

**The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education
Oral History Project**

Name of Interviewee: Andres Rendón

Name of Interviewer: Senon Valadez

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1 BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

2 [00:00:01]

3 Senon: For the record, please state your full name.

4 Andres: My full name is Andres Rendón.

5 Senon: Your birth date?

6 Andres: Birth date is January 24th 1939.

7 Senon: 1939. Your marital status?

8 Andres: I'm married. I've just three months ago celebrated our 50th.

9 Senon: 50th anniversary

10 Andres: [laughs] 50th anniversary.

11 [00:00:27]

12 Senon: Oh fantastic. How about children? Do you have children?

13 Andres: I have two, two boys.

14 Senon: Two. Are they here in Sacramento?

15 Andres: They're both here in Sacramento. One lives in Loomis and the other one in Elk Grove.

16 And they're pretty much into what [laughs] what I've been up to.

17 Senon: Yeah, they're in education?

18 Andres: No. They, they took different paths. One of them is, a letter carrier and a part time

19 soccer coach. The other one works for State Rec and Parks. [laughs] Parks and Rec, I should say.

20 Senon: Yeah. Andres where were you born?

21 Andres: I was born in Embudo, *Nuevo* [New] Mexico. Embudo is...it's not even the name of the

22 town anymore. Now they call it Dixon, but it's in Rio Arriba County and just.. about forty miles

23 North of Santa Fe.

24 Senon: Okay. Rio Arriba sounds familiar.

25 Andres: [laughs] yeah.

26 Senon: And you were raised there?

27 [00:01:28]

28 Andres: No, I was raised in, partially in Las Vegas, New Mexico. It's a small town. My father

29 went there and he was, well he was born there. His father was born there. And one of my

30 brothers and my sister were born there. So we all sort of went back.

31 Senon: You went back to Las Vegas?

32 Andres: To Las Vegas.

33 Senon: Okay. And—and you were there until what age?

34 Andres: I was there until I was ten. And about that time my older siblings started to grow up and
35 there's a university there. But there were no jobs given the Depression from—I don't think they
36 ever recovered from that Depression even to this day. So my dad knew that if any one of us was
37 gonna go to college, we'd have to find a place where there were jobs as well as universities, so
38 he moved us to Denver. And that's where I finished growing up [laughs].

39 Senon: Okay. What did your parents do?

40 Andres: My father was a Presbyterian minister. And my mother was a nurse. So [pause] we've
41 been involved in all sorts of things [laughs].

42 Senon: Yeah. He-- was a minister since you were born?

43 Andres: Since—well yeah even before I was born.

44 [00:02:51]

45 Andres: My father had two families. He was married thirty-six years to one woman and she
46 passed on. Then he married my mother. And he was married to her for 36 years and he passed on
47 [laughs]. So I'm the last one [laughs].

48 Senon: [laughs] Yeah. Alright. Brothers and sisters?

49 Andres: I have uh three half-sisters, two brothers, and a full sister.

50 Senon: They're all living still?

51 Andres: No. My sister was killed in a car accident. Got hit by a drunk driver. Back in 85 – so it’s
52 been a while.

53 Senon: Can you describe for us your -- childhood experiences, your experiences as a youth? How
54 you developed your own mindset?

55 Andres: Yeah. I think a lot of that I owe to my father. Because I remember we used to get an
56 evening paper. And he would look at delegations, especially during political years. And he
57 would read the names to my mom about who is in a delegation for different candidates and
58 who’s going to the party conventions and to state capitol and things like that. And he always
59 pointed out the Spanish surnames. And so I think –you know, I still – I do that still. I – I count
60 them. [laughs]

61 Andres: So that – that was part of my learning experience. Especially in Las Vegas. Denver was
62 a whole different experience for me.

63 [00:04:30]

64 Andres: We moved there when I was ten and I had, maybe I still do. I had a very strong New
65 Mexico accent. You know you can look at Mexican accents or from-- Central America, and the
66 grammar that they use. And you can just tell they’re different. A New Mexico accent is very
67 different. And I’m sure I must have had a very pronounced one when I went there. Words that I
68 didn’t understand, stuff that the big cities boys would tell me; things like...one time I went to the
69 river during lunch and we weren’t supposed to do that. [laughs] And the teacher asked me why I
70 was late so I told him I was down by the river. The kid I was with said [deep voice] “dummy up”
71 [laughs]. To me it sounded like one word. It wasn’t dummy up like shut your mouth, it was like
72 “dummy up”. And I said what he wants to be let up? [laughs] So I -- I had a time with that.

73 Senon: Yeah. What was Denver like at that time?

74 Andres: Denver was --

75 Senon: Rural?

76 Andres: It was still small, it was about 500,000. But Denver itself is a size of a postage stamp.

77 And the metropolitan area stretches out over three counties. And I don't know how big it is now.

78 I left there in '65 and I've only been back for funerals and weddings.

79 Senon: Yeah. What could you say about the -- sorta the sociology of the town, the -- poverty

80 areas, the wealthy areas, the--

81 Andres: Yeah. Well there's always the wealthy areas down there where all the golfers go and

82 John Elway lives and those sorts of things.

83 [00:06:15]

84 Andres: But the poverty areas are -- are there and they're there for all the world to see. There are

85 several government housing projects and that's where the really poor live and it's a tough place

86 to grow up. We lived not very far. I went to school with the kids that came out of Las Casitas. It

87 was a government housing project. And those kids were tough. I learned how to make my first

88 zip gun. This kid took me aside and he says, "Do you have a zip gun?" and I said, "No." He said,

89 "come here" and he tore aerial off a car, took it to his dad's garage in the back of the house and

90 sawed it down. And he said, "that'll hold a 22-caliber bullet." And he had several handles carved

91 out and wired them down and rubbed big ol' rubber bands with a hammer and by gosh it worked.

92 You could only shoot 'em a few times, but they worked.

93 Interviewer: Is that the time period of or later than Corky Gonzales emerges?

94 Andres: Uhh, it was just before.

95 Senon: Just before?

96 Andres: Corky Gonzales was a boxer. And he was our local hero. When we lived in east Denver,
97 he used to come out and do clinics at Curtis – Curtis Park, which was another poverty area on the
98 East Side of town. And he used to come out and every Chicano in school was there to greet him,
99 to take a picture or shake hands with him or have him pat you on the back and say “keep going
100 dude” [laughs].

101 Senon: You were – you were there when he was there, but he was older?

102 Andres: He was older, right –

103 Senon: Okay, yeah.

104 [00:08:01]

105 Andres: Yeah, Corky.. You know, he was – he was a Councilman, he uh after when he retired
106 from the ring, I remember him re—really clearly I think and some of these things were really
107 empathetic towards other humans. He killed a guy in a ring. And it was just part of what happens
108 in boxing, especially back in the early ‘50s when there was um you know not much regulation.
109 People got knocked out, they had a bleed in the brain and nobody seemed to care. Well, he got
110 one of those bouts and he killed this man. That’s one of the reasons why he retired.

111 Senon: Mhmm.

112 Andres: And he became a bail bondsman. Even then, I saw him as an advocate for us, somebody
113 who could speak for us.

114 Senon: Mhmm.

115 Andres: And of course [laughs] later on he went on to other fame. By that time – by the time he
116 wrote the poem [“I am Joaquin”] and other things like this I was gone

117 Senon: You were gone from there?

118 Andres: Yeah –

119 Senon: When did you end up coming to California?

120 Andres: I got a call from an old professor saying that there was an Ethnic Studies Program here.

121 Senon: Oh.

122 [00:09:21]

123 Andres: And he asked me if I – If I were interested. Of course [laughs] I jumped – I jumped on
124 the chance because you know by this time, there was a lot of movement I guess I would call it,
125 toward Chicano Studies and other things like that. I was, I had – I had been working for Arizona
126 State as a Research Associate for the Graduate School for Social Administration.

127 Senon: Mhmm.

128 Andres: And we were doing research for the Department of Labor. And so we – we knew where
129 the target areas were and what they were trying to do. And so – since we had the contract at
130 ASU, the director said, “How would you like to go to Albuquerque?” So, I went to Albuquerque.
131 Our contract ended and I, by this time, Chicanos were talking about forming their own
132 university. You know they looked at traditionally black universities and other universities and
133 they were -- they had their eyes on [New Mexico] Highlands University [in Las Vegas, NM] at

134 the time. This was oh back about 1968. And I heard that they were starting a new college on a
135 Navajo Reservation. So, I thought you know, if the Chicanos are serious about starting a college
136 or university, I wanna get some experience doing that. And so, I went there. And, of course, my
137 contract ended about the time that Alex Garber [he was a student of his at the University of
138 Colorado] called me and told me there was Ethnic Studies in California here in Sacramento. So,
139 well – [laughs] I gathered up all my stuff, applied, and that’s why I came here.

140 Senon: Where did you get your education? Your community college or your university?

141 Andres: Yeah I -- I started well, I got my B.A. at the University of Colorado.

142 [00:11:25]

143 Senon: Colorado --

144 Andres: That’s, you know, I knocked around for about 4 years before I even started school.

145 Senon: Mhm.

146 Andres: I worked on a railroad.

147 Senon: After high school?

148 Andres: After high school, I worked on a railroad for a couple years. I was a warehouseman. You
149 know back in those days when I was on the railroad [laughs], they called us “gandy dancers.”
150 We were section hands. So, the old traditional name was that. And I joined a union. And then
151 from CU [Colorado University], I went to Arizona State to the graduate school for Social Service
152 Administration. And that’s where I ended up. Later I worked – I worked for the Graduate

153 School. And it gave me some good experiences. The – the thing that I was a little disappointed at
154 was that we were never able to muster enough money and people to start a Chicano University.

155 Senon: Yeah, yeah. I know that experience. So, when you came to Sacramento State, what year
156 was that?

157 Andres: 1970.

158 Senon: 1970?

159 Andres: Yeah.

160 Senon: Okay.

161 [00:12:32]

162 Andres: Fall of 1970

163 Senon: 1970, okay. So that takes us to the next question that is, you are already a professor in
164 1970 so you were not part of the Mexican American Education Project, but were you teaching
165 fellows, people that were in the Project?

166 Andres: Yes, I was. In fact, I taught a graduate seminar in the project. And I can't remember the
167 year, I think it was '72. And I can't remember if it was spring or fall, but I – I look at the
168 outstanding people who are in that class.

169 Senon: Uh huh.

170 Andres: And one that comes to mind right away is Rene Merino.

171 Senon: Okay.

172 Andres: So he was in that class. And I had other students who were “felitos.” I don’t remember, I
173 – I can’t identify if they were in a project or not cause they were just part of the student amalgam
174 [laughs].

175 Senon: [indistinct]

176 Andres: Yeah, they go in there. But I had people like Richard Soto in class. Sam Rios, Jr. David
177 Rasul. And those were early 70s people.

178 Senon: He remembers you likewise.

179 Andres: [laughs]

180 [00:13:39]

181 Senon: So, at [pause] when you were completing your – your degree in Sociology, um did you
182 take cultural courses over there?

183 Andres: I took a lot of cultural courses as an undergraduate. I – sociology of course. But I also
184 have a minor in anthropology, and psychology. But the cultural courses I don’t know they sort of
185 just duck tailed into everything that I was – that I was into.

186 Senon: Yeah.

187 Andres: And the kinds of things that my brothers influenced me into.

188 Senon: Uh huh. That’s – that’s the question that, that we’re jumping to that says and did your
189 study of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the movimiento Chicano
190 [the Chicano movement]? Did that awareness of cultural, you know, aspects, issues, elements
191 influence how you went about doing your work?

192 Andres: Yes, they did because they taught me a lot. I learned lots of things about lore and
193 tradition. And – and why it’s important to – to Native peoples and to ethnic groups. The
194 influence it had on me is that it made me wanna learn more. I still every once in a while, pick up
195 things [laughs] to see what I should’ve done, I think.

196 Senon: Mhmm. In your study or in your teaching of sociology, um you had a course called
197 um..I’m not gonna remember right now. Chicano community?

198 Andres: Chicano community.

199 Senon: What did that course entail? What did you try to do through that course?

200 [00:15:36]

201 Andres: I tried to, back in those days, one of the things I was interested in – how the Chicano
202 generation came about. And what we were trying to do. And the things that should motivate us.
203 And so, this was generally the course. I touched on all sorts of things like population, population
204 growth, especially among ourselves. Voting behavior was one of the things that it entailed. In
205 fact, some of my students used to say, “oh that’s a political definition of this, isn’t it?” And sure
206 enough, it was.

207 Senon: What were your earliest memories of the Chicano movement or what’s something that
208 attracted you to it? Probably back uh—

209 Andres: Yeah, quite a ways back [laughs]

210 Senon: yeah.

211 Andres: There are several things that stand out in my mind. One of the things was that I went
212 with my father to a little town north of Denver where farmworkers had put together canned food,
213 they'd lead a drive up in a town near Fort Lupton. And I went there with my father and they met
214 with all sorts of religious leaders. There were rabbis, priests, ministers. And they were there just
215 kinda giving their blessing. And I remember very clearly a truck, a flatbed truck, not very big
216 with a tarp over it, a canvas tarp. And I could still smell it these days. And it was packed with
217 canned food that they were taking to some minors somewhere in New Mexico. And that's all I
218 can remember about that. My second big thing came when my oldest brother was a graduate
219 student at the University of Colorado. He said, "there's a movie being shown and I think you
220 ought to see it." So he took me up to Boulder. And you know-- after teaching almost 30 years, I
221 reinstitute, I – I started to show that film in class.

222 [00:17:50]

223 Andres: It was Salt of the Earth.

224 Senon: Yes.

225 Andres: And I remember this was, oh mid '50s. Took me into a library and Professor Hidman
226 got up and introduced the-- film. Told us he was gonna show it and then he said, "I think I know
227 most everybody in here or at least somebody who is accompanying somebody I know. He said
228 but there are some people here, I have no idea who they are. So, I'm going to turn off the lights.
229 I'm going to turn off the lobby lights and anybody that doesn't wanna be seen here may leave
230 quietly. I'll give you a minute or two if there's any. When the movement stops," he said "I'll turn
231 them back up". And my brother hit me in the ribs [laughs] and he says, "you see those two guys
232 on the side over there? They're wearing suits and I don't think Hidman knows who they are." So,

233 and I thought what's this all about? Later on, I learned about the McCarthy era and all those
234 things. And you know I – I showed that, that film to my class back in 2003 or something like that
235 [laughs]. And they're – they were thinking what was the big deal for that? But then we were
236 guilty by association.

237 Senon: Yes.

238 Andres: So a lot of my, a lot of my thinking about the Chicano movement-- is closely blended
239 with the labor movement. And so sometimes, I can't separate them. By the way, it turns out that
240 those minors down in Silver City, New Mexico were all Mexicans. Of course, you know the, the
241 controversy that that movie caused. And I think the literature accompanying that has grown
242 bigger than the picture.

243 [00:19:39]

244 Senon: Yeah. That movie had a great deal of impact on – well it just showed us that we, before
245 the word Chicano, there were people already doing exactly the same thing.

246 Andres: Right.

247 Senon: They were standing up and trying to do something about their labor conditions and they –
248 the living conditions that—

249 Andres: Right.

250 Senon: given communities were all about.

251 Andres: That's right. You know another experience that I had and this was strange, I was a junior
252 at the university. I was sitting in a criminology class and I sat in about the middle of the room. I

253 could never get there on time to sit up closer. But they had a guest speaker and he was talking
254 about certain laws and practices by police departments. And just towards the end of class, just as
255 it was ending, he asked for questions. And a hand went up in the front row. And I looked to see
256 what it was. And there was a blonde woman, really blonde, blonde hair. And she asked him,
257 “well how does this impact the Chicano youth in Denver?” And she used the word Chicano.

258 Senon: Mhmm.

259 Andres: And before that, it had only been used among us [laughs]. And I thought holy, something
260 is going on here that I don't even know about. How can some blonde person, a woman at that. So
261 as class ended, I went out the side door and we met in a common hallway from three doors and a
262 lecture hall [laughs]. And I looked at her [laughs] blonde hair, blue eyed, fair complexion, and I
263 thought “oh I know who she is.” She was the daughter of an anthropologist.

264 [00:21:29]

265 Senon: Oh okay.

266 Andres: Later on, uh you may know the name Pancha Suárez López. She wrote extensively on
267 the land grants of New Mexico.

268 Senon: Oh, okay.

269 Andres: So that was another one of my interests.

270 Senon: Yeah [laughs]. How about the word Chicano? The word Chicano...accepted or not
271 accepter in your experience wherever you were?

272 Andres: You know I didn't run into much opposition from my generation or even, even when we
273 were kids. I have a good friend, I just talked to him a couple months ago. Through junior high
274 and high school he used the word Chicano. And we used to use it among ourselves, but never
275 outside. And so, I didn't encounter any frowns or anything or signs of disapproval until I used it
276 among my elders. My dad didn't care, my mom didn't care. For them it was alright. You have a
277 right to say who you are and what you are. My brothers, of course, no opposition. But elderly
278 aunts and uncles would kind of frown upon us using it or calling ourselves that. But you know
279 when it got old it kind of mellowed out. And they used to say things like, "Oh, hay vienen los
280 Chicanos" [here comes the Chicanos]. [laughs] So at least they, even though they disapproved,
281 they were still. They were still halfway there.

282 Senon: Yeah. It was a new identity. How about the civil rights movement. You – you had heard
283 about it before you came –

284 Andres: Oh yeah.

285 [00:23:10]

286 Senon: To Sacramento?

287 Andres: Oh yeah, long before... that. The civil rights movement and the antiwar movement in
288 Vietnam are also sorta blended in my mind.

289 Senon: Mhmm.

290 Andres: The civil rights movement and antiwar movement were going relatively strong, but I
291 was isolated. I spent a year on the Navajo reservation. And, of course, while I was there, there
292 were national guardsmen shooting the students at Kent State. And I was there at the junior

293 college teaching at the time. I also directed a program on ten different locations. We were trying
294 to do something about dormitory aids being able to deal with problems. Boarding schools are one
295 thing. I mean, some people go there cause they wanna go there. Other people go because their
296 parents make 'em go there. But they're monied and privileged. Not so on the Navajo. And for
297 me, this was really the poor or the down trodden. And as far as my ethnicity goes, you know one
298 of my brothers had his DNA taken and he's almost forty percent American Indian, Native
299 American. And [laughs] so you know, we're mutts.

300 Senon: Yeah.

301 Andres: But to me there was some kind of brotherhood. I went to school with some kids that
302 were Native Americans. Different tribes, but I missed out on a lot of that. But about the time I
303 came to Sacramento, well it was in full swing. There were national TV show people and people
304 in Alabama and Selma in other places where were turning the dogs loose on the civil rights
305 people.

306 [00:25:06]

307 Andres: And that's blended with the antiwar movement where they were using water cannon to
308 clean down the steps at Berkeley.

309 Senon: Yeah.

310 Andres: And so, when I came back into the populated world, it just seemed to fit into everything
311 I want, I wanted to do. Something about—I didn't know what. I was sort of lost, I knew
312 something had to be done.

313 Senon: Yeah. Everything was in motion. And would you say your involvement in the Chicano
314 movement changed you personally? That it affected somehow your conscious level?

315 Andres: [laughs] I think—I think yeah it affected me in a profound sort of way. One of the things
316 was that it helped me focus a little bit more. It told me that I wasn't alone in the world. Just a
317 voice crying in the wilderness. There were lots of us crying in the wilderness. But that--that gave
318 me some help and it added to my self-confidence, I think. And obviously career wise it gave me
319 lots of opportunities to do something with the movement like interviewing students for EOP and
320 mentoring programs and things like that. So, it gave me things that I don't think I would have
321 had the opportunity to do. Anything about – including becoming a professor. Because this is
322 where the pressure was and people in the movement, the movement itself was applying all this
323 pressure on colleges and universities, especially public ones and some people were doing
324 something about it. [laughs] I know you were highly involved.

325 [00:26:57]

326 Senon: Um. I wanna—I wanna continue that line of thought, but let me come back to this idea of
327 women in the movement, the role of Chicanas. What role do you believe that Chicanas played in
328 the movement?

329 Andres: For me, they played two different roles. Early on, the speakers that I heard here in
330 Sacramento, they talked about – well the women's rights movements were also in play. But
331 Chicanas said that they had different needs. Their primary need was to support their men. And
332 some of them felt very strongly about it. I can give you names if you want [laughs].

333 Senon: Sure, yeah.

334 Andres: Juanita Polendo was one that comes to mind right away because—you know. Well, let
335 me put it bluntly. I learned more from my students than they learned from me and these attitudes,
336 these justifications, these arguments they had for doing things in a certain way, I think I learned a
337 lot from them. In a way, I was a little disappointed because then I started looking at the roles that
338 they played, you know, every time we went to a menudo feed or we had a picket or we had some
339 meeting going on. The women were in the kitchen. And so, I started – because you know there
340 were just talking about that and that made me look at that. And so [laughs] I don't know I just
341 when – when they started looking at themselves saying we have rights too. I took that as a very
342 positive sort of move and it's affected me. A colleague and I did – did a little research on
343 women's roles and-- sorts of things. We set it up as a – as a prisoner's dilemma game where you
344 have a situation where somebody cooperates – if both people cooperate, they get a few points.

345 [00:29:14]

346 Andres: If one doesn't cooperate, the one who does, loses all his points and the one who doesn't,
347 gets all the points until you see something happening. Well we did this with women's roles to see
348 what was going on. Had interesting things, it didn't go the way we hypothesized things [laughs].

349 Senon: No?

350 Andres: [laughs] We learned from that.

351 Senon: What happened?

352 Andres: Well, we expected people, women's rights people, to become competitive. Well they
353 didn't. I thought, you know, if somebody challenges one of these women, they're gonna [laughs]
354 they're gonna screw it up for everybody – well for the other person, but it didn't happen that

355 way. They became cooperative. They started off competitive and then throughout the series of
356 tests –

357 Senon: These were Chicana women?

358 Andres: No no, these were just women, yeah. I—I couldn't get anything funded at that time
359 through the faculty research grants. In fact, I served on that committee. You know, when we—
360 when I talk about the Chicano movement giving me opportunities, I got into that committee
361 because they said not enough grants are going to people in the social sciences and none are going
362 to the ethnic sciences. So, I got in there just –just to see if somebody wrote a proposal. You knew
363 I was gonna [laughs] gonna have my vote and try to talk other people into it.

364 Senon: [pause] Okay, going to that—to the—what we were talking about earlier, the role of
365 faculty in the Chicano movement.

366 [00:31:02]

367 Senon: The question says what did you personally initiate or help initiate in this movimiento
368 Chicano [Chicano Movement]? In terms of your courses or your efforts that you were making
369 through your courses, what happened there?

370 Andres: Yeah, most of my efforts came into initiating those courses. And then all – all the
371 preparation goes into teaching them. I think that was where I concentrated cause I didn't want
372 my class to become a, be seen as a second-class kind of class. And so, I started to think that
373 everything I had said had some relevance. Especially to the Chicano movement. Other things I
374 really don't remember initiating. Anything rather than participating. I did try to initiate a
375 neighborhood research group and I got a few people interested like Father Casey, his assistant,

376 Joe Flores, Juan Hernández, and some people have since passed like Fidencio Salazar. Yeah, so
377 we tried that out and, well we didn't have the manpower or the facilities –

378 Senon: Was this through an agency or?

379 Andres: It was through Catholic charities.

380 Senon: Okay.

381 Andres: They sorta sponsored us, but didn't give us any money [laughs].

382 Senon: Oh, okay.

383 Andres: So, it was all done by a community group, priests, nuns, people who volunteered. And
384 most of them had no research experience at all so it just sort of fell on my shoulders and I
385 couldn't carry it. Other than that, most of my involvement has come into things that other people
386 have initiated.

387 [00:33:00]

388 Senon: Like for instance?

389 Andres: The student affirmative action. I went – I went to work for Student Advising Center and
390 Isabelle saw me in there and said now that you're trained, we can use you over here being a
391 counselor to our students.

392 Senon: Okay.

393 Andres: And so, I did that, several other mentoring programs, the – participated with Stella
394 Serrano in the one that was started by the Vice President's Office, David León was – got that one

395 going and held it together. The other was another mentoring project, but it was for all ethnic
396 groups. That's the one started by Dan Decious in Chemistry. Although every once in a while,
397 he'd take a break and I'd become the university [laughs] counselor. But most of my things were
398 not things that I initiated mainly. I, I joined things because some things were already in play
399 when I got here.

400 Senon: Yes.

401 Andres: Like *Trabajores de la Raza* [ethnic Mexican workers, la raza was a popular term used
402 during the Chicano Movement as a nod to La Raza C6smica championed by Mexican
403 philosopher, Jos6 Vasconcelos] was already in play.

404 Senon: In the community?

405 Andres: In the community and at the university. There were several active people in that.
406 Valdemar Gonz6lez from social work had come in and found a community organization. And
407 there were mostly people – social workers and social work students from-- who were already in
408 it.

409 [00:34:32]

410 Interviewer: Would be this be the year that you came to Sacramento:

411 Andres: Yes, that would be –

412 Senon: Already going --

413 Andres: That was already going in 1970.

414 Senon: What were other things going on?

415 Andres: Concilio was going strong in those days as *Trabajadores de La Raza*, Valdemar and I
416 had to, we were, served on the board [laughs] intermittently replacing each other.

417 Senon: With Concilio?

418 Andres: With Concilio. Yeah, I was Valdemar's alternate.

419 Senon: Yeah. What activities or what programs were going on in Concilio at the time that you
420 remember?

421 Andres: We had the, we're trying to get a wellness program going. I'm trying to remember if
422 there was one for *ancianitos* [the elderly].

423 Senon: A senior program?

424 Andres: A senior program. The other thing that I was most involved in, or remember more
425 clearly, was in proposal writing. They had a really good proposal writer, Patricia – geez--not
426 good with names today, Patricia Franco was a good – was a good--proposal writer. And every
427 once in a while, she'd call me and read – read stuff to me and asked me how it sounded.

428 [00:35:56]

429 Andres: And again, it was nothing I initiated. I was, maybe I was more of a follower.

430 Senon: Yeah, but the question says that not only initiated, but helped support or participated in.

431 Things like that –

432 Andres: Yeah, I did mentoring mostly because it – and it covers any number of subjects.

433 Senon: Mentoring on the campus?

434 Andres: On the campus, Yeah, I – most of what I did out in the community was--was informal,
435 people, I used to get together with the Mexican Americans in my community. And we'd do small
436 things like adopt a child for Christmas or send them gifts or do the Christmas – we would unite
437 to do something like that.

438 Senon: The *Familia* [La Familia is a community resource center located in Sacramento] tried to
439 do that often all the way through, they would contact faculty and see if you could sponsor a child
440 or

441 Andres: Yeah

442 Senon: *El Hogar* [community resource center in Sacramento] the same thing.

443 Andres: Mhmm

444 Senon: I think, um-- Estella Serrano had worked with somebody at the Concilio also to do the
445 mental health or the

446 Andres: Yeah

447 Senon: explore that – develop that. Osuna. Was their last name? Patricia Osuna

448 Andres: Oh right, okay.

449 Senon: Maybe that's the one you were –

450 [00:37:21]

451 Andres: Yeah, Mhmm. Yeah, because there were other mental health people involved, Alejandra
452 Epersol, Valdemar- of course. Um [pause].

453 Senon: Do you think the activities of the Chicano movement raised your consciousness along
454 social, cultural, and political lines? Any of those?

455 Andres: I think to a certain extent they did. You know, I thought I was always up and arguing
456 and going at what I could. But, I think – I think that they helped. As I-- mentioned before, it was
457 – it was – they gave me some moral support. And sometimes even verbal support, you know, a
458 pat on the back, a kick in the butt [laughs] those are the kinds of things that kept me going. And I
459 think it did help. And I think it, to a certain extent, [laughs] sometimes I think it changed my
460 personality. At one point when I first came here, in my department I was as obnoxious as I could
461 be. I think back [laughs] at those things sometimes and I think well they had it coming to ‘em.
462 Somebody had to tell them. [laughs] but then [laughs], that’s not my personality. [laughs] I’m
463 not an abrupt person.

464 Senon: Yeah, yeah. But things that were going on supported you or back you up or – it sounds
465 like when you had Juanita or other students in your class, that engagement with people in the
466 community either encouraged or fostered another mindset, another level of consciousness.

467 Andres: Yeah, that’s very – that’s very true. Because I think of some, a lot of people in my
468 classes were already activists when I came here. And so sometimes it was like preaching to the
469 choir. And sometimes getting a nod, yes, from one of them like well said or that’s something we
470 gotta pay attention to.

471 [00:39:30]

472 Andres: That’s helped me a lot. It bolstered me, and it fostered a certain kind of behavior, both
473 political and social.

474 Senon: Do you think that these changes that you were experiencing as you were working, that
475 they--had an impact on your family or the people that knew you before?

476 Andres: Um.

477 Senon: They saw you changing?

478 Andres: Uh no, I don't think they saw me changing that much.

479 Senon: They knew you, who you were at the core.

480 Andres: Yeah, right yeah. Well, yeah it really does I guess I was always like that. I had – I had
481 kind of a political awakening when I was in college. My brother of course was always doing
482 something. He was working on his doctorate and uh he let me know what was going on in the
483 world. And it seems at a certain time right after high school, and working in manual jobs, that I
484 had started to develop a very conservative, conservative point of view. And going back to that, I
485 said you know, this is all wrong. If people delight in human misery, and that's not me. I'm here
486 to alleviate it any way I can. Sometimes not in the strongest way, but I'll do what I can.

487 Senon: [pause] Can you describe the impact that the Chicano movement had on your career?

488 How would you answer that Andres?

489 Andres: I would say that if it were not for the Chicano movement, I wouldn't have even got my
490 foot in the door.

491 [00:41:32]

492 Andres: And it's-- that very basic level, if there had not been that pressure, if there had not been
493 activists, like Corky Gonzales and other activists in the Denver area that I grew up with, Senator

494 Roger Cisneros and those people. You know for, uh you know because they also established
495 scholarships. I remember my senior year, I almost could hardly graduate because I needed some
496 money in order to pay my last month's rent. And so I went to one of these organizations and they
497 said "yeah, okay." Some of those were union leaders. My neighbor I think, uh a mean named Pat
498 Ríos had a lot to do with my being able to get that cause he was a strong union man and people
499 knew who he was. So, he had-- influence.

500 Senon: The many issues that you were exposed to, or that you discovered as you were teaching
501 and especially as you went to the point where you started to retire, are there issues there that
502 were very critical and are still unresolved?

503 Andres: I think there are, um there are some issues. For example, political involvement has
504 always been a concern of mine. And you try to do what you can, you walk precincts, you talk to
505 your neighbors, find all the Chicanos in your neighborhood and talk to them because, first of all,
506 they'll be more receptive. And there's certain things that we learn. I learned about political
507 behavior from my oldest brother. He was already working on his master's degree when he got a
508 job with the National Council of Churches working with migrants. And this where, another place
509 where labor and the-- movement sort of blend together. He followed migrants from Brownsville,
510 Texas down in the Valley, Westlaco, Texas to Michigan. Followed the crops going up. Followed
511 the harvest going back down.

512 [00:44:02]

513 Andres: And when he was down at their home base in around Arlington, they had an election and
514 so he looked into it and the way he told it to me was that they had a sheriff who really mistreated
515 people. And at the coming election, some new guy came in and my brother started registering

516 people. In fact, he got thrown in jail for interviewing people on public property. And of course,
517 they let him go, but he kept registering because he discovered that the difference between the
518 sheriff and the one who ran against him, they were separated by three percentage points. So, he
519 had figured that he had large enough population to make up for that and two more percentages.
520 So, the new guy came in and he gave some political promises to the people who were the
521 migrants who had their base down there during the winter. And he promised them paved streets,
522 streetlight, and fire hydrants; it worked. So, they all voted for him and they got rid of the old
523 sheriff and got this new one. And he came through with, with all those promises. So that gave me
524 a view of how things work. Yeah, so I always thought we have to get more involved, who do I
525 talk to. I talk to my students, of course [laughs]. But, yeah that's-- still, and now with things
526 getting close the way they are, that voting behavior is something that we have to address. And
527 we have to put some of that pressure on the political parties.

528 Senon: The population is there.

529 Andres: Yeah.

530 Senon: We just gotta get that politicized and gonna need to become more active.

531 Andres: That's very true. Yeah.

532 [00:46:14]

533 Senon: Describe how the *movimiento* Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento.

534 Andres: Uh, well we saw a lot of new leadership. It impacted medical programs, I think. What
535 was it? Politically where you see more and more people, Joe Serna, Philip Serna, and people who
536 have taken roles of leadership. I think that has impacted over here. Especially the city and the

537 county both. And I see that-- as a positive sort of thing that, you know, you look at well. Well
538 since we live in the capital city, we also see that the leadership and the senate and the assembly.
539 That guard is changing. And I think we have to ride it and see how many more people we can get
540 involved. You know there is a couple of other old lessons in that. One of them comes from Nazi
541 Germany. That army held itself together as long as there were sergeants. And when the sergeants
542 started getting killed off, they started losing and people started deserting. So, it's that personal
543 one to one contact that these guys brought. And I think there's a lesson there for us, we don't
544 want what happened to them, but we want the personal contacts that we have with people to be
545 able to alert them and have them become aware and discover their own – their own thinking
546 about these things.

547 Senon: There are many people that were involved in the movement beginning in '65. The study
548 that we're doing takes that all the way to the 1980s. It would be the first fifteen years of the
549 Chicano movement. A lot of people, as you know, have passed away.

550 Andres: Yeah.

551 Senon: Their history, their memories, their efforts, we won't have a record of them but we're
552 lucky we're doing this at the present time.

553 [00:48:35]

554 Senon: Are there people there that you remember that have passed on that have left a impression
555 on you. Things that are possible to do?

556 Andres: Oh yes, lots of them. I think of Joaquin Fernández music that, you know every time he
557 had a concert, people of all ethnic groups used to come out. Fundraisers, he did those things and

558 he helped instill a sense of culture with his music and I think it's priceless. I think of Valdemar
559 Gonzales and his efforts and he used to loved to write letters and so he wrote -- I think every
560 time he wrote a letter about some issue, I think he even carbon-- copied President Nixon. I'm not
561 sure, but [laughs] I have that feeling. Another one that comes to mind is Cy Gonzales [short for
562 Cyrilo]. As I mentioned, a lot of people that came through were already activists. Cy Gonzales
563 was not an activist when he first started taking my classes. And that's because he wasn't in a
564 world that allowed him to be connected. He was, he was a marine. Went, joined the marines
565 when he was seventeen years old. Served when the nationalists were running away from the
566 communists he was stationed there at the "protect the American interests." Did, three – two tours
567 of Korea, three tours of Vietnam. He was a company commander. Retired and just came out just
568 – you know, 1968 when all this stuff was starting to ferment and several movements. And he was
569 dark and he said [laughs] "I'm a Mexican. So, he said I gotta find out what this movement is all
570 about." And he was kind of ambivalent because part of that was the antiwar movement. And he'd
571 done over twenty years as a career soldier. So, he kinda had some kind of ambivalence about
572 that, but he came out and what I admired mostly about him was that he was willing to listen. And
573 he was my first graduate assistant. Went on and became the University Affirmative Action
574 Coordinator at Chico State.

575 [00:51:16]

576 Andres: So, and during that first year that we worked together, people in the department talked to
577 me about "the radicalization of Cy Gonzales." His term papers, it started to take a different
578 voice. So, there were some of those people. Casavantes, Edward Casavantes. He was a good
579 man. Uh, abrasive sometimes [laughs]. Well, maybe often, but I sure enjoyed him.

580 Senon: I remember Casavantes.

581 Andres: Yeah...There's well.. Joe and Isabel of course [Joe Serna would go on to be the first
582 Chicano Mayor of Sacramento and Isabel serve in administration at Sacramento State
583 University]. Can't get anywhere without mentioning them because they were some of our
584 luminaries here. And I don't know, all of these people I feel privileged in knowing them.

585 Senon: They came and they left their mark.

586 Andres: They sure as hell did [laughs].

587 Senon: They did something. They had an impact that stays. What do you see as current or future
588 challenges for the Chicano movement? The community has changed, but they're still challenges
589 there..

590 Andres: Yeah. I--I think the things that we talked about today are important because some of
591 them have no idea what's going on, the younger generation. You know you talk about César
592 Chávez, and some people think you're talking about the boxer. Yeah, that sort of thing. So, what
593 you're doing here today. It to me is extremely important. Some place where somebody can go
594 and say you've interviewed all these people and they've had their say. And they learned some of
595 those things, they learned some of the names of the past people who came before us and paved
596 the way. Or if they didn't pave it, they plowed it up so we could do it. [pause] Important people.

597 [00:53:27]

598 Senon: Is there anything else that you can think of that we touched on a little bit that we can
599 develop a little bit more with reference to the – the progression of the development of the
600 Chicano movement? Either here in Sacramento or you know like if you did travels back to

601 Denver or wherever else you traveled to during your career. Do you see some things, you know
602 like, similar or some things different about how the movement went?

603 Andres: I see a lot of things that are similar. When I was at Arizona State, I had a chance to train
604 Vista volunteers [volunteers in service to America, advertised as the domestic peace corps]. And
605 later on, I became the vista coordinator for Operation Leap, which is [laughs] Leadership and
606 Education for the Advancement of Phoenix. Name thought up of by no one other than the mayor.
607 And later I became a supervisor for a community organization, neighborhood organizations is
608 what we call them. And so, we went out and helped them organize and gather membership and I
609 remember helping them write constitutions and bylaws. And, of course we were, we had to air
610 [?] the mayor and so we were able to use the printing facilities from the city. And of course, got
611 them from federal [laughs] grants that were in there. And I see a lot of similarities, sometimes
612 people need to see that other people are with them. That they're not alone. They're not the only
613 ones that –on towards things are happening to them and nobody does anything about them. So, I
614 see those similarities in research that I did in Albuquerque and Phoenix, the Navajo reservation.
615 The Navajo reservation holds a bit of interest for me because my people come from Picuris
616 Pueblo which is in northern New Mexico. The first ancestors we can point a finger at was a
617 Picuris Native American.

618 Senon: What nation would that be?

619 Andres: That would be the Pueblos of Picuris had their own pueblo in northern New Mexico.

620 [00:56:00]

621 Andres: It's about ten miles from Vadito and northeast from Peñasco if you've ever seen a map
622 [laughs].

623 Senon: Yeah, that's great. I think sometimes that when we get to the retirement phase and we
624 step back out that we kind of get the idea that, or get the feeling that we've become superfluous.
625 Do you see yourself as staying active in some way or continuing to – like activists of old days,
626 but now it's something different.

627 Andres: Yeah, I see very little of that in me anymore. I've – I go out to work in the yard for five
628 minutes and I gotta rest for ten.

629 Senon: [laughs]

630 Andres: So, you know that energy level, that's just become lower and lower. I had, as you know
631 I had a heart surgery in '85 and I couldn't have lasted another semester at Sac State. I parted
632 company with them in August. The following March, I had another heart surgery. So it's been
633 kinda hard but you know I still write letters and I sign petitions. It's a very minimal level and it's
634 [stutters] it's more scattered now than it was cause I don't have the opportunities to concentrate
635 as much on Chicano issues. Because with a career, that's what gave me the opportunities, so the
636 Chicano movement helped me do that.

637 Senon: Let me ask you a question that's not in anything, but I'm-- curious as to the music that
638 you remember of this time period. What's become like your – or of your favorite song that
639 identify the movement.

640 Andres: Joaquin Fernandez playing Adelita. [laughs] That's the one that comes to mind first. The
641 other one was, when I was a little boy, my uncle put me -- I'm so old that I rode the stage
642 between Mora, New Mexico and Las Vegas, New Mexico. So I rode the stage.

643 [00:58:21]

644 Andres: And the stager driver, well it was a station wagon, one of those with the wood on the
645 outside.

646 Senon: Uh huh.

647 Andres: He played something over and over again on it and it was “*traigo mi cuarenta-y-cinco*
648 *con sus cuatro cargadores*” [I have my 45 pistol with four extra magazines] and I don’t know
649 what it was, that guy was a chain-smoker and he had tattoos [laughs]. I think he’s probably been
650 in prison or something, but nice guy [laughs] and he played that. Several of those things have
651 stuck in my mind. Mariachi music, my wife knows the names of all of them [laughs]. But when
652 we used to go to places like that, she made the request [laughs].

653 Senon: Yeah, she remembered the lyrics. The names and of the titles.

654 Andres: Right

655 Senon: That’s good. Well, I want to thank you Rendon.

656 Andres: Okay.

657 Senon: For coming in today and uh doing this interview. You know, it breaks the routine of your
658 retirement.

659 Andres: It – it sure does [laughs].

660 Senon: To bring you out and to get you into-- this memory lane, but it’s, we’re always thinking
661 that somewhere along the way somebody is going to take an interest in the things that happened
662 during this first fifteen years of the Chicano movement and hopefully they’ll find your--
663 recording there among a hundred others.

664 [00:59:54]

665 Andres: Right

666 Senon: We're looking for a hundred total. And they will walk away with a different impression
667 of the experiences that people had and the significance of that movement for most of us.

668 Andres: Thank you for doing this and for one day you gave me a feeling of self-worth. [both
669 laugh]

670 [01:00:07]

671 END OF TRANSCRIPT