

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project

Tim Quintero

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Juan Soto
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Transcription by Shivani Patel and Technitype Transcripts

Soto So my name is Juan.

[00:00:05]

Quintero Nice to meet you, Juan. Tim Quintero.

Soto So, for the camera, please state your full name.

[00:00:09]

Quintero Tim Quintero.

Soto And your birthdate?

[00:00:13]

Quintero March 3rd, 1945.

Soto And your marital status?

[00:00:16]

Quintero Single.

Soto And do you have any children?

[00:00:20]

Quintero Three.

Soto So where were you born and raised?

[00:00:25]

Quintero I was born in El Fuerte, Sinaloa, Mexico, and moved here in 1954, to the United States, to Broderick. So I was actually raised here, but for the first nine years of my life, I was in Mexico.

Soto What did your parents do for a living?

[00:00:44]

Quintero Both of my parents were educators. They were teachers in El Fuerte, Sinaloa.

Soto Siblings, did you have any?

[00:00:53]

Quintero I have two sisters and a brother.

Soto Can you describe your experiences as a child and youth in your family and neighborhood?

[00:01:06]

Quintero Sure. I grew up in a town called Ciudad Obregón, Sonora. We moved there from El Fuerte, Sinaloa, and I was raised by my grandmother and my uncles. My mother and dad split up when I was about four years old. She actually came to the United States on her own, without any family or anything. She crossed the border without any papers, and she was here for four years, and then she was able to get married to my stepfather, who then sponsored—at that time it was called sponsoring—sponsored us to come to the United States, my brother and I.

Soto So were you a Fellow or Felito during the Mexican American Education Project?

[00:01:55]

Quintero No, I wasn't, no.

Soto Your earliest memories of the Chicano Movement, what events attracted you to the Movement?

[00:02:07]

Quintero Well, even before the Chicano Movement, when I was in grade school, going to school in Broderick, probably about the fifth or sixth grade, I got very interested in civil rights issues when I would see the news media in the South, attacking African American folks who were trying to gain their civil rights. So at a young age, I really had that feeling that I wanted to become involved in civil rights issues. That was really the spark.

The second was when I was involved with a friend of mine who we started a business, a local import/export business from Mexico, and we never really talked of politics or social issues or anything, we were just friends. The business was on El Camino and Mission. It was called Mission Imports. I had all of the contacts in Mexico with all of the craftspeople that we were able to purchase different things, leather goods, any type of arts and crafts, clay materials, and bring them to the United States, furniture. And one day on the way back from Tijuana, where we went to pick up a load of goods, we started talking politics because we had the radio on. They were talking about Cesar Chavez, and, naturally, I turned the radio up and I started listening. And he was very quiet. He didn't say a word until the whole interview of Cesar Chavez was over, and I said, "I really think that's great. That's fantastic. We need to really help the farmworkers out."

And he actually said, “What are you talking about? They don’t need any help. They’re fine. They do their work. They get paid just like anybody else.”

And I just looked at him with an anger, I guess, inside of me to think that someone that I trusted in business and called my friend would have those type of political ideas. So we got into a pretty a heated argument on the way home. My main point to him was, “Yeah, they’re earning a wage, but they’re earning a very low wage for all the hard work that they do, and when they go to the store, they’re not getting subsidized. They’re not saying, ‘Oh, because you’re a farmworker and you earn less than most people, we’re going to sell you the milk for less.’” So my argument to him was that he was totally wrong.

And about two weeks later, I told him we were no longer partners. I said, “If you wanted to buy my half of the business, you can do that.” But, of course he couldn’t do that because he couldn’t even speak Spanish to go down to Mexico.

So, shortly after that, I heard about a new program which was called the Sacramento Concilio—it was a newspaper article—which was an organization that was just being founded by local Chicano activists to provide bilingual/bicultural services to the Chicano community. I was working six days a week, going to school, and Monday was my only day off, so I decided to call the office and ask them if I could become a volunteer, fortunately, because, to me, that was a whole change in my life. I met with Mr. Luhan [phonetic]. At that time, he was the director of the Family Service Center, where folks would come in and ask for services. We hit it off right away, and he asked me if I could come in every Monday and be a volunteer service agent, we were called in those days.

My first case was man who had lost his dog. We called it “the missing Chihuahua case.” That was my first case. What happened, he was blaming a neighbor for stealing his Chihuahua. So my job was to go out and interview him, interview the neighbor. Sure enough, when I went across the street, represented myself as a volunteer for the Sacramento Concilio, the man had heard about Concilio, and he said, “Oh, yes, I found a dog. He’s right here.” So I was able to get the dog over to the gentleman. And it’s really ironic, because he lived four blocks away from my parents’ house where I grew up in Broderick. So that was my first case.

Eventually, I was able to get hired full-time as a service agent, so I worked many, many types of cases. Folks would come in with immigration issues, housing issues, problems with children, problems with the school. So it was total service-oriented program where we kept track of all the clients who would come in, just like a social service agency of any type, but the difference was that we were bilingual/bicultural.

I received a *lot* of training in those days, not only in providing social services and what our cultural heritage was, but also how to deal with those individuals that were empowered, which is the establishment, and I became very good at it. I was very fortunate, as I said. I was able to provide those services.

One other case that I’ll mention which was very ironic was that a gentleman came in who was being evicted from his home in the Alkali Flat neighborhood, which is right downtown. It was an old Victorian they had converted into rooming houses. He was being evicted because there was a fire. So he came in. He wanted some

assistance in providing some relocation benefits, try to find him another place to live. And as I was interviewing him, I asked him, "Where did you work?"

He goes, "I worked for the railroad."

I said, "Oh, okay. You're only receiving general assistance." He was a single man. I said, "Don't you know you can get your pension from the railroad? How many years did you work for the railroad?"

He says, "Oh, I got forty, fifty years."

"They never told you that you had a pension coming?"

He says, "No. They just let us go and that was it."

So through another program that we had, Legal Services, where we had third-year law students, we actually filed a suit against the railroad, and they were able to provide him \$30,000 of back pay. So those are the things that you uncover as you provide services to the community. To me, that was quite an accomplishment.

As Concilio grew, it became the focal organization for the community for any types of issues. We had a youth program. A friend of mine, Ronny Tejas [phonetic], used to operate the youth program, where we actually were able to get kids who were in trouble with the law to come to Concilio for training, and that was all types of training for employment opportunities, for schooling, for any type of grants or anything that we could find for them, and it was part of their probation. It was mandatory to come to Concilio through that program. Luckily, we were able to find employment opportunities for a lot of our youth.

We also had Project Maestra, which is a Head Start program, one of the first bilingual/bicultural Head Start Programs, housed there. It was the old St. Joseph's

School building, which is a Catholic school, which actually provided the office space for Concilio and all the different agencies.

Again, when you provide employment opportunities for folks, it really changes their lifestyle. We had folks who were really going the wrong way into gangs and drugs, and once they were able to catch on with a good agency, either the city or the county, or some type of company that had a decent wage and good benefits, they totally got away from that. So it was really an eye-opening experience for us at the ground level to be able to accomplish some of those things.

We had a health program. We started La Raza Drug Effort. We had—what was the other good program that we had? I can't think of any, but it'll come to me. But again, immigration issues are really heavy, because we had staff that would be able to translate *all* of the documents. Every piece of documentation that someone would have to apply for legal status here had to be translated from Spanish to English, so we had a whole section of folks who that's all they did, just sit there and translate documents, translate documents.

One of the young ladies that I had working for me at that time after I became director of the Family Service Center, she was able to go from Concilio actually to the courthouse and become a court interpreter. Her name was Lila Scalindo Cook [phonetic], and she was just amazing, because from working at Concilio, working with clients in the courthouse, she was able to get close relationships with the judges and the attorneys and still have the advocacy role to help our clients. So that worked out really, really well.

Soto That's great. So can you give me the time frame for when you started?

[00:12:08]

Quintero Sure. I started as a volunteer at Sacramento Concilio in 1969, started as a volunteer. I got hired as a full-time service agent, and in about three years, I was hired as the director for the Family Service Center for Sacramento Concilio, overseeing about nine service agents, providing all of the technical assistance to them, plus going out to the community, making presentations and recruiting volunteers. To me, again, that was a life-changing situation because it just opened so many doors for me.

Soto Great. So did the Movimiento Chicano change you personally?

[00:12:57]

Quintero Oh, yes. Again, prior to that, my life was really involved with family, sports, working, going to school. Once I became involved with Sacramento Concilio, I was able to meet other folks who felt like I did. We became a real team, whether you worked at Concilio or you were a professor at the university or someone that was working at another agency. Police officers, sheriff's officers, which we didn't have too many, started coming to the Concilio. We would tease them because we were able to acculturate them to our culture and to really provide services to our community.

Soto So what role do you believe that Chicanas played?

[00:13:46]

Quintero Oh, a big role. A lot of our staff at Sacramento Concilio were women. At first, there was actually—the *machismo* came into effect, and a lot of the men didn't want to deal with women. Whether it was health issues or any other type of issues, they didn't want to be helped by a woman. But we broke that barrier because

we just told them, “She’s the staff person, she’s in charge of the health program. You deal with her. You don’t come to me. You deal with her.” It took a lot of time, because we were able to put those individuals up front, in terms of women staff, to go to meetings, to make presentations, and to provide the services. So at Concilio especially, the majority of the staff were women.

Soto So what did you personally initiate or help initiate in the Chicano Movement?

[00:14:48]

Quintero Again, a lot of the things that we accomplished through Concilio were really more a collaborative effort, but my goals were always that Concilio is a social service agency, we’re providing what we called the Band-aid approach in the old days of social services. It’s a Band-aid approach. Someone comes in, they have a problem, we deal with it, and they go away.

My way of thinking was always we need to do more. So I wanted to get involved. For example, if somebody came in and needed housing, that’s great if we could find you a place to rent, but it was much better if I could become involved and actually develop housing, develop economic opportunities in the community. So when I had that opportunity, I left Concilio in 1972 and was hired by a new program called the Alkali Flat Redevelopment Program, and that was federal money, which the redevelopment plan called for building low- and moderate-income housing, senior citizen housing, rehabilitation of the old Victorians, providing capital improvements, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, streetlighting programs, mini parks.

One of the parks that we developed was the Zapata Park, and that was in the middle of a 236 subsidized housing program, the first one built in that area for folks who lived in the old Victorians, which at that time were really substandard, rat-infested firetraps, because the owners of the old Victorians, 80 percent of the property was owned by what we call absentee property owners, who could care less about the living conditions of our community and would not restore them or not provide any service to the tenants.

We were able to build subsidized housing units. We built, if I recall correctly, 243 units, one-, two-, three-, four-, five-bedrooms units for large families, and the rent was only 20 percent of their income. So we were able to provide a space with a park in the middle called the Zapata Park, and then all those folks were able to stay in the community, because we knew eventually as redevelopment happens, there's displacement. So that was our first project. We wanted to make sure that our folks stayed in the neighborhood as the redevelopment occurred.

After that, we were able to receive funding for rehabilitation of the old Victorian structures. So it was really a combination then of low-income apartment units and then higher-income individuals were able to come into the neighborhood, which really provided the blending where you don't want just to live in a neighborhood that's just totally low income, you don't want to live in a neighborhood that is totally high income or one ethnic group, one particular ethnic group. So we were able to balance the community by doing that.

Then, like I said, we built four units of low-income senior housing next to another park, J. Neely Johnson Park. We were able to receive finding for the

rehabilitation of not only the residential units, but also the commercial structures. So any individual that wanted to stay, any business that wanted to stay in the neighborhood, on 12th Street, for example, which is our commercial corridor, they received grants to paint the exterior—we call it façade grants—to paint and repair the exterior of the building. They received low-interest loans to repair the interior of the building.

To me, that was the most difficult part, because even though you provide low-interest funds to do the rehabilitation and the restoration, the rent still has to go up, and some of the businesses that were located on 12th Street were marginal. They were barely surviving because it was a low-income neighborhood. So we lost a lot of those folks, but, fortunately the other businesses that came in provided employment opportunities for the residents.

One agency that came was Legal Services of Northern California, which, through the Redevelopment Agency, we purchased in old vacant warehouse which originally was going to house a social services art program. Unfortunately, what happened, politics got involved and the artist got a little greedy and they didn't want the Washington Neighborhood Council to be there and a couple other groups, which in the past had worked completely hand-in-hand. That was the only provision, that it would be a multi-service agency. And when we were able to purchase the building, the only condition was that the agency that would be housed there would only pay a dollar a year in the property taxes. Otherwise, it was a gift, it was a total gift through the Redevelopment Agency Alkali Flat [unclear]. And because the artist didn't comply with the multi-agency program, we lost the building because it could not be

just strictly an arts organization, because at that time it was very difficult to get money for the arts. Unfortunately, we lost it.

I'm still upset about that, because, to me, that was a big, big failure for our community. We had the La Raza Bookstore around the corner, which was going to be housed there; we had the Breakfast for Niños Program, which was going to be housed there; we had the Royal Chicano Air Force, which was going to be housed there; and the Cultural Center. It was a perfect, perfect setup. Because, again, it couldn't be strictly arts and culture, we lost the funding and the building was sold to Legal Services of Northern California, and they began providing legal services to the community out there.

Soto So just a recap, which organizations were you a part of?

[00:21:39]

Quintero Oh, goodness, so many. [laughs] I mentioned a few, Sacramento Concilio, La Raza Drug Effort, single men self-help group, worked directly with La Raza Bookstore, with Tere [Romo] and Phillip [Santos] and those guys. Washington Neighborhood Center, Washington Neighborhood Council. There's so many, I can't remember.

Some of the other ones that we were not directly involved with, Chicano organizations which I really enjoyed was we established the Sacramento Home Program, which at that time we were able to recruit folks into the trades, into the building trades, because we didn't have too many of our people, ethnic minorities, in any of the building trades. Most of them were laborers. The electrical unions, the plumbing, the carpenters' unions, we didn't have them. So in order for them to

receive both local funding and federal funding, we established a joint group headed by a gentleman by the name of Bill Spooner [phonetic], and he was a contractor. We were able to write a specific number of percentages of minorities that the unions would recruit and train and hire in the Sacramento community. Again, this is back in 1972, '73.

The other one that I was really involved with, we had the Washington Elementary School on 17th, 18th, and F Street. The Washington Elementary School was a school that provided educational service to our community there in Alkali Flat and Washington area. It was an old school. The school board decided that they would demolish it because of the Field Act, because it was not earthquake-proof. Naturally, at that time we didn't have any Chicanos, I think there was one African American, one Asian on the school board, so the majority was Anglo.

We decided we would establish a group called the ABC Committee for Higher Education, Asians, Blacks, and Chicanos, because there were other schools in the Southside area, for example, the Asian community, they were not going to rebuild that school, and in Oak Park, in a black community, they were not going to rebuild that school, and all our kids would have to be bused. So our ABC Committee was very active, some very strong leaders in the ethnic communities.

We were able to convince the school board to build the Washington Elementary School, to rebuild the—can you recall the Southside school? I can't remember the name of it, the Asian school and the one in the old state fairgrounds in Oak Park. So we got what we wanted.

I was able to write a letter to the school board which kind of outlined how many more folks were going to move into Washington and Alkali because of the construction of the homes that we were building at that time. So there was going to be enough students to fill the school. It's in the time capsule at the Washington Elementary School, the ABC Committee. So that was a great organization.

Soto That's awesome. So tell me how did these changes impact your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:25:40]

Quintero Well, it took a toll on the family life, naturally, because being involved in the Chicano community was not an eight-to-five job. It was 24/7. Whenever an issue would come up, for example, when the students walked off school protesting that we didn't have enough bilingual teachers, we were called to go and work with the students, make sure they were safe, that they didn't get arrested. Whenever there was a problem with the police, a shooting or any type of abuse, we were called. Whenever there was a political issue that our folks needed help with, we were called. So we were totally involved. So that, naturally, takes a toll on your family life. The one thing that I did do, I saved my weekends always for family, but the rest of the week, I was seldom home. So it caused a friction at home.

Soto So describe how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento.

[00:27:01]

Quintero Well, I think starting with the bilingual/bicultural services throughout the Greater Sacramento area, Concilio and all the other agencies that I discussed, to

me, had the biggest impact. When Cesar Chavez would come to town, the whole community would rally, provide support. I had an old '63 Dodge van that was painted red at that time. Juanishi Orozco, who was a local artist, and I got together and said, "Why don't we start taking food and clothing down to the farmworkers." I told him, "Well, on one condition. It's already red. I want a black eagle on the door." And, sure enough, he would drive it because, again, I stayed home on the weekends. He would drive it and take a load probably every two or three weeks of food and clothing and other items that were donated to the farmworkers down in Delano, which was great.

And, naturally, when Cesar Chavez would come into town, the whole community would mobilize and provide *any* type of assistance that we could, whether it be for a place for them to stay, food, water, whatever. If they needed to rally at the state Capitol, if they needed to rally here at City College, Sac State, wherever the rally was, we organized the community to come out and support.

I want to tell you one good story about my good friend Marta Bustamante, who was a local activist in Alkali Flat and Washington, amazing woman. She's gone now. But one day we organized a boycott of Safeways, which was on Alhambra Boulevard, and, naturally, everybody was there. Marta was a big woman and she was pregnant at that time. She goes in to Safeway, starts shopping, filling up her shopping cart. She goes to the produce aisle, the fruit aisle, starts filling it up full of grapes. And then she had the basket full of grapes. One of the grocers came out and said, "Hey, lady, why are you buying so many grapes?"

She says, "These are union grapes, Cesar Chavez, right?"

And he goes "Hell no!"

And she goes, “What?” She was pregnant. Said, “I’m pregnant. Oh, my stomach! I think I’m going to fall!” And she falls on top of the grapes and destroyed the whole grape area, just totally destroyed it, fumbling around, “Oh, oh, my stomach! I’m going to sue you! Oh, my stomach!” Just cleaned out the whole grape display everywhere.

When she came out, we all started clapping. [applauds] So, to me, that’s the best story for Marta Bustamante, who was a great, great person, totally involved. All the things I’ve talked about, she was totally involved.

Soto Our last question. Future challenges for the Chicano community. What do you see as current or future challenges?

[00:30:34]

Quintero Well, to me, it’s always been the same, that our community has to stand up and really fight for what we call—again, my good friend [unclear] Mayor Joe Serna would always say, a level playing field, making sure that all of our children and grandchildren have an opportunity, whether it be education, whether it be politics, whether it would be in the business community, that they are afforded the same opportunities as anyone else. To me, that’s a challenge because that’s never-ending, you know. As long as you have wealthy people who are in control of the political system and who are not in tune to the needs of the minority communities, especially Chicanos, those opportunities, we will always have to struggle for that.

Naturally, there’s been a lot of changes since the sixties to now, because I could count on one hand how many students we have at Sac State. When I graduated from high school, didn’t have any representation on the city council, didn’t have any

representation, as I mentioned before, on the school boards. Now we do. We've had a Chicano council member. We had a Chicano mayor. Those are the things that were accomplished by a whole bunch of people through heavy sacrifice, for the most part, because of what we had to endure in terms of the struggles, the everyday struggles, our family life, etc.

But, to me, that's the greatest challenge, to keep that in the forefront, that as long as we don't have the same opportunities, we need to organize. We need to make sure that everyone understands what a level playing field is and how to take advantage of all the opportunities that are presented to us in order to advance our cause. Again, that's in all fields, the political arena, Farm Workers Union, whatever it may be. Whatever that individual is interested in, if it's music, if it's sports, if it's politics, whatever they decide to do, if they're not getting those equal opportunities, then the rest of the community has to join and organize and make sure that we attack those institutions that are not providing these equal opportunities.

Soto All right. That's it.

[00:33:25]

Quintero That's it? Wow, my mouth got dry talking so much. Let's talk about my involvement in the community, because you said things I was involved with.

Soto All right.

[00:33:41]

Quintero I'd like to talk about some of my other involvements in the community. When I was young, I was always into sports. I played football, baseball, basketball, the whole works, ran track. To me, again, that was a training field because

you have to work as a team in any sport that is a team sport. And my dad was a real *macho* guy. He said, "You don't need to play sports. You need to go to work."

I said, "Fine." So I worked all my life, whatever I needed to do, deliver newspapers, work in a service station, work in a restaurant, but I still wanted to play sports.

So at the age of twelve, in Broderick, Little League finally came into play, because we didn't have Little League because it was a very low-income neighborhood and you had to drive all the way to Woodland to play baseball. Finally, we had Little League when I was twelve. I asked my dad if I could play, and he said, "No."

I said, "Well, I can still work and still play."

He said, "No. You're not going to get into sports. You're going to work, you're going to study. You're going to go to work."

So I forged my dad's signature on the application to play, and I was selected to play baseball. I still remember the name of the team, the Senators. That was the first bad thing that I really did in all my life, to go against my parents. But I enjoyed it. I delivered my newspapers, played ball, delivered my newspapers, and my dad didn't find out until one day when my mother was washing my uniform, because she was on my side. [laughs] She said, "No, you can play sports. I'll try to keep your dad out of here."

But he caught my mom and he got very upset. I told him, "Why don't you come watch me?"

And it took him probably about six games and he finally decided to go watch me play ball. Because he was a mechanic, worked five days a week. The other two days, he was home working on people's cars, families' cars, never rested. So I was very proud when he showed up. [cries] It really changed my life [unclear].

So I decided that I would play sports, no matter what. So when I got into high school, I played football, baseball, basketball, and I ran track. The reason I'm bringing that up is because all of the things that I was able to do in the Chicano community, I was playing fastpitch softball for a team that only had one Mexicano from Rancho Cordova, and one night we were playing downtown, 10th and P, and we were playing against a twelve-Chicano team. I was playing shortstop. We were playing against each other, and the guys came over. "Hey, are you playing with those guys?"

I said, "Well, I know them from work." I worked in Rancho Cordova at the time.

"Why don't you come play for us? Next year, why don't you come play for us?"

I said, "Okay."

So the team was Brown Berets, my *compadre* Tony Uisar [phonetic], Tommy Guiro [phonetic], who was involved in the Chicano Movement through the Brown Berets, but they also loved sports. So I started playing with them. They were all from the Washington neighborhood downtown area. Played softball with them, became friends, *compadres*, our kids grew up together. I got them to start playing flag football. We would play tackle football at the park on Sundays, but I had always

played flag football for the city league. I said, “Why don’t we get a team together and let’s play some flag football against these guys.”

Again, we were just Chicanos, didn’t have uniforms, didn’t have anything, and we’d go up against these guys totally dressed out in their football uniforms. They played at Sac State. I remember one guy, Fred Brown, he was an end at La Sierra High School, who went to Miami University, got drafted by the Los Angeles Rams, linebacker. One day I saw him. I had played football against him when I was in high school. I said, “Fred, what are you doing out here?”

And the quarterback for the other team was Mike Lippi [phonetic], who was a bigtime quarterback here in Sacramento. He goes, “Oh, [unclear].”

I said, “Yeah, but you’re a professional player.”

“Yeah, but you’re the only one who knows that.”

And we beat them. [laughs] We were able to beat them. It was a championship game. We was able to beat him.

Then, finally, I told my buddies, I said, “You know who we’re playing against?”

He goes, “No.”

He says, “That’s Fred Brown from the Los Angeles Rams.”

He came over. “Man, you guys are good.”

It was the first total Chicano team—we had a couple other minorities—to win a championship in the city flag football league, so that was a lot of fun.

From there, we started organizing tournaments. We organized softball tournaments with the Sacramento Concilio, and it was all Chicanos. We got teams

from everywhere, from Woodland, Sacramento, played each other every year. We organized volleyball tournaments, Chicano volleyball tournaments. We organized a Chicano basketball tournament at Sac High.

Those friends, even though they were involved with the Chicano Movement but somewhere outside, we became long-lasting friends who I still see if we ever get a chance to play ball once in a while. David Rasul had just gotten back from—he served in Vietnam, was in Boston for a while, came back home. He got involved. I asked him, “Hey, you want to play some football?”

“Yeah, I played at Christian Brothers.”

I said, “Well, come on.” So he started playing some football with us.

We start organizing softball teams. We had Davis Diablos, Los Amigos. What were the other ones, David? Those are the two main ones. And we played softball all the time.

With my Brown Beret Chicano brothers, we’d go to the prisons. We played in Vacaville, played in Folsom against the inmates.

One day I ran into a Native American friend of mine who was also a ball player. Ira [phonetic] goes, “Hey, why don’t you come play with us?”

He says, “Yeah.”

I said, “I’m from Mexico.”

And he goes, “Yeah, you’re from the tribes down south, you tell me. You can play for us.”

So I played softball with the California Reds, all Native American team, and—what was the other one? Sacramento Skins. We would go to the reservations

and play fastpitch softball with all of the different tribes here in California. Then we had the big, big softball tournament where fastpitch teams came from Canada, from throughout Southwest to play here in Sacramento. Until this day, he still has the Indian Powwow Days at Southside Park. Ira was a great, great guy.

Soto I heard you mention that you got some relationships from all these sports. So can you tell me a little bit more about those relationships you formed with playing ball with all these people in the Chicano Movement? So were there any significant relationships that you formed through those activities that helped you with your Movement, with interaction in the Movement?

[00:41:41]

Quintero Well, definitely. Like I said, the Chicano team that I would play with were Brown Berets, and they were involved from the very beginning. Fortunately, some of the folks that were involved in the Chicano Movement were able to get employment opportunities for the city, for the county, and a lot of my friends, through Manuela Serna, who worked with the county, Affirmative Action, was able to find jobs for my friends who worked for the county, for the state, who were able to really improve their lives and their families' life by having, as I mentioned earlier, a good-paying job with good benefits, and they became the examples for a lot of the younger generation who were out on the streets, and were able to provide those services for them too.

Soto Most of these relationships was more of like a brotherhood? It was like a brotherhood, right?

[00:42:46]

Quintero Oh, definitely. It was called, at that time, Mexican American League. Our team at that time, the Brown Berets, we were the Reno Club, which was a club downtown which was very famous. The other team was Mexicali Rose team, La Cabaña Club, the California club in Broderick. What was the other one? There was three or four other teams, so it was totally a Chicano league on Friday nights, and the stands would be packed with family and friends, foods and drinks, and the kids would be running around playing ball. Same thing at the football games. All the kids would be out there, everybody watched the kids, no problems whatsoever. So, yeah, lifelong friends. It was a very, very positive atmosphere to me, sports.

Soto Did you feel like it was a good outlet at the time for a lot of people, right?

[00:43:50]

Quintero Oh, definitely, very good outlet for folks who didn't have a lot of opportunities, didn't have a lot of money. A lot of folks didn't travel, didn't take vacations, you know. So that was an outlet. Football season rolls around, get together, play flag football. Softball season, go play softball. Basketball, the same thing. So, yeah, those are the friends that I have for the rest of my life.

Soto Great. Is there anything else that you want to touch upon?

[00:44:21]

Quintero Well, probably that's it. I've taken a lot of time. [laughs]

Unidentified Tell me about the political atmosphere in the city.

[00:44:32]

Quintero The politics in Sacramento when we were involved at Sacramento Concilio, again, did not have opportunities for minority communities, especially Chicanos, the main reason being that the city council was elected at-large, which means that a council member could live right next door to another council member, and because they had the political connections and the financial connections, they would be elected to the city council, and it was like that for many, many years. Most of the council members would come from the higher-income neighborhoods such as Land Park.

Joe Serna, Lorenzo Patiño, those that were involved in politics not only through Joe being a professor, but Lorenzo being an activist who became an attorney, who later became a judge, we saw how that was not a level playing field, as I talked about earlier. How can we elect a Chicano city council member when they can't even afford to buy a house in the Land Park area or any of the higher neighborhoods?

So through tremendous organizing efforts of the community and supporters at the state assembly, we were able to change the way city council members were elected, change the city charter, and became district elections. By doing that, we had individuals representing different areas of the city, North Sacramento, south area, Oak Park, etc. The first Chicano council member ever elected was Manuel Ferrales, who was the president of Sacramento Concilio and was very involved in the community. That's how we got him elected, because he ran for District 1 at that time, which had a large percentage of Chicanos in that particular district. And it took the effort of everyone to go out and convince individuals who have never voted before, again because of the way the political system was set up, convince them to register to vote,

to get out the vote and elect Manuel Ferrales. And he was the first Chicano council member in the City of Sacramento, in the history of the City of Sacramento.

Soto Can you give me the year that that happened?

[00:47:20]

Quintero Manuel Ferrales, I think he was elected in 1972, maybe. I don't know. We could probably look it up. It was in that time period in the seventies, early seventies. And it works. Again, if people are dedicated and organized and learn how the system works, then you can make changes. I mean, so many changes were made.

Soto How did you guys go about educating people?

[00:47:50]

Quintero Well, Joe Serna and the group started a program called COPA, Chicano Organization for Political Awareness. Again, just organizing, talking, making presentations, going door-to-door, recruiting individuals to help us. And you have to remember at that time it was a politically-charged atmosphere because the Movement had just started. Cesar Chavez was coming to town. The Sacramento Concilio, educators, social service agencies were starting to come together and became a force, because we didn't just have this little neighborhood, Alkali Flat, or downtown hollering, screaming to change the system; we had everybody else that was involved. And that's what it takes. You have to have a comprehensive approach to whatever changes you're going to make in the political arena or the economic system. It has to be everyone involved.

You can't just say, for me, for example, after I left Sacramento Concilio and started working at Alkali Flat, that, "Okay, I'm in the redevelopment program and all

I'm going to do is redevelopment." No. It's nice to build new homes for folks, but if we can't go into those homes and start recruiting the parents for employment opportunities, start recruiting the children to aspire to a higher education and change their way of life, all we've done is built a new little box for them, and we haven't changed the culture. We haven't changed the socioeconomic status of that individual. And so even though I guess you could say I was able to bend rules because I hired staff that not only did we deal with redevelopment, but we dealt with all the other issues too.

I was called on the carpet a few times, but I stood my ground. I said, "No." I said, "If we're going to do community redevelopment, we're not just going to put in new sidewalks. We're not just going to put in streetlights. I want the community to come to our neighborhood and bring those services to them." And they did. I mentioned the Breakfast for Niños Program, Centro Cultural, RCAF, La Raza Bookstore, I mean, you name it. It was a rallying point for the community, and it worked. I mean, it really does work when you organize and you have individuals who are *totally* committed, not the folks that just come in and say, "Well, I'm here because I want a higher political office," or, "I'm here because I want a new girlfriend." The folks who stayed to this day, like Senon [Valadez], like David [Rasul], who are still doing that work, that's what it takes.

[End of interview]