that the Azteca started in Utah, and from Utah they

migrated all through the United States and they left sacred mountains all throughout the United States until they got to Mexico. So who are you? Ask yourself that.

Botello So do you think that the Chicano Movement made its way back to Mexico?

[00:34:04]

Miranda Oh, yeah. When I was down there, I was *recibida* as a *capitana* in about 1996, and I was, I think, probably the only Chicana, Meshica, *mujer* at that time that was *recibida* as a *capitana*. It was like going through a knighting. You have to have permission from the elders, and they need to know who I—“Who is she? What’s she doing here? Does she even speak Spanish?”

At that time, Pedro España was introducing me to the tradition and presenting me as a *capitana*, and he told her, “She’s really involved.”

“Well, how?”

“Well, her parents back in the sixties *que the* Movimiento the United Farm Workers.” So he started telling them my whole history of the Movimiento and what we did and then my time in *la tradicion*. So they had to plead my—not so much plead my case, but present me. They’re not just going to let anybody be *recibida* as a *capitana*.

But I’ll tell you one thing. If I knew then what I know now, that having the responsibility of a *capitana*, it’s no joke, and not that I would want to, but I could never say, “All right. No more. I want to take a break.” There’s no breaks. And it’s okay because this is my way of life and I love it, and I do it because of the love not only of our *cultura*, but of you guys, the youth. And because through education you

guys are going to keep it going. It's okay to get educated, but doggone it, don't leave your other side behind. Intellect is important, but your spiritual side and your cultural side is as equally as important.

Botello So would you say that your role as captain was to educate the youth, or what other responsibilities?

[00:36:17]

Miranda Oh, *mijo*, there's a lot of responsibilities. It's in maintaining the *tradiciones*, the *disciplina*, the ceremonies, continuing to learn. I mean, it's a constant. And I love it because now my daughters, and especially my youngest one, Tona, she's been able to go to Mexico, and this last year she got to go—[Barack] Obama had this program, 100k program, and she got to go to Mexico and got to go to the different *ceremonias* throughout Mexico. She brought back just a plethora of information, and I love it because now I'm learning from her as well. And I love it when the youth go out there. You guys are taking it.

It's like a chain. That's what they use to tell us; the Movimiento was like a chain. I said, "A chain?"

They said, "Yeah, some of us will make one loop and we pull the next people up, another loop and the next people up."

That's what we're doing. We're continuing that, so you guys are the ones that are going to continue with this, to continue to dig, man, because we have just began to scratch the surface with this. That's exciting to me.

Botello How did these experiences impact your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:37:44]

Miranda That's a good question *mijo*, a very good question. I think as my peers, some of them wanted to continue being *danzantes*, but, you know, you really have to really, really want that. I think with the youth, it's been great. I love them, they love me, they respect me.

My personal life, not too good, and I don't blame him, my ex-husband. He's North American Indian, and for years he helped me with *ceremonias* and all that, and then it got to the point where he got tired, poor guy. He said, "You know what? I want you to quit doing what you're doing."

I said, "I'm not sure what you're talking about."

He goes, "I thought the older that you got, the more you would pull away from being a *dánzante* and being involved with the ceremonies and with all of these youth and all this, but I was wrong. The older that you got, the more that you were into it. I can't do that."

I said, "Well, I can't leave it." So I had to pick. And besides other things, but that was the big one in the relationship.

And with my kids, they've all grown up with the traditions and learning. I think the beautiful thing is that they've learned from their father, who has taught them the North American traditions, whether the Sun Dance or Sweat Lodge and all that, and ours. Ours are equally as important. So I like that they've been able to embrace both and learn who they are. And I know they've gotten a little tired as I drug them around all over the United States, and may be a little resentful, but I think in the long run, it's something that has made them who they are today.

And now it's my granddaughters' turn. I have a little six-year-old and I have an eighteen-year-old. They're also *danzantes*, and just like my kids, they're half North American and half—but it's the same indigenous *sangre*. They've learn both. So we're continuing another generation. I just don't jump as high as I use to. [laughs]

Botello So looking back at your experiences in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that are left unresolved, any regrets?

[00:40:13]

Miranda Any regrets? I think for myself, I'm going to take myself back to school because I gave a lot of my years to the Movimiento in that, and I didn't finish, and I was close, so I want to go back to school. So it's not really a regret, because you can still do it.

I think it's beautiful that this is being documented, because a lot of our people that did a lot of work in the Movimiento have died, and it's sad because we're not going to get their stories anymore. But I think such as Chuy Ortiz, José Montoya, Ricardo Favela, Juan Cervantes—I mean, I could go on and on—the Sernas, Isabel Hernandez [-Serna], Joe Serna. I mean, there's a lot of people that are gone now, but I think it's important that this story be told for the next generations. Not that I'm saying that you guys don't appreciate or value, but that for you guys to understand that this is still just the beginning. You guys are the butterflies already that are flying, and it's time to document. When you guys feel that you're being led to another path as far as your education, bring yourself back, bring yourself back, because that's how we're going to be able to continue to make a difference.

Botello What impact do you think that the Movimiento Chicano had specifically in Sacramento or wherever you lived?

[00:42:23]

Miranda Oh, gosh, *mijo*. God, just an awakening in every aspect, whether it's education, the arts, spiritual, especially the spiritual part. I think that we can't have one without the other, and that's where we tend to go wrong. I know that the new generation, the new millennia that they call you guys, those of you that are in your twenties, you know, late twenties, it's okay to have material things. Education is really important, but you cannot lose your spiritual side. I'm not saying if you want to go through a Catholic or Christian church, that's okay, but find your base, find your spiritual base. That's really important.

I think that the Movimiento helped us, you know, for us to understand that every aspect of who we are is important. Our political, our spiritual, our personal, every aspect of who we are is important, and that we can't do one more than the other, and that we have to continue to be also politically awake and aware of what's going on. And now with our food and with our water, now you guys have a bigger responsibility because there's other things that are here that need tending to.

Botello Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano increase your involvement in the political spectrum?

[00:44:21]

Miranda Yeah, I think the United Farm Workers. I think in, gosh, '70-something when Jerry Brown was running for governor, in Oregon—no, what was it? For president. Was it president in the seventies? Did Brown run for president? What

the heck did he run for in the seventies? I think he did. I remember the United Farm Workers were backing him up because we were really active in Oregon, so that was a big a political—that's when we started learning about walking precincts and voter registration and all that. So, yeah, the Movimiento was really a big awakening for a lot of us.

Botello You spoke a lot about Chicano activists that have passed on. Are there any specific ones that had a real strong impact to you?

[00:45:14]

Miranda I think José Montoya. At least here in Sacramento, José Montoya, Isabel Serna were big influence in my life. I think José because he was famous all over the world, right? But when he was home, it was just about the community, our *cultura*, arts, education, and he would just talk to everybody, whether you were a president of something, to a farmworker. Everybody was always the same, and he always had so much love and so much dedication.

You have to remember that José Montoya had like forty years of doing *ceremonias* and all that. Then when I first started dancing and then Chuy started dancing later on, so I had a lot of good times, good fights, good everything with him before Chuy died. When you have that many years with people and we've done a lot of good things—I guess I wasn't planning on getting a little emotional but, you know, it's a lot of good memories, a lot of work that we did and a lot more that still needs to be done

Like with José Montoya, like I was telling you guys, it's really important, you know, on how you treat people always with respect and with love and dignity, and it

doesn't matter who you're talking to. That was one of the biggest things he taught me, just like Cesar, just like my dad, very humble. But with José Montoya, his love of the *cultura* was just amazing. He made sure that we kept going. The last two years before he died, he kind of weaned us from him, because we would always go to him for "This is what we're doing. This is what's going on."

In his own way, "Okay, that's good." But he stopped coming around, so we could start standing on our own feet.

So, yeah, the community ceremonies, like I said, forty-one years, and then Chuy, when we started the *guerrero* ceremony, I think it was about twenty—how many years? Twenty-three, twenty-four years that we started doing the *guerrero* ceremony. I think there's always been in our tradition for the young girls, it's the *Quinceañera*, rites of passage, but as we were talking one year, we were saying, "Man, our young men are as important, too, so why not so have a *ceremonia* for the young men like they used to in Mexico?" So that's when the Ceremonia de los Jaguar y las Aguilas began.

The very first *ceremonia* we did for that was in his house when he lived out there in the south area. There probably was about, oh, gosh, maybe thirty of us altogether, *danzantes*. And his son Calto and Miguelito from Martinez, from San Francisco, they were the first *guerreros* that we had. It was just a little ceremony, but from that little baby, now we have *guerreros* from all over the place that come. But Chuy started that one, too, so I give credit to him for that one.

Like I was telling you guys, right before he died, I was telling him, because he was never received as a captain, I always told him, I said, "Chuy, I feel like bringing

Jefe Ameyala. I was talking to him to come in, for us to do you a *ceremonia*, to acknowledge you as a *jefe*, that way the *jefes* in Mexico also.”

He goes, “You know, I’ve been thinking about that. We just might do something like that.” Time just got away from us, and we never did.

So we were going to do an acknowledgement for him on his birthday, but then he crossed in December, so weren’t able to even do that .

But I had promised him—because he liked how I cook and he’d always tell me—I said, “Then let’s do a birthday party for you.”

He goes, “Okay, we’ll do a big gathering and an acknowledgment.” He goes, “You handle all the food, María, okay?”

And I said, “*Orale*, you got it.”

But then when he died, I think we had, gosh, at least 700 to 800 people at that hall. I don’t know how we fed everybody, I really don’t. It’s almost like I felt like—you know the old story about Jesus feeding all these people with a little basket of fish? That’s how we did it. But everybody came together with some food, too, because he always wanted it to be like smorgasbord where everybody—because he loved to eat.

And Isabel Hernandez, who was a professor at Sac State, she was one of my spiritual teachers and she introduced me to a lot of beautiful women in this path. So, yeah, I think politically, José Montoya; culturally, Señora Cobb; *compadre*, Chuy; and education is Isabel Hernandez. And there’s all kinds of other people, but those main ones.

Botello You've spoken a lot about influential figures such as José Montoya. I hope that you know you're also an influential figure. So knowing that, do you think that you will continue your work in the Chicano Movement?

[00:52:23]

Miranda *Hasta* until Creator, and I think when I go to the other side, too, I'm going to be a *friega* over there, just like my *compadres*. But, yeah, *mijo*, I plan on being on this path until Creator takes me one day, and that's a promise I made. That's what I was saying, that when you give a *promesa* to be a *jefe* or *jefa* of a tradition, you just can't say, "Okay, I'm done. Break." There's no break. You keep going. But it's okay, though.

This is my life, this is who I am, and I love it because every day you learn. Every day you learn something, and every day you just open yourself up to learn more and pass it on. That's what's important. Too many times when people learn something, they hold it right here [demonstrates]. But it's like with your hands open, when you give, it's like the cycle of life. You give, you receive. You give, you receive. How could you keep receiving if you don't give, *verdad*?

Botello Thank you.

[End of interview]