

The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education  
Oral History Project

**Raymond P. Valdez**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Senon M. Valadez  
June 25, 2015

Transcription by Technitype Transcripts

**Valadez** Please state your full name.

[00:00:09]

**Valdez** My full name is Raymond P. Valdez. I was born June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1942. I'm married. My wife's name is Josie [phonetic]. She's retired. I have one daughter who's going to be forty-one. She's a deputy probation officer here in Sacramento.

**Valadez** Where were you born and raised?

[00:00:38]

**Valdez** I was born in Sacramento. I was born in Washington Neighborhood Center. I was born on 13<sup>th</sup> and D Street. At that time when I was born, I had four older brothers and four sisters, and so we were living in a rental apartment somewhere around that area, because when I was talking to my sister, I tried to get exactly the time. So, first fourteen years I remember was living at 318 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

So then from there, then we moved for the next fourteen years to the Northgate area, so I spent my rest of the time at the Northgate area. During that time, I was in the Army for two years and I got drafted on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1964. [laughs] So for

two years I wasn't in Sacramento, so things that were happening, I wasn't aware of because I wasn't here.

Some of the positive things that I remember living at home is that we were a large family. When we finally moved into 13<sup>th</sup> Street, my mother and father had purchased that house, so she purchased that house because our grandmother lived next door, so I had an extended family. As far as I remember my childhood, it was loving, it was hardworking. Both my parents worked seasonal at the cannery. They were cannery workers for all that time. Again, they provided us with—I remember every day—well, every school day, with clean clothes all the time, new clothes from Sears, and it may have been something that they charged. So it wasn't because, again, of the situation, it wasn't something that they went out and had something charged; it was always on layaway and things like that.

The neighborhood was mostly Hispanic. Our area was really from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Street in the Washington Neighborhood, and we were mostly Hispanics living there. We went to Washington Elementary School, which they were having trouble closing. We went there, and all my brothers and sisters, some of them went to Jibboom Street. There was another school there that went my older brothers and sisters.

So as far as looking for my family and that, well, again, we were a happy family. We had parties, we had *piñatas*, we had everything, and it was usually an extended family there. And also I was in the Boy Scouts, so that was at the Muir Playground. There used to be a center there, and that was the Washington Neighborhood Center before they moved to 16<sup>th</sup> Street, so there used to be a center

there, so the Presbyterian church was the ones that ran that. The Boy Scouts, I remember that we had a troop, and they were all mostly Hispanics. We went to Camp Aubrey West [phonetic] for the summer. They always put us at the furthest campsite. [laughs] So I always wondered, you know, how come we were at the furthest campsite. Well, the other ones were because they were mostly Anglo. Well, they got the closest one.

But, again, it was just that experience that I knew I was different, but not really, because to me it didn't matter because I had my extended family, we had our friends, and we had our other friends in there. But that was the main thing, again, is the family was always loving. And looking at how much hard work they had, they provided, and also my brothers and sisters, as far as their jobs. I can say that all my family, eventually there were a total of twelve of us, but all my family, we all graduated from high school. That was one thing that my parents instilled, was graduation from high school.

**Valadez**      It was after high school that you went into the service?

[00:05:19]

**Valdez**      No, actually after high school what happened is—well, before we moved to the North area, I was at Sutter Junior High School in town. It went to the ninth grade. What happened was we had to take a test to see whether or not we could take algebra, and I didn't pass the test, so I had to take general math in the ninth grade.

So we moved to the North area, and when I went to Norte Del Rio High School as a sophomore, well, there I told the counselor what I wanted to take, so I

took algebra. In three years, I took two years of algebra, geometry, and trig in three years, so I knew I had the capabilities to do it, but because of the test, that test told them and the district or the teachers that I can't do it. Well, I know I can do it. It's just a matter that—as we go through, I'll explain what I tried to do it in my career with students, because everybody does not fit into the round hole. Everybody learns in a different way, and that's why we have to do it.

So then after high school, I went to City College. I came here. Again, I wasn't really prepared, so I couldn't pass the English. So then what happened was I dropped out and went to work. So I worked in many different jobs for three years, but I kept coming to City College back and forth, back and forth, and I did take some classes and passed it.

But then eventually, in 1964, I got drafted two years. So then after I came out of the service in 1966, then I was in a wedding, and what happened was that I met my future wife, who had been a graduate already from college. So then she's the one that encouraged me to go on to school.

So then I had jobs. I had many good jobs, but the main job that I wanted out of high school was working for the Southern Pacific, because all my older brothers and uncles, everyone had gone to work for them, and it was a good salary. So that's what I wanted to do, but what happened when I went, I couldn't pass the test because I'm colorblind. [laughs] So I couldn't go. So actually it was a good thing for me, because I wouldn't have follows this other path.

So then I did get some jobs in the state printing plant. I was making at that time in the late sixties close to fifteen, twenty dollars an hour, but I didn't like it.

Then what happened, when I was taking classes, what I would do, I would take my work with me and study, because the job I had was really manual and I didn't have to do anything. Every ten or fifteen minutes, I would go and take the textbooks away from the women that were sewing them together and put them in a stack. So I would do my homework there. So then I said, "You know, I'm not going to do this all my life. It's not something—."

So then I came back to City College, and then within two years, with my wife's—well, I wasn't married there, but she encouraged me to go on. So then I went and finished my two years here at City College, and then from City College on to Sac State. I was at City College again, I was in the Movement here and got involved with the Hispanic/Chicano Movement as to what was going on here at City College. So then I got to meet all the ones eventually going to Sac State.

Then what happened is when I got to Sac State is that I also got in through EOP, but I also got involved with Isabel Hernandez as an advisor, so she hired me as an advisor. Then at the same time, that's when I began taking classes. Well, my major was Spanish. My minor was Ethnic Studies. So then I started taking classes from you, from Steve Arvisu, and all the other people, Joe Serna, all of them that were teaching the Ethnic Studies classes, because that was my minor.

Then, consequently, I got more involved with them, and then what happened was that Steve knew that I wasn't a teacher, because most of the people in the project were teachers, and so then he was able to get me in kind of as a community person coming in, in the master's program, not in the Felitos, because those were undergraduates. So he was able to get me in through that.

**Valdez** So you then were a participant in the Mexican American Education Project.

[00:10:34]

**Valdez** Right.

**Valdez** Excellent.

[00:10:34]

**Valdez** And what happened after that is I also was working on my teaching credential, so I got my master's and teaching credential in 1972, at the same time.

**Valdez** Do you think that the Mexican American Project influenced your career?

[00:10:55]

**Valdez** Oh, yeah, it influenced me because, again, I saw for the first time many Hispanic teachers that now had been in education, and so it gave me a thing, because growing up, I didn't see too many of them, and the ones I did see, well, they didn't want to claim themselves as Mexican. So I saw what they had done and what they were doing, and thinking about in my past that, yes, there has been discrimination all the time, but only thing in Sacramento in the school district had always been underneath, you know. They can do it underneath because it's not like the South and everything, but they can do it underneath and they can write things. I still have some things from school, from elementary school, my teacher always told my mother—well, my parents didn't read English, and so we read to them, so they just signed it. But again, they just said, "If you can help Ray with his homework or in reading a couple of minutes, it would help." [laughs] Not knowing that if they would

have communicated one-on-one, like they are in some cases now, then they would know they don't speak English, so they could communicate in Hispanic to them.

**Valdez** Yes. So do you think that it influenced your experience with the Mexican American Project, did it influence your involvement with the community, did it kind of give you that orientation?

[00:12:39]

**Valdez** Oh, yeah, because what happened was, again, I got involved with COPA, is when Joe Serna started the program, and then it was right in my neighborhood. It was on F Street, I think. F Street, there was a building there. That was in my old neighborhood. So then I was involved with that, with them, and helping them get elected, looking at things politically, because there's also the political aspect of the whole thing. To me, that's one of the most important part, is politically, because if you have the right people making the right decisions, helping the probably, then, again, it would help everyone, pull everybody up to the level where they could do very well in our society.

**Valdez** Did your study of cultural anthropology give you a greater picture of how you could involve yourself with the community?

[00:13:37]

**Valdez** Oh, yeah, because what happens is that culture, the way we look at culture is everybody thinks they're just the American culture, which is apple pie and hot dogs and music of the Americans, whereas in the Hispanics, well, we have our own food that we like to bring in, and as we bring in the food, well, there's something about that food that is part of our culture and we should be able to share it with

everyone so that they can become proud of our culture and could be part of the big part of the melting pot of what the United States is. It's a melting pot.

Also the language, the language is important because in my studies at Sac State, most of the articles or books we read were all from Castilian, not from the Mexican writers, because there are Mexican writers. So that is becoming involved with the whole thing.

The entertainment now is becoming worldwide now. It's no longer just the Beatles and that's it. There's the whole thing of that. There's a part of dress. Well, what type of dress is important? So all that is part of all the culture of anthropology, looking back to where things are, where they are today, what they will be in the future, and how you should bring them in so that people can begin to look at it.

As part of it, for instance, now—well, before, when I was in the Army and I took some tamales back East in 1965, they didn't know what it was. They didn't know how to open it up. But nowadays in the year 2015, well, it's common. So these are things that the experience that people can go out and look at these things that could be part of who you are as an individual.

**Valdez**      What do you think attracted you first to the Chicano Movement? What was going on that had an effect on you, that attracted you to it?

[00:16:01]

**Valdez**      Well, I think politically, the politics of it, the politics that—I had always voted, because at that time you had to wait till you were twenty-one to vote, so I always have voted, but not knowing that we could make a big difference by getting politics and getting people in there that could make changes to help us and



that people can see that back in 1965 or 1980, we're still dealing with it in 2015, so there's still a lot more things that we need to change. To me, hopefully during my lifetime, they'll change. I don't know. I'll be seventy-three [laughs], so I don't know whether if I live to be 100, which would be twenty-seven more years, whether things will change or it'll still be the same.

**Valadez** The word *Chicano* at that time raised a lot of eyebrows, or people defined it or accepted it or rejected it depending on how they saw it. But what was your experience with the word *Chicano* as opposed to other words that had been used before?

[00:17:20]

**Valdez** Well, actually, to me, initially I think that when I heard the word and looking at what was happening, was that the Brown Berets, which was, again, a militant—that people looked at as a militant type of thing, and at the same time, what I looked at it is I looked at it and said, well, you know, my feeling was I'm an American of Mexican descent and not a Mexican-hyphen-American. To me, that's what my thinking was. But I know that looking at it, it was just a word that had been described by the people involved politically at that time, that they identified themselves. No one else identified, because the word "Mexican" or "Mexican American" was identified, I'm sure, by the Census many years ago, and even in some cases they're still being assigned different names.

But to me, you know, as I looked at it, to me it was a sign that people wanted to become more involved with what was happening to themselves and to their community and to other people, whether it was in California, in Texas, Colorado.

Everybody was looking for something that was going to be changing them for the better. And so to me, at first I think it was negative, but later on, I realized, again, that looking at it now as I got older and am older now, I think that the names are one thing, but it's what the person perceives what they give to themselves and to their community. If they're helping somebody and doing it in a positive way, to me it doesn't matter what the name is. It's are you doing something for the good of the people, whoever the people are.

**Valdez** You had become aware of the Civil Rights Movement by the time that you were in high school, that there was the civil rights making an impact on your consciousness when you were high school or City College or at Sac State?

[00:19:53]

**Valdez** I think probably it wasn't making an impact, because the time that—like, for instance, at Washington School in '65, I wasn't around, so I didn't know. In '65 and '66, during the riots, I was in the service. And in the service, you get notices from the *Stars & Stripes*, the military newsletter, and they never mention what's happening. Also the television, when I was in Germany, well, it would be in German, so it wouldn't make any difference to me if I'm looking at something and seeing that, "What are they saying? What's going on?"

But then later on as I got older and began teaching and looking at things, then I realized that the civil rights was something that I consciously was teaching the students, especially with civil rights, which we're still fighting today, is the voting, is the civil rights voting. Today I don't know whether they heard about it, is Obamacare was—the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Obamacare. [laughs]

**Valadez**      Okay. I hadn't heard.

[00:21:17]

**Valdez**      Yeah. So then there's things that, again, all of these things are important.

**Valadez**      Yes.

[00:21:25]

**Valdez**      So the civil rights, that everyone should have their civil rights, and they're still not having their civil rights.

**Valadez**      Yes.

[00:21:34]

**Valdez**      We're back to it even today, after the law that was passed by President Johnson after Kennedy was assassinated.

**Valadez**      You became a teacher, so would you say that the Chicano Movement influenced or changed you personally, it had an effect on you personally that directed you toward teaching?

[00:22:00]

**Valdez**      Yeah. I think that what it did is that it helped to solidify my own feelings about the importance that a teacher could make in the lives of students, and that would be where my education philosophy would be, that all students can succeed, all students can succeed as long as we deal with them, that we accept them unconditionally, that we accept them and who they are, and also understand and respect and appreciate their differences. To me, all this, we empowered them to become ownership of their future, and also we need to help them build a foundation.

To me, the project was building that foundation for me in order to carry on for the students in the future.

**Valdez** Yes. I want to come back to that some more, but let me go back to the issues of the Movement. What role did young women, Chicanas, play in that, according to you?

[00:23:26]

**Valdez** Well, to me, they play an important part, in that they should be able to voice their opinion, and as individuals, we should be able to listen to what they have to say and to see whether or not they have some credibility as far as what they think could happen, and I think as individuals, in order for us to grow, sometimes we ourselves have to try something, and when it doesn't work, then we go back and say, well, what did work and what did work, and how do we go about improving it. I think too many times there's too much involved with being, quote, "*machismo*"—

**Valdez** Yes.

[00:24:11]

**Valdez** —and that "My thing is right. Yours doesn't count." Well, to me, that's never been an issue. To me, everybody has an issue, whether it's someone older, younger, or even a middle-school student or whatever, but if they have something good, because we can learn from anyone. So I know that in the Movement itself, that this hasn't been brought up enough, that the role women have played in the Movement, and I know from a fact, just myself, is without the encouragement of my wife, well, I wouldn't be where I am today, because her encouragement and telling me, "We need to do this," because she had been through the system already, so she

helped me do that. So then from that, that's what I try to do with the students, to give them the support that they need.

**Valdez** Did Josie participate in the project also?

[00:25:14]

**Valdez** No.

**Valdez** A Felito, in EOP?

[00:25:17]

**Valdez** No.

**Valdez** She didn't?

[00:25:18]

**Valdez** No.

**Valdez** Oh, that's interesting. But that's good. I'm glad that she and you came together. But from your experience when you were in the project, did you see women becoming actively involved and being outspoken?

[00:25:37]

**Valdez** Yeah, there were some that were outspoken.

**Valdez** That's good. What do you think you were able to do or you personally initiated or did in this Chicano Movement? You became a teacher.

[00:26:00]

**Valdez** I think part of that is that my first assignment in 1992, graduated from Sac State, I tried to get a job at Sac City, couldn't, so then there was somebody from Antioch said that there were openings in Oakley near Antioch, and they were looking for Hispanics, so I went and applied and got the job as a teacher. As a teacher, my

first assignment was Opportunity class where I would get students that were having trouble, and then the others would come to me and I would help. This was working with seventh- and eighth-graders.

So then after the first semester, it wasn't working, because the principal had assigned students to the class. These were good students. [laughs] So he thought that having good students in the class would help the bad ones who come into the situation. Well, the opposite occurred, because students that were in the class, well, they said, "We're bad students, because this is the Opportunity class." [laughs] So then eventually I told them, "No, I think I'll just handle the students that are having problems to come to me."

In the meantime, they were working on a grant for a bilingual program, so they asked me to become the interim bilingual director. This was right after the project. So then I said yes, so then I got together with Ike Juantinez [phonetic], who was a teacher over at Brentwood, because we combined the two programs together, so we combined and called the name Hermanos. So then my job was to get the community involved with the program, which they were anyway.

And so then what happened is that we got the grant, so then I had to go round up the parents and go get them and get information from them to have the class so that we could have the program at two different districts.

During that period of time, what happened is the community had been organizing, and so then they asked me to come and I did speak to them, to be part of their ad hoc committee away from the district. So then they would give me information that they wanted to try to implement into the program, so then I was kind

of the lead person with that. I think without the process that I had with the project, I couldn't come right into it, so that helped me with that. So then we started the program for one semester.

What happened was the superintendent ended up hiring another person to take over the program because she had just graduated from the Mexican American Project [laughs], and she had her master's [unclear] administrative [unclear] [laughs], so then she took over the program. So then I asked the superintendent—

**Valadez** Who was that?

[00:29:19]

**Valdez** I can't remember her name. Then what happened is that I asked the superintendent, "Well, can I still be involved?"

And he said, "Oh, yeah."

So I just went to two or three meetings, and finally she went to the superintendent and said, well, she didn't want me there anymore, because the teachers would come to me or ask me questions. So then I said, "Fine."

So then after the year there, then I applied back to Sac City and got the job at Sac City, so then I got a job interview at Sac City and was hired to go to Argonaut Continuation High School as an Ethnic Studies teacher. In the meantime, Rene Barrios [phonetic] was in Personnel, so he said, "You're working on your credential?" Because in the meantime, I was working on my counseling credential. So then he said, "You're working on your counseling credential?"

I said, "Yes."

And he said, "Okay, well, I think I can get you in there for counseling either at Joaquin Miller or Will C. Wood." So he said, "Well, go to those interviews."

So I went to the Will C. Wood interview, and I didn't like the office. It was kind of really negative toward me.

So then I went to Joaquin Miller. I liked it because it was mostly a lot of Hispanics there that came from Franklin Boulevard to Joaquin Miller. So then what happened was that, well, the principal there, she had been moved up from counselor to principal, and she kind of wanted somebody else, but then Rene says, "No." He talked to the superintendent, and the superintendent said, "No, we want an Hispanic there." So then I was assigned to Joaquin Miller as the counselor. So then I was there as a counselor. Then they closed the school down.

Then from there, I moved over to the high school as a counselor, Continuation High School, and then a job opened up at Albert Einstein as a dean, so I got the job as a dean there, spent two years there as a dean. And then they did away with ninth-graders, so then I was assigned over to Kennedy High School, so I was there for a year. So they were going to do away with the deans there, so I applied for the vice principal job at Will C. Wood, got that job, was there for two years, and then the principal left, and then I became the principal there at Will C. Wood. Then from there, I moved over to Fern Bacon. [laughs]

**Valadez**      Excellent. Wow.

[00:32:08]

**Valdez**      And it was at Fern Bacon, again, where I think I really made a big change, change in it, because there was two schools in one, and there was an upstairs



and a downstairs. The good kids were upstairs, the bad kids were downstairs. [laughs]  
So I had one PTA upstairs and one PTA downstairs. Teachers had two different meetings. They didn't want to associate with one another.

**Valadez** Wow.

[00:32:34]

**Valdez** So, finally, my job was to get them both to combine into one, a behavior base, the Basic School. So then that's what I did, is helped convert that into the Basic School.

Then what happened is that I fell out of disfavor with the superintendent, with the Hispanics in the district, so he reassigned us, so then I went to Sacramento High School. Then when that closed, they went to charter school. I went over to—well, it wasn't a Continuation; it was a high school of all kids that had been expelled from all the districts came to our school, so I was there for two years. Then they closed that down, and then my last assignment was at the military school. I was there for three years. Then I retired from there. But each time at that school, most of those students that came there were all mostly Hispanics. Most of them were either *cedenos* [phonetic]—

**Valadez** Oh, man. [laughs]

[00:33:44]

**Valdez** Because, see, all the high schools that didn't want to deal with them, they sent them to the military school, so that we took them. We took them in.

But at Sacramento High School, I started the—for one year I was a teacher there, but then I—well, I was there for four years. I was a teacher, but then also I

became the counselor. We started a Puente Program, which they have here at City College. They started it at the high school, at Sac High School. So then I got involved with that, starting that up, so I had to get the parents involved with that and the students. Then we did it for one year, then they closed the school. But we were looking to make Sacramento High School to be the Puente school of high schools, because the City College had made it a big thing. So then they were moving to the high schools. So then I was involved with that at the Puente. So all that experience has helped me in all my careers, going through, looking at—and the knowledge that I think I have [laughs], only because my experience, because each one is different and each one brings in a different person. And you have to be a different person—

**Valadez**      Yes.

[00:35:02]

**Valdez**      —in each thing, and I know that one problem that I think that I had is that I wasn't a teacher long enough before I became a counselor or administrator. I think if I had been a teacher longer, I think I would have understand being a teacher, because when I became a teacher again, I became a better teacher because I understood in whatever I was preaching to the teachers, I started to do. I wanted to be the best teacher that I knew that I could be, so that, again, I gave the classes—the classes weren't college prep, but I gave them information that the students didn't like it after a while. They wanted to go, in fact, in the college prep classes because my demands were higher, and also I knew that the students could do it.

If a student, for instance, when I was a counselor at Joaquin Miller, Hispanic student would come in, he would be transferred into our school, he would have

excellent grades but then he would get involved with something. The parents were moving from another city to Sacramento, and I would see his grades. I'd say, "This kid can make it." So I would purposely put him into the class where all the students were high achievers, because if you're not high achievers and the other students are, and you have the capability, you're going to do that, because you don't want to be back and say, "I know I'm not that dumb." But, see, so many of our kids don't want to do it. They don't want to be challenged. They'd rather take the easy way out. The easy way out is getting that C or B in that low class, instead of going in and saying, "You can do it."

And I know from experience that I know with my hard work, that I knew I wasn't the brightest, but I'm a hard worker, and give me time to do it and I'll do it. And part of me is I can start a lot of things. Usually it takes me from three to five years to do things. Then after that, I become kind of bored. In my mind I don't, but in my actions, I probably do. So then I'm very good at starting things, but trying to maintain it is—probably someone else can come in, because to me there's a beginning, there's a middle, and there's a future.

So you need to be able to do all that. If you stay too long in doing one thing, then what happens, you become part of the furniture. I know that there's quite a few teachers that I would have let go many years ago, but, again, because of the teacher contract, you can't do it. And these are teachers that hurt our kids. And when parents come in to me as administrator, telling me, I can hear them, but I can't do anything. To me, their blame is me, because I can't do anything because I can't legally, because

there's some roads you have to take in order to get to that point, and sometimes it's three to five years, and to me, that's too long. [laughs]

**Valdez** Yeah, it is. It is. There's a question that asks—this is question eleven. Did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, political lines? It could be any of those. And it sounds like it has because of what not only you walked away with when you became employed, but also from your experiences teaching and as a counselor and as an administrator. It looks like all of these things have influenced your consciousness, your awareness at the social level, at the political level, at the cultural level. Can you comment on that?

[00:39:09]

**Valdez** What was that again?

**Valdez** It sounds like—let me just ask you the question. Did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, and political lines?

[00:39:25]

**Valdez** Yeah, I think that it did, in that I became more involved with my relatives and friends, encouraged them to get involved politically, to make sure that they go out and register to vote, because that's one of the problems we have, is too many Hispanics, Latinos, many of them don't want to vote, because, to me, the word is "It doesn't count anyway." Well, every vote does count, whether you like it or not. So you need to be able to go out to that. To me, that's the main thing, is politically. It's a hard crack to really get people to really understand.

**Valadez** Did your involvement when you started to go to school, did your involvement with the Movement or with these kinds of classes, did that influence or affect your personal relationships with families and—

[00:40:39]

**Valdez** Yeah, it did, in that, again, they began listening to me and also wanted to talk to me also about, “Well, who is the best candidate for this job or that job?” Because right now, for instance, we live in a county. We don’t live in the city. So all the city questions that come up, well, I may have my opinions, so they do ask, “What’s your opinion about so-and-so or whether or not we should vote for this thing or that thing?” So they do listen to me. And being the one that is quote to me—I don’t like to say this—educated, because of all twelve members of my family, I’m the only one that went to college, and, again, they kind of look to me, even though I had seven older brothers and sisters and four younger ones, but, again, they still look to me as somebody that knows what he’s doing, even when my mother was alive. She always would consult me, even though I wasn’t the oldest, but probably because of my experience and, again, going to college, and to me, that made her very proud that I did go to college and did graduate, even though some of my other siblings could have gone because they have the intelligence to go, and even now I keep asking my nephews and nieces to make sure that they do go to school and get a skill, because it is important.

And I come, again, from a large family, because overall, I probably could get 125 people that are all relatives, and because, again, the most important thing is for them to go to school, and some of them have, because I have a great-niece that

graduated with honors from Stanford University, and different colleges, you know, they're going to school. And the thing is, that's what I want. I want people to—and even some of my nephews and nieces that I know that their parents are having trouble financially, and I try to buy their books for them where they can go on to school, because, to me, school is important.

**Valadez** Another question asks about—says describe how the Movimiento Chicano impacted community life here in Sacramento. How do you think the Movement here in Sacramento impacted life, life in general?

[00:43:31]

**Valdez** I think it did. In fact, there's no an Hispanic in the chamber of commerce, which there wasn't before. There's different televisions stations now that are coming online because they see that the Hispanics do have money. And also the different foods that are available. Politically, I know they're trying to get people back involved politically, because there seems to have been a lag of that lately. I mean, as far as the state itself, there's quite a few of them statewide. As far as Sacramento, we still need to do some work in that. There's still problems of trying to get—well, a newspaper, there was the Hispanic newspaper that had dropped out, but there's people on television now that are of color. So, again, I think people are becoming aware of who we are, and I know they're looking at it nationally, too, because, again, of the voting.

**Valadez** Yes. There are a lot of people that have passed on since you became involved, coming back to school, going to a community college. And then the state, the whole Movement brought on a lot of leaders, a lot of people giving direction or

guidance along the way. Is there anyone—or who are some people that you remember that have passed on, that left an impression on you, did something in Sacramento that was very important?

[00:45:22]

**Valdez** To me, the most important person that I admire the most is probably Lorenzo Patino, because Lorenzo, to me, Judge, because he did reach that level of judge, and I think that if he had lived longer that he would have had a greater impact for the community, because when you dealt with him, you dealt with him as a human being. He accepted you. He wanted to do things for you. He didn't have the feeling that, "Well, what are you going to give me?" To me, he was always straightforward and just his own personality. He could talk to anyone. And some of the others that have come on, I think sometimes they get to a point that they become part of the establishment.

**Valadez** Yes.

[00:46:17]

**Valdez** You help them along the way, but then they get to that point and then you come to them and, "No, no, you deal with it." Instead of, with him, I think that if he would have stayed alive, there would have been a lot more Hispanics becoming involved, there would have been more people that would have gone to law school, to be lawyers, to be really people that we can look up to, to say that, yes, they're representing us, they're looking for us, they're taking care of our interests. So to me, again, that was a great loss.

**Valdez** Yes, it was. You never know what impact somebody like that could have had. You know it would have been an impact.

[00:47:08]

**Valdez** Mm-hmm.

**Valdez** Future challenges, things that you see that are still needing to be resolved in the Sacramento area?

[00:47:18]

**Valdez** Well, I think the biggest challenge, to me, that still needs to be resolved is that, number one, we need to have more of our students graduate from high school. Graduation rate should be up there in the eighties and nineties and not anything below—to me, anything below ninety, we need to do something. We need to have students graduate from high school, graduate from high school, be able to go on to City College to get a skill so that they can get a good-paying job to help them for the future, or to a four-year college, because too many of our students drop out, or even at the high school, they go to the high school, graduate, they go to the state and get a clerical job, which is okay, but the thing is, that's not going to help you in the long run, because if you're just getting that clerical, getting 30,000 or 40,000 a year, and going to retire at thirty years or forty years, then you only make 30,000 of that 40,000, that's not going to help you.

**Valdez** No.

[00:48:45]

**Valdez** So we need to be able to have them graduate, and that's one of the things that I did when I got the Milken Award, was that they asked me what I



thought, one thing that I hadn't accomplished yet, and the thing that I hadn't accomplished was my thinking was that I wanted to get into—starting in the middle school, I wanted to get the students involved with a pilot program of them going to school like Rey is doing now, Cristo Rey is doing now, I wanted them to be able to—and I said this in 1993—I wanted them to be able to go to school part-time, go to a small business, whatever it is that they want to become, whether a lawyer or a small business, work there for two or three hours, and then go to school, have them connect with that person so then at the end of four years, that person would say, “Okay, I’ll help you with your college. And when you go to college, you learn all the new skills, bring them back to my office for two or three years, and then you’ll repay me by doing that,” because most small businesses cannot go back to learn new things. So by doing that, the student learns how to do it or he learns to say, “I really don’t want to do it.”

And it’s not like the program we have right now, where the kids go to the hospital and all that, because some of that, they go and they just take the food and do things like that. This has to be something meaningful for the students. Like Cristo Rey, the Catholic school, is doing that right now, that they do. The students have to go dressed up to school and then they go to work and they have a partnership with that, doing that. So to me, I was thinking of doing that in the middle school, so that the students would become involved, because students have to become involved with what they want to do in the future early. It can’t be later.

And one of the last things, if it’s the last thing [laughs], one of the things that I’m proud of is that I got the Milken Award in 1993, which—

**Valdez** Hold it like this so the camera can get it.

[00:51:25]

**Valdez** In 1993, I got this because converting Fern Bacon into a Basic School. It's a program that both the Milken family, they provide for educators in the state of California—well, all over the United States, and there was only six of us that were selected in 1993. The program started in 1989, California only, but in 1993, there were six of us in the secondary. There was the high school person, which was Maggie, who was superintendent of the district, she got it for the high school, I got it for the middle school, and there were four teachers. I was the first one in our Sac City School District to get it.

Also at the same time, the administration received—I put this article together for the administration, so it's an article on Fern Bacon, so it was done, again, with my name in there and everything.

**Valdez** “Back to Basics.”

[00:52:36]

**Valdez** “Back to Basics.” So it's an article of *Leadership* magazine.

**Valdez** What month is that? What's the date on that?

[00:52:46]

**Valdez** It's Volume 22 and Number 7, May-June 1993.

Then the last thing was that I got the Distinguished Service Award from Sac State in 1995, again for the things that I've done at the school. Again, I think that all this has combined with me that through my involvement with the project and being able to express what I really wanted to do for the community and for Hispanic

students and Chicano students, whether they're male or female, again, so I'm proud of this. And also my picture's in the Alumni Center. [laughs]

**Valdez** Oh, good, good. Anything else, Ray, that you would like to share with us, thoughts, last thoughts that you have about the Movement, about the opportunities you've had, things you still wish for? This idea that you had then, that you are praying with, do you see that as a possibility? Have you consulted anyone? I know La Familia is trying to get one of the schools that have been closed up to expand and to try to offer more associations with the community, but I'm wondering if there's a charter school idea, concept, that your idea could work with. Just your thoughts.

[00:54:36]

**Valdez** I think any one of the ideas that I may have, I think that it would work, but it would take a lot of work of planning it, and also the commitment, and the commitment not just for—the main object is, to me, is the district deciding what they want and also what that will be, teachers and the unions specifically, because, again, the union is strong, but not as strong as it was during my time. It's strong, but not as strong, because in my travels, because when I was a partnership, we were in a partnership with seven other middle schools in the state, and I had a chance to travel throughout the United States visiting other school districts and meeting other principals, and Sac City had the toughest teacher contract in the nation, and they told me constantly they don't know how I had to work with it. [laughs] But you work with it.

But, no, as far as the charter, it does take time to do that, and people have to be willing to do their part, and it's something that, to me, like I said before, to get

started would be fine, but then to carry it on to the second level or the third level, and at the same time, like anything else, it's a superintendent. There's a Hispanic superintendent now, but two or three years down the road, he'll be done, and then someone else comes in and says, "Well, I don't want this." [laughs]

**Valdez** Since you've retired, are you still staying active and intend to still keep an eye out for what's possible out there?

[00:56:39]

**Valdez** Not really, only because, number one, I think it's too much of a hassle dealing with barriers that are out there, and you get to a point saying, "Well, you've done your time. Now it's time for someone else to deal with it." Even though I know I can be of value to somebody, I know that I might not be fast enough [laughter], but I still have it up here, but now, though, I spend a lot of time in politics, looking, watching the different politics, reading about it, reading different books about politics and doing that, because to me, it's always been fascinating, politics, because you never know. And that's one thing I wish I could become. I'd like to go just one time to the convention, the Democratic Convention. [laughs] And that's one thing I never tell—because my students, when I was teaching, because I did teach government, and the students always asked me what party I belonged to, but I never told them, because I felt that wasn't my place to tell them what party, because they needed to make their own minds as to what they want to do, and a lot of times depends on their parents.

**Valdez** It's true.

[00:58:10]

**Valdez** Even though my parents never voted, but I feel that that's the way I feel, is that Democratic—

[End of interview]