The Sacramento Movimiento Chicano and Mexican American Education Oral History Project

Steven J. Ybarra

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by David Rasul
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Transcription by Selina Carrillo and Technitype Transcripts

Rasul Can you please state your full name?

[00:00:09]

Ybarra Certainly. Steven J. Ybarra.

Rasul Steven, please provide your birthdate.

[00:00:14]

Ybarra December 13, 1947.

Rasul And where were you born?

[00:00:17]

Ybarra I was born in Artesia, California, in the county hospital.

Rasul Can you please provide your marital status?

[00:00:22]

Ybarra I'm married right now.

Rasul And how many children do you have?

[00:00:25]

Ybarra I have one living child.

Rasul You said you were born in Artesia, California?

[00:00:31]

Ybarra Yeah.

Rasul Can you please talk about your early childhood and what your parents did?

[00:00:38]

Ybarra When I was a year old, we moved from Artesia, from La Mirada to Arlington, which was the railroad camps in Riverside County, and we were part of the city of Riverside. They eventually took over the Arlington area. But it was a railroad camp and it was a tough area. We had mostly orange pickers and railroad pickers that were there. It was a Mexican neighborhood, and it was a pretty rough area. I mean, you learned how to use a knife when you were young, and I became quite proficient at it, actually.

Rasul And what did your parents do?

[00:01:10]

Ybarra My dad was a railroader, and my mom raised five children, which was an accomplishment unto itself.

Rasul Being a railroader, can you explain specifically what he did?

[00:01:20]

Ybarra He was a foreman on a section gang, and he ran twenty miles of track, and he had between eight and twelve men working for him at any given time. He did that for about thirty years.

Rasul How many brothers and sisters did you have?

[00:01:32]

Ybarra Two brothers and two sisters, all are college graduates Everybody went to college. That was the thing that my father wanted to make sure, that we all had some college.

Rasul Can you describe more about your childhood, your youth with your brothers and your neighborhood?

[00:01:45]

Ybarra Well, I was the last of the litter, so pretty much everybody was grown by the time I came along. But we had the normal stuff. I went to Catholic school. I remember when I was a kid, my mother told me, "Sit in front of the class. That way you can learn everything." Well, when the seating charts would come out, it would be me and the other four Mexicans in the class, we were always in the back right-hand corner, I remember that, and that's the way it was from the first grade to the eighth grade.

Rasul How did your mother deal with the school?

[00:02:12]

Ybarra Like, I think, most mothers whenever you're dealing with Catholic issues. The nun is always right, the priest is always right, and you don't question it, they must know better. It's an authority figure issue. So my job was to learn, and that's what I did. I came home and I worked and I learned and I read. I could read actually at a second- or third-grade level by the time I entered the first grade, because I would go home and my dad and I would sit and we'd read the funnies together.

I remember one time I was bored in the class, and the Sister looked at me and she said, "Well, what's the matter?"

I said, “Well, I’ve read this already.”

And she said, “Well, come on and read it in front of the class.”

So I walked up, and it was usual, you know, “See John run. Run, Jane, run. Run, Dick, run.” And I went through the book, and then she handed me the next reader and the next reader. By the time she got to the third-grade reader and I was still reading, she said, “Okay, go have a seat.” Never talked to me again that whole year.

Rasul I know you’re an educator, and I’m curious about what you think about Catholic schools for Chicanos versus public schools for Chicanos.

[00:03:15]

Ybarra Well, the major issue, of course, was the ability to focus small groups. We had between twenty and thirty kids in our classrooms, and this one was pretty strict. But I remember the first year, one of my colleagues that lived in the camps had got held back because he had problems reading, and eventually he dropped out of school by the sixth or seventh grade. There was no special recognition of educational issues. You just either learned or you got out, one of the two. And that’s not uncommon in any school. I mean, it happens here at this gyp joint that we call Sacramento City College. We have a 70 percent dropout rate among Latino students. Same with University of California.

Rasul Were you a Fellow or Felito, or were you actively involved in the Mexican American Education Project at Sacramento State?

[00:04:00]

Ybarra No, there was no project like that whenever I was in school. The only thing that I had was there was a scholarship that was given by the Mexican American

Political Association my first year. There were two Chicanos that were in our class in what we called ordinary studies. Now, in vocational studies, there was like a zillion. But there was only myself and one other guy, and we filled out an application for the scholarship. I remember it was twenty pages long. It was an *incredibly* in-depth thing. And then we went in for an interview. They were only going to give one scholarship, so this was an important thing.

And about a week and a half later, I ran into José and I said, "Did you get any word of the scholarship?"

He said, "Yeah, I got it."

I said, "Oh, great! How much was it for?"

And he said, "Twenty-five dollars." And that was the scholarship. The people in MAPA must have wasted more of their time going through that whole process, they could have each chipped in ten bucks for both of us, and we'd have made more money off the deal.

Rasul Were you aware of the Felito program here at Sac State? [00:04:58]

Ybarra No, no, that was way beyond my time. The MAOF, the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation, in Los Angeles, which was—I can't remember the gentleman's name who started it, but he had a deal with Pacific Bell, and they were doing a lot of funding of scholarships in the late sixties, but that was in the late sixties.

Rasul These questions pertain to a cultural anthropology perspective and influence. Did your study of cultural anthropology or your knowledge of cultural issues influence your involvement and participation in the Movimiento Chicano? [00:05:30]

Ybarra There was no study. We never learned anything about who we were or where we came from or anything of that nature. I mean, the only thing was is that my father made it abundantly clear that "You shall not speak Spanish without taking a formal class." He was absolutely opposed to us growing up with any knowledge of the language, except through an educational process. He would rarely talk about his grandmother, his great-grandmother, where they came from, how they got here, none of that.

Now, my great-grandmother, by the way, my great-grandmother was a soldier in the revolution with Zapata. She was a machine gunner in the Zapata battalion. My great-grandfather killed a Texas Ranger in Texas for stepping on his foot, and so he killed him because the guy didn't apologize. Then he left, went to New Mexico, then changed his name and went to Oklahoma. The story that my grandmother told me was he killed another guy in Lawton, and my great-grandmother and my grandmother took $500 in gold and went down to go see the judge, and the judge took the money and released my grandfather, my great-grandfather, and said, "If he kills anybody else, I'm going to have to hang him." [laughter] He died in bed.

Rasul So your understanding of our cultural issues, our past, our heritage, the Aztecas, the Mayas, the [unclear, 00:06:43], when did you start realizing that or understanding that or start studying or aware of it?

Ybarra I think it was in the third year at college. I was at Whittier College by that point on a full speech scholarship, because I was a national champion in oratory, and there was only three of us that were at Whittier, in the whole school. I started talking to one of the guys there, whose name was Steve Perez, I remember him well, he was on the track team. And there was a meeting that was held in East L.A., and most of the Mexican American students in the area—you've got to remember, as you know, there was nobody. I mean, you went to war, you went to college, and if you weren't in college, you probably got drafted and then you went to war anyway.

But we had this meeting in East L.A. I'm trying to remember where it was. I don't remember where it was. I think it was probably the community center there, that was run by Bert Corona. We met all day long, and the biggest issue was what we were going to call ourselves. People wanted "Spanish-speaking tudents of the Southwest," they wanted "Hispanic." *Hispanic* wasn't even a word then. There were several other things that were challenged. Finally, we walked out with "United Mexican American Students."

So I went back to Whittier and formed up the chapter of UMAS, which there was three members, myself and two other guys. I think that was the year that [Richard M.] Nixon was running for reelection. I went into the dean's office and I said, "You know, it's an embarrassment to this college that there's only three Mexican American students here. Here the guy who's running for president of [unclear 00:08:12], he keeps talking about how he wants to be close to the Mexican American community etc., etc." I said, "How do you think the demonstration would play in the news?"

And he said, “What do you want?”

I said, “I want fifty scholarships.”

He said, “I’ll give you twenty-five.”

I said, “Okay. I’ll take twenty-five.”

So I think we funded about fifteen kids the next year. The year I graduated, about fifteen kids got into the college. There was a guy there that was in charge of the center, he was a really, really good guy, but you’ve got to worry about tenure, you’ve got to worry about everything else, and so he wasn’t the most formidable individual, if you mind. I, on the other hand, was a professional knife fighter. [laughter]

Rasul Your own self-identity as a Chicano, Latino, whatever you designate yourself, when did that start to formulate and how did it influence your participation in the Chicano Movement?

[00:09:11]

Ybarra Well, I think in ‘67 with the UMAS meeting was the first turn-on call. Now, before then, I’d been active against the Vietnam War. I’d been active against the war since 1963. I had met people from the Quakers and went to several demonstrations with them. I mean, there would be like 50 of us and we’d be surrounded by 500 cops.

As that awakening started to occur and started to move forward, the Negro Movement wasn’t talking about war, racism, and poverty. They were talking about racism and they were talking about poverty, but they weren’t talking about the war. So those of us that were in the Vietnam War Movement and could see the impact it had on our Mexican American families and brothers who were being drafted, because

there was no excuse out of the draft. You were just done. If you got a low number, then you were gone. It took me three years to get a college exemption, and I had a good grade-point average, but, nevertheless, it took me three years to get the exemption.

So when [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] started talking about the war, then those of us that were involved in the War Movement said, "Oh, now we'll talk about civil rights," because we saw it as a Black thing. It wasn't a Black and Brown thing. Our issues were education, our issues were *Mendez, Mendez vs. Westminster,* and it's still alive today. I mean, Kamala Harris is still on appeal from a case where incompetent teachers are teaching our children. Rather than saying, "You know, those Mexican kids are being screwed. Can we just possibly get them competent teachers?"

So she's taken the stand that "Oh, no, we have to side with CTA and move forward."

So that's all been part of the whole process. And the NAACP, by the way, refused to help in the *Mendez* case, which was another sign to us as to where they were at. And now the White women's organization refused to help with Latinas. I mean, I met with them several times when I was practicing law. I said, "You guys got to get off your ass and help our women."

"Oh, no, we have to deal with White women first."

"Hmm. Okay, thank you very much, and we'll leave it at that."

So in '68 or '69, I don't remember which, I got a phone call from Bert Corona. It's too bad he's dead, because he was a great guy. Everybody should read

his book. I use his book in my classes to teach from. And Bert said, "We're going to have a meeting in Sacramento. I want you to come up."

And I said, "Okay, I'll come up."

I was working and I could afford the gasoline to go back and forth, so I got in my little Volkswagen and drove up here. It was like a thirteen-and-a-half-hour drive both ways, because Volkswagens don't go that fast.

I got up here, and we were meeting at the Guadalupe Church, in the hall there at the Guadalupe Church. If my memory serves me correct—you've got to remember this is forty years ago—that there weren't more than 150 people that were at the meeting, but Bert was there, Cesar [Chavez] was there, Saul Alinsky was there, Fred Ross was there, all of the, quote, unquote, "communist organizers" were all there. Then I started meeting other guys, and we started talking about the same and similar circumstance. I didn't speak Spanish. A lot of those guys didn't speak Spanish. They grew up in neighborhoods where you either were successful in school or you spoke Spanish and you flunked out. That was the bottom line.

So I came back from that meeting and I started being involved now more with the Anti-War Movement as it involved Chicanos in the military, and we could see that. By '69 when I graduated from school and I came up here to San Francisco to go to law school, the Anti-War Movement had taken over everything. Everything was about the war. I was a member of the Black Berets out of San Jose. I forgot to put that down by the way. I was a member of the Black Berets [laughs], which was a pretty nefarious group, truth be known, and we were all self-organized. There wasn't more than three or four or members that knew who the other members were.

So we were doing a lot of demonstrations, I mean a *lot* of activity. I was going around to a lot of the campuses throughout the state. I don't remember what year Fresno burned down, and then there was Isla Vista and there was all of the other activities. Pictures that show me there are all Photoshopped. I just want to make that statement right now. I was never there.

San Diego and the junkyards, and then, of course, in San Francisco, the Mission District. I had a little office in the Mission District that I would go to every Saturday, and I set it up so that people in the Mission District could come. I was a first-year law student. I didn't know squat from squat, you know, but people felt comfortable coming in to talk to me about their problems.

Then I went to work for CRLA, and there I met Bob Ganazo [phonetic], I met Mario Obledo, I met Tony Klein, Marty Glick, all the top-name people in the Legal Services area, everybody who was anybody. Cruz Reynoso was the head of CRLA at the time. I was working in Santa Rosa there in the summertime, and going back and forth between the city and Santa Rosa, and Cruz used to let me park my motorcycle in his office, in the CLRA office on Market Street, and I'd sleep on the floor there because I had no other place to go. My wife had gone back down to Southern California. She'd had a breakdown.

So I remember one night the door opens, and there's flashlights in my face, and I'm going, "*Hijo de la chingada*! What the hell's going on?"

And Cruz sticks his head inside and goes, "Ah, he's okay. He's one of us." [laughter] Security guards, "Who's this guy sleeping in your office here?"

So that was the relationship that Cruz and I developed, and we've had the same kind of relationship over the last forty years. I'm also now the chair of the Cruz Reynoso Center for College Success, which is a foundation that I established, which Chicano Studies at UC Davis doesn't want anything to do with. What a surprise.

But during that time period, of course, when I went back to Southern California, the August riot had just occurred when I was on my way back down, and this was the one in which Ruben Salazar was killed in. I got back into Riverside, and all the guys that were at the march in East L.A. came back. Guys had tear-gas burns on their faces, they had been beat up. They were *really* furious. So there was some activity that occurred there. There was a police car that was firebombed as well. I became part of the defense team for the guys that were charged in the offense.

So I became basically the local attorney, because there was no other attorney except for one guy who was a public defender for all the Brown Berets and all the folks there. Chavez and I started working closer and closer together with the Farmworker Movement, and Cesar would call me up and he'd say, "I need for you to go to this," or, "I need for you to go to that."

I remember one time I got a phone call, he said, "There's a guy that's going to give us a bunch of money in Beverly Hills. I can't make it. Can you go?" He said, "Dress up the usual way," which meant khakis and the khaki shirt, you know, look like a farmworker.

So I drove over and I got there and I did my "Our people are dying in the fields!" you know, the usual stuff right? Talked for about twenty-five minutes. We had tears coming out of everybody's eyes, you know. Children dying, which was all

true, by the way. There was no lies or anything about it, I mean, people were collapsing from the heat. There was no drinking water, there was no toilets in the fields in those days, and they were still using a short-handle hoe, which was banned. CRLA won that case.

So I get ready to go, and this guy hands me this briefcase full of money. It's all cash. And I get out and I drive over to a gas station, and I call Cesar at La Paz and I said, "Hey, boss, I got this suitcase full of money here. What do you want me to do with it?"

He said, "Put it on a Greyhound bus and it'll be all right."

I went, "Wait a minute. There's like $50,000 in cash in this damn thing. You want me to put it on a Greyhound bus?"

He said, "Yeah, it'll be okay. Just put it on a Greyhound bus."

I said, "I'm not doing that. Cesar, I'm *not* doing that."

So I drove over the hill, went to La Paz, dropped it off, had breakfast with him, and came back.

A lot of people don't know about how La Paz was set up, that it was a private area for him, it was a safe place, and he had these two big giant German Shepherds. They were like big German police dogs. I don't know if you ever met those guys or not. But the first time I met the pups, as we used to call them, I go in, right? And Cesar and I are sitting, talking, and the pups are sitting there and I'm sitting there scratching the pups' neck, and this guy looks over at me and he says, "Who the hell are you?"

And I said, "What do you mean?"

He says, “Those dogs don’t let anybody touch them.”

I said, “They’re fine with me. I don’t know what your problem is.”

But he and I were good friends. I couldn’t go to his funeral. I just couldn’t handle it.

Rasul You know, La Paz is now a national park.

[00:18:09]

Ybarra Yeah, national park, and it’s really great. It is a beautiful, beautiful place. Anybody that has the time to take off and go up there should go, because it is a beautiful place.

I didn’t mean to meander.

Rasul No, it’s okay. The next question, what are your earliest memories of events that attracted you to the Movimiento Chicano, and you’ve basically answered that question with all that you’ve been talking about. But also during that time, again, self-identity, searching for ourselves, the term *Chicano* came about. How do you feel about that term *Chicano,* and how did your friends feel about the term *Chicano*?

[00:18:45]

Ybarra Well, it was really interesting, because my dad and I had a conversation about that. My dad was a member of his local union, and he was very strong in his union, with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way. And he tells me this story about self-identity. He says, “You know, one time during the Depression, I was coming back from Oklahoma.” His mother and grandmother lived in Oklahoma, and he was on a bus and he got off there at the Arizona side of the border to go use

the facilities. And he got ready to get back on the bus, and this guy said, "Where are you going?"

He said, "I'm going to California." And at that time, you had to have a return ticket to go into California. You had to have a return bus ticket. You couldn't get into California without a return bus ticket or at least $50 in cash.

So this guy says, "Well, I got my return bus ticket."

He says, "Well, who are you?"

He said, "In those days, we called ourselves Spanish Americans."

He said, "I'm a Spanish American."

He said, "Well, you're not getting on the bus, then."

My dad looked at him and said, "What do I have to do to get on the bus?"

He said, "You got to be an Indian."

He said, "Hell, I'm an Indian." [laughter]

So the whole concept of self-identity was, you know, what does it take to get on the bus? What do you got to be to get on the bus?

So I started using the word *Chicano* around him, and he never had a problem with the word. I mean, there were several other members of my family that did, some of the more wannabes, you know.

Rasul What was the problem with the word?

[00:20:10]

Ybarra They thought of it as a derogatory term, see, because some of the guys that grew up, especially during the Pachuco Movement—Pachuco time period, not

movement, but during the Pachuco time period, they were called Chicanos as derogatory.

In my class at UC Davis, I asked the kids to come up with a definition. What does the word mean? What's the origin of the word? So, of course, they go through all the standard stuff, you know, Chicano, Indians, so on and so forth. Well, this one guy did a really nice research paper, and he said the word actually means "the displaced." And I read the paper, and I kick myself for not keeping a copy of it, but it was really, really well researched. The origin of the word and how it came to be, it meant "the displaced."

Well, if you take a look at the migratory movements up from Mexico, all from Mexico through the ports into Texas, and so on and so forth, you'll see the economic, political, and social impact of the migrations. None out of Baja, because Baja was wealthy, but out of the central areas, and every time there was a flood, a fire, a famine, or some type of disruption like there is now with the *narcotraficantes,* people got the hell out. So I use that term indicating that we were a member of the displaced people, and that's the way I explain it when people lecture to me.

When I got elected to be chair of the Chicano Caucus for the California Democratic Party—I don't remember what year it was—people came to me and said, "Well, we think we ought to change the name."

I said, "To what?"

They said, "Well, to the Hispanic Caucus."

I said, "Let me understand this. There's no Spanish blood in my foot, in my toe, in my hair. I'm not Hispanic, Herpanic, or anybody else's panic, okay? It's the

Chicano/Latino Caucus for a reason. We recognize that there are Latinos from Central and South America who come here, but people that are here, that are U.S. citizens who identify themselves this way are Chicano. That's what we are."

I was at a fundraiser one night in Beverly Hills, again, some years later, and this guy asks me, he says, "How do you feel about all those green cards coming up and taking control of our country?"

I said, "I'm sorry. Help me understand that."

He said, "Well, you know, some people come over here, they get a green card and they steal our jobs and they're destroying our economy and they're intermarrying, all that stuff."

I said, "Well, you know, our problem is, I get that there's a real significant problem with aliens coming to California, I mean non-Californians being here."

He said, "That's right."

I said, "Well, if you just get them to move back to Texas and New York, I'd be happy."

Well, about a week later, I'm thinking about this. I designed a membership card for the caucus and I made it green. So all of our members were green card holders, see?

I went in to the next meeting and I stood up with my membership card. People said, "What the hell is this green card about?"

I said, "We're all one step away from the river. We cannot separate ourselves from the guy that came over last night or whether you came over years ago, as my great-grandmother did. We're all one step away from the river, and everybody in here

needs to recognize this, and every time they pull out that green card, membership card, they look and they say to themselves, 'Here we are. We vote because nobody else can vote. Other people can't vote. We're politically active and we want to make sure that everybody is politically active.'" So that became all part of the identification thing.

I remember when Loretta [Sanchez] first got elected. One of the guys came up and he said, "Why don't we have Congresswoman Lorena Sanchez came to talk?"

I said, "Fine. She can pay her dues, she can talk."

"Don't you understand she's Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez?"

I said, "Don't you understand people that pay their dues in this organization can talk. If you don't want to pay your dues, she doesn't get to talk. But look along the wall over there. There are eleven congressmen, twenty-two members of the Assembly, seventeen members of the Senate, and the governor, lieutenant governor, and everybody else is all scheduled to speak. They're all green card holders. They all paid their dues. Because if they don't pay their dues, they can't talk. Just that simple." We had over 1,000 members when I left the caucus.

Rasul This next question is obvious, but you may want to explain it a little bit. Did your involvement in the Movimiento Chicano change you personally? [00:24:27]

Ybarra Oh, yeah. Once you've been shot at, tear-gassed, beat up, thrown in the back of cars, made to walk—oh, one of the fun things that the cops used to do to me during the strikes was they picked me up, they'd throw me in the back of a police car, drop me off in the middle of the desert, and then I'd have to walk back.

One time I remember one of the Figueroa brothers was coming back up from Calexico, and he sees me walking, 3:00 o'clock in the morning. [Makes sound of a siren] He pulls over. "Ybarra! What the hell are you doing out here in the desert?"

I said, "You know those guys."

He says, "Get in!"

So we go by the Meca coffee shop, which is outside of Indio. There's this cop—he stopped to have his cup of coffee—from the sheriff's department. And so we [demonstrates] and we get back into Indio, and by the time we got back into Indio, I'm back there on the line, doing my business. This cop comes out and he goes, "What the hell are you, a magician?"

I said, "I'm magic. That's what I am." [laughter]

But, I mean, I witnessed a lot of violence. When you see somebody's head get split open, you watch a woman get beat to the ground, you watch a child get beat to the ground, I'd come home from demonstrations with bruises and tear-gas burns and things and rest. That's what I did, I'd come home and I'd rest.

Rasul What role do you believe that Chicanas played in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:25:42]

Ybarra Oh, they were here. They were extraordinary. We were never part of the Feminist Movement, okay? The Feminist Movement was a White woman running around calling Mexicans chauvinist pigs. I had to look that word up. I didn't know what the word meant, you know. Nobody had ever called me chauvinist until a White

woman called it. I went over and I read the word, and I thought to myself, "I wonder how many Mexicans she's got cleaning her house?"

But we always looked at and had honest discussions about what roles everybody should play. They were always equal. I mean, there was never a question of "Oh, we're going to have a meeting. The women will set the table. We're going to have a meeting. The woman's a secretary." None of that crap occurred.

I remember getting picked up by two or three of the gals after I got my head cracked in one of the demonstrations, and getting carried to the side. They were *soldadas*, that's what they were, and we were the *soldados* and we were all in it together. There was no separation.

Rasul Are there any women you could mention maybe?

[00:26:46]

Ybarra Oh, god. There was La Bonnie and there was Ethel— [laughs]

Rasul No, as part of the Movement. [laughter]

[00:26:55]

Ybarra Oh, as part of the Movement! I'm going through all the women that were there doing the stuff that we were all doing. There was [unclear]'s Mom, you know, and Irene. She was a fighter, she was in fighting for her kids at the schools, one of the toughest Chicanas I've ever known in my life. And we just all did our part, that's what we did, everybody did what they could do, and that was the key. We didn't ask people to do what they couldn't do; we asked them what they could do.

Rasul Steve, what did you personally initiate or help initiate in the Movimiento Chicano?

[00:27:34]

Ybarra I don't think of myself as an initiator. I think of myself as a person that managed to assist in other people playing roles. I did a lot of training. I went all over the United States and trained political activists in, like, forty-seven states. I never made it to Alaska or Hawaii. I trained people in Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana and Florida.

I worked with Cesar, of course, during the time of his Movement. One of the great stories, he calls me up and he says, "Listen, we're going to get served with this injunction, and I need for you to deal with it."

I said, "Okay, fine." Because Safeway, we were always getting enjoined by Safeway for demonstrations.

So I meet the Figueroa brothers again out in front of the Safeway store there in Riverside. Now, the Safeway store, if you conceive this door over here, maybe ten feet away is the door, then there's a sidewalk about five and a half feet wide, and then there's the curb. So they come up and they serve the injunction, they drop it at the Figueroa brothers' feet, and they say, "You're served. You guys have got to stop all of this marching. Get out of here."

I said, "Wait, wait. Let me read it. I've got to see what this says. You can't just tell me I got to get the hell out of here."

Well, Sergeant Gonzalez looks at me and says, "That's right. I should be able to read this."

So the guy from Safeway is going *nuts*, and I'm taking my time, reading it, reading it, everything else.

So about that time, a lieutenant shows up, a White lieutenant, along with Sergeant Arceñega [phonetic]. Well, his son and I went to school together. Arceñega and I went to school together at St. Thomas. We're sitting there and I'm reading the thing, and he's looking at me and he says, "Well, what's the problem?"

I said, "I got a question for ya, Sarge." I said, "Is that sidewalk over there public property?"

He says, "Yeah."

I said, "You're telling me I can go across the street to that sidewalk and I can demonstrate with my people?"

He said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's fine."

I said, "But where I'm standing is public property. I'm not interfering with Safeway. I can't help it that the Safeway store built their store close to the public property. So I should be able to demonstrate here."

Boom! Safeway guy goes crazy, right? Now, we've been at this now for about two and a half, three hours. We started at 8:00 o'clock in the morning. It's like 10:30, almost 11:00 o'clock.

One of the Figueroa brothers comes up and goes, "Ybarra, I told the guys I could only pay them for three hours. We gotta go home." [laughter]

So I finally said, "Yeah, we'll just come back another day. We'll see you guys later."

So we picked everybody up and everybody went back to Blythe and I went home.

The Safeway guy says, "I'm watching you."

I said, “Good. I’m glad, I’m glad.”

Rasul What were some of the organizations that you were involved in?

[00:30:21]

Ybarra Well, let’s see.

Rasul And maybe talk about their significance also.

[00:30:26]

Ybarra UMAS, of course, was the cornerstone, which eventually became MEChA.

Rasul UMAS, the acronym for—

[00:30:33]

Ybarra UMAS was United Mexican American Students. This was the one meeting that I went to where we did the organizational stuff. Then, of course, there was Chicano Law Students, which we founded in the first year of law school, when I was at Hastings my first year.

There’s a great story about that. We’re in our second day or third day at the meeting, and we had about 160 law students all across the state of California that were members that came to this meeting. There was only 623 Spanish-surnamed attorneys in the whole state at that time, out of 40,000 attorneys. This guy comes in, he’s got his backpack on, and he smells bad. This is the second day. So I walk up to him and I say, “*Hermano, como estas*?”

He said, “I’m here for the meeting.”

I said, “Where you from?”

He says, “I’m from Michigan.”

I said, “How’d you get here?”

He said, “I hitchhiked, took the bus, what I could do.”

I said, “Are you hungry?”

He said, “Oh, yeah, man, I’m really hungry.”

I said, “Okay, come with me. We’ll get you a shower and get your clothes cleaned up and everything else, and we’ll get you something to eat.”

He said, “I don’t want to miss any more of the meeting.”

I said, “We’re going to take a break right now anyway.”

So through the course of this whole time, I said, “Listen, we’ve got to deal with these assholes in Michigan.”

One of the guys said, “What do you want to do?”

I said, “Well, we’re going to make Juan—.” His name was Juan Maldenado [phonetic]. “We’re going to make him the president of the statewide Chicanos Law Student Association in Michigan.”

He said, “He’s only one student.”

I said, “So? We can write them a letter, tell them that we’re demanding fifty slots for scholarships for *la raza* students to be entered into Michigan, and if not, we’re going to boycott the school and everything academically, and we’re going to announce a national boycott.”

Typed the letter on his typewriter. We were all students with no money, right? Collected enough money to get Juan a ride back. He gets twenty-two scholarships out of Michigan.

Rasul Beautiful.

[00:32:25]

Ybarra So it was a matter of you think about what can you do. And Saul Alinsky taught us, your organization, you should always make it bigger than what it really is, because people don't see behind the curtain. They don't know that Oz is behind the curtain. They only see the curtain. They only see the magic and the fire. Well, once you recognize that, you can pretty much get people to do a lot of stuff. As long as they're not killing people, then they get scared and it's a [unclear] problem.

Rasul We interviewed someone briefly a couple months ago, a month ago, Rodrigo Mayorga. He talks about being involved with—

[00:33:02]

Ybarra Rod was at Berkeley when I was at Hastings. Yeah, he was at that meeting. He was at that meeting, yes. Rod was there. All the guys from USC came up. When I transferred to USC, they all knew me, because it wasn't that big of a group. Mind you, there were fourteen Chicano students when I started at Hastings. I was the only one who finished the year.

Rasul It was interesting what Rodrigo was saying. He talked about that too. Any other organizations besides that, that you want to mention?

[00:33:31]

Ybarra Well, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, VVAW, I strongly worked on. Just about any anti-war organization that was around, I was either a part of or demonstrating. When the May Day bombings occurred in '70 and we shut down—[Ronald W.] Reagan actually gave us the school holiday. He shut down all the universities in California. It was like there's our gift. We had three days to

organize, and I hit like eighteen or nineteen campuses, me and the three FBI agents that were following me, you know. I remember I was at a demonstration one time, and every time you turn around, there's some cops taking a picture of you. And finally I stopped this one and I said, "Stop."

He said, "What?"

"Get a copy from the other guys. Save the money." [laughter]

Rasul Did the Movimiento Chicano raise your consciousness along social, cultural, and political lines?

[00:34:21]

Ybarra Absolutely, no question about that. I mean, it had to. If you are blind, stupid, lame, and living in another universe and you were brown-skinned, there was no way for it not to affect you. Now, if you were very fair-skinned and you spoke with a British accent and your name was Rodriguez, then you could get away with it. But, no, you and me, we're done. [laughter]

Rasul How did these changes affect your personal relationships with family, peers, and significant others?

[00:34:49]

Ybarra My first wife couldn't take it. It was too hard for her, all of the stuff that I was doing.

One of my sisters, I remember we were sitting there at the dining table and she said, "You're not like them."

"Like who?"

"Well, all those people that are in the streets. We're not like them." And, of course, she's fair-skinned.

I said, "Dorcas [phonetic], we *are* them. What the hell are you talking about? You know, I got one brother in Vietnam, I got another brother that's in Cambodia. Oh, no, he's not in Cambodia. He's in Thailand. I mean, what the hell do you think? We *are* them."

My one brother was there during the Tet Offensive. The war changed him dramatically, you know. It does that to you. And then my dad was constantly concerned about my safety. He never really said it out loud. One time I came home and my other brother came home, and we walked to the door at about the same time, and he put his arms around us and he picked us up off the ground and he said, "My boys are home." So there was that.

Then there was the concern my friends and my other relations that I had that were worried about what I was doing. We were all under fear of arrest at the time. I would do trainings for people, I'd say, "Okay, assume three things: you're always being photographed, you're always being tape-recorded, the person you're talking to is a federal agent. If you assume those three things, you probably will stay out of jail, but you may not."

When Moctesuma Esparza and the rest of the guys got arrested, I missed that meeting because my car broke down. I blew a fan belt on my way to L.A. And the twenty-three guys that were at that meeting, they all got arrested, conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor. It took ten or eleven years out of Moctesuma's life. This is a guy who's the director of *Gettysburg* and producer of *Selena*, you know, brilliant,

brilliant man. Everybody paid. One way or another, if you were involved in that Movement, if you were *truly* involved in it, you paid some price.

Rasul Absolutely, yes. The question also included peers. I know you're a professor, you're an attorney, and I'm talking about your peers that were non-Chicano. How did that relationship work?

[00:37:04]

Ybarra Well, in the law practice, that was pretty much everybody. I think that most of the attorneys that were there in Riverside were country club guys anyway, with the exception of those that were involved in Legal Services. There was a few of the guys that were involved in Legal Services and they understood what war, poverty, and racism was all about. But it became just a closed thing. You didn't discuss things with people that you knew that were going to disagree with you.

I was a nonviolent person. Of course, I carried my .45 with me just for self-protection, which I still do today. I'm a licensed-to-carry person, because I know that what happened in South Carolina is not an isolated incident. I mean, when the President [Barack Obama] says, "Just because you stop using the word 'nigger' doesn't keep you from being a racist," and he's right about that, and you have to put that in that context. You know, all you've got to do is run around town and you'll see the guys with Confederate flags on their cars and everything else. I'm sorry, you guys lost, and the war *was* about slavery, it absolutely was.

And if you read David Hayes-Bautista's book on Cinco de Mayo, then you really get a good understanding of what that war was all about and what Cinco de Mayo was all about. The American institution as we know it today does not exist if

we lost the battle of Puebla. If the battle of Puebla had been lost, all the supplies and everything else that comes in from Europe, straight through Texas into Louisiana and into the South, and the war goes on interminably. When Mexico won that battle, it shut off the supplies, it kept the union a union, but nobody wants to recognize that. I teach it in my classes when I was allowed to teach it.

Rasul Please describe some of the impacts that your involvement with the Movimiento Chicano had on your career.

[00:38:59]

Ybarra Oh, it was dynamic. My first year of law school, when my wife had lost her job with Yamaha, she was a music teacher and she lost her job, a series of problems, we were now short on money. I had to go to work. Now, everyone will tell you if you're in a law school in California, you do not work your first year. You rely on your scholarships, you rely on whatever other support systems you have, or you live like a coyote. That's what you do.

So a friend of mine, Marty Cresi [phonetic], who was also my mentor, told me, he said, "There's a job being opened up at CRLA. Go over and talk with the guys."

So I went over and I talked with the guy. His name was Bob Ganesda [phonetic], and Ganesda and I talked about what he was doing. He was working on a case with Pacific Bell, and he wanted me to do a whole bunch of stuff that I didn't feel comfortable doing, and finally I said, "Suppose I could find people that applied for Pacific Bell who are Mexican American and couldn't get jobs."

He said, "Can you do that?"

I said, “I can do that.”

Well, there was a guy in the Mission District who had this outreach center for veterans, and I knew him because he was right across the street from my little office. So I went and banged on his door, and I said, “Hey, Saul, I want to find people.”

He pulls out a stack of applications like that [demonstrates] of all the people he’s referred to Pacific Bell. One of the guys was a husband-and-wife team, she was an operator in Mexico City on the international line, so she had to speak English and Spanish. He was a decorated Vietnam veteran and he was a Cat operator. That’s what he did. He did Cat operations in country. Both of them had applied to Pac Bell, got turned down.

So we did the trial on that, and I was co-counsel in the trial on the rate increase on that case. I remember putting them on the witness stand, and by the time I got through examining my witnesses, opposing counsel came over. Actually, it was the vice president of Pac Bell came over and said, “We’re going to resolve this right now. Those two people go to work tomorrow.”

And I pulled up my box and I put it on the table, and I said, “What about these guys?”

He said, “We’ll find them all jobs.”

I said, “Okay.” I didn’t resolve the case, but at least we got some people working.

Well, 1972, I graduated from law school. In ’74, I’m working for Jerry Brown in his campaign in Riverside County, and we carried Riverside County for Jerry, and we did it really nicely. Bob Ganesda knows Jerry, Tony Klein knows Jerry. They

were roommates in law school together. Jerry's looking for a secretary of Health and Welfare. Tony Klein says, "I got your guy. His name is Mario Obledo."

So Jerry and Mario get together in an airport in Chicago or some place, and they spend a couple hours talking, and he offers him the job. And Mario said, "I'll go, but only if you'll take Bob Ganesda with me, because he's my guy."

So Jerry said, "Whatever you got to have, you take it."

About a week after the announcement, I called up Bob to congratulate. Now, mind you, I'm a court-qualified expert at this time in welfare law, okay? Not bad for a little Mexican kid who's twenty-four years old, sixty-six about that time.

I go up, spend two weeks. Every day we're meeting with Jerry, every day, and finally one day Jerry looks at me and says, "What do you think I ought to be doing?"

I said, "Well, the first thing you need to do, Governor, is get the hell out of these guys' hair and let them do their jobs." I said, "We're over here messing around every day. Why? Why don't you just let us do our jobs?"

So Ganesda offered me a job. I said, "I'm going back to Riverside to practice law. That's my hometown, that's where my son is at, my family's at. I've always planned on being a lawyer in Riverside."

He called me every day. "You've got to come up. You've got to come up," every single day for two weeks.

Finally one Friday night I was out, I was blitzed. I came home. My wife and I had broken up. We were divorced. I'm laying in bed hungover like a dog. Bob calls me up and he says, "So when can you be here? Can you be here in two weeks?"

I said, "No, I've got to have at least a month to close up my practice."

He said, “Okay, fine. Goodbye.” Click.

And I go [demonstrates], “I just went to work for Jerry Brown.” And I worked for him for four years.

So in that process, I was the deputy secretary of the Health and Welfare Agency, the first Chicano deputy secretary in the history of the state of California. I had $10 billion directly underneath me, four state departments, 50,000 employees, 4,000 legislative bills, 3,000 to 4,000 changes in budget that would go across my desk every year for the four years that I was there.

I went on vacation once. Mario told me, said, “Don’t ever do that again.” The paperwork had backed up in my office so high, they had to bring in five guys to deal with it. And I just got exhausted and I went to Samoa for ten years and then I came back.

Rasul Looking back at your experiences in the Movimiento Chicano, are there any issues that were left unresolved?

[00:44:13]

Ybarra War, racism, and poverty. I mean, the three issues that were still out there are still here today. *Mendez* is alive and well. *Mendez* was the case that said “You go to the Mexican school because that’s where you need to go.” And today, the attorney general is defending the Mexican school with the lousy teachers and the lousy facilities, and she doesn’t have to do that. There’s no reason for her to do that. She could just have simply said, “I’m not going to appeal that case.” But CTA paid her to do it.

So, our educational system. You know from your experience at this college what the dropout rate amongst our kids is. I mean, I used to say, "Every student that I work personally with graduates." I'm now—ready for this one? I'm an advisor to a Latina sorority at UC Davis. When the women came over to talk to me about it, I said, "Can't you guys find a woman to be your advisor?"

They said, "We don't like any of them."

"Okay, fine. Now I'm going to lose my job over there." Sure enough, I did, but all of my girls graduate. Every single member of that sorority graduates. We've got 100 percent graduation rate. And the woman who's doing the speech at the graduation says, "We have to work on our dropout rate among our students!" And I'm thinking, "Lady, why don't you come and talk to my students. They'll tell you how to get it done." Because we have a no-dropout rule. Nobody drops out.

One of my students got up and she said, "I'm here to thank Ybarra. He was the only guy that cared about me. I was thrown out twice and he kept me in, and that's the reason why I'm standing here today graduating," tears running down her face. And that's what I do.

Rasul Want to say that statement again?

[00:45:56]

Ybarra Tears running down her face?

Rasul No, about every student you work with.

[00:46:00]

Ybarra Has 100 percent graduation rate.

[00:46:02]

Rasul And that's why I always send my students to you. [laughter]

[00:46:04]

Ybarra Exactly, exactly. Give me these guys that are saying, "I don't want to be here. I don't know what this guy's going to teach me." [laughter]

Rasul You know, time has passed, '65 to '80, and people who worked and gave their heart to the Movimiento Chicano, a lot have passed away. Can you remember anyone who has passed away and tell us about them and their significance, their impact here in the Chicano Movement in Sacramento?

[00:46:30]

Ybarra You don't want someone statewide. You want somebody local.

Rasul Yes, please.

[00:46:30]

Ybarra Only one person that qualifies, in my mind, and that's Isabel [Hernandez] Serna. While other people were running around talking about what they were going to do or how they were going to get there, Isabel *did* it. If I had a student that I needed to get into Sac State, if I had a student that was in trouble at Sac State, if I had a student that was contemplating dropping out or there was marital issues or family issues, I could go to Isabel and she would fix it. She was a magician. When she passed, it was just an *incredible* loss to this community. If anybody deserves a statue, it's Isabel. There ought to be an Isabel Serna chapter for Latinas in every school and college in this town. She was an amazing woman, absolutely amazing.

Rasul Your involvement with her, your relationship with her, how did that come about?

[00:47:34]

Ybarra Like I said, it was professional. I went to her house—

Rasul That's what I mean.

[00:47:39]

Ybarra I went to her house a couple of times for events, but we weren't best buds or anything. It wasn't like we played bridge together or sat down and drank tequila together. It was a shock when she died. It was a real shock.

Rasul Yes. What do you see as current or future challenges for the Chicano community?

[00:48:03]

Ybarra War, racism, and poverty. And what I mean by that is this: our young men, now our young women, see the military as their only alternative for an educational bonus. They get into the military. I mean, some of the guys I know are doing five, six, seven tours, and they're coming back broken.

After the Vietnam War, we all used to talk about the 58,000 men that died in the Vietnam War. A hundred thousand died afterwards. Nobody talks about that. Nobody talks about the number of suicides and homicides. All you've got to do is go on the streets over here, and 80 percent of the folks on the streets here are veterans.

I have one kid that I've been mentoring now for the better part of five years. He was in the sandbox for a couple of years. He's broken. He's an alcoholic. He won't admit it, but he is. I don't allow him to be drunk when he comes to my house, I don't allow him to have the smell of alcohol on his breath when he's around me, but I

help him as much as I can. He looks at me and says, “Well, I know I can come here and I can be safe.”

During the war, there was a halfway house in East L.A., guys who would come back. Because remember they take you out of the shit—excuse me—out of the soup, and they’d fly you out to Guam, you’d turn in all your junk and everything else, they’d give you a brand-new duffel bag and they’d ship you home, and you stepped off an airplane, and you were home. Well, that’s really good for debriefing. During the Second World War, people were on ships for thirty or forty-five days where they had time to cool down from combat.

There was a kid there by the name of Smiley. I don’t remember his last name. But he was a nice, quiet young man, but you didn’t touch Smiley from behind, you didn’t make loud noises around him, you didn’t wake him up by touching him, you just didn’t do that. He was a tunnel rat. Most people know what tunnel rats are. These are the guys that went into the tunnels, and if they came back, well, fine. If they didn’t come back, well, you didn’t expect it, right? Well, he was a tunnel rat. He was about 5’5”, 5’6”, weighed about 125, 130 pounds.

So one day I’m out there cooking for the guys, I’m making chorizo and eggs and everything else, and I’m banging on the wall, “Hey, everybody, get up, get up!” Ringing the bell. “Let’s go! It’s breakfast time.”

This buddy of mine comes in from the law school, and I said, “Hey, go down there and wake up Smiley. He’s sleeping in today.”

And I’m cooking. All of a sudden, I hear [gasps], like that. I turn around. “Don’t touch—!” By the time I got to the “touch” part, he comes flying out of the

room, BAM!, up against the wall. Smiley comes out, “I’m sorry, man, I’m sorry.” Don’t touch Smiley.

Well, today the military is seen as the option for our kids rather than here, because there’s no supportive services at this school. With your retirement and my leaving, there’s nobody here that gets up and bangs on the door of the folks here and says, “What are you doing for our kids?” Same thing at the universities, same thing at the elementary schools.

We’re going to open up a Spanish immersion school, the old Washington Elementary School, because it’s a block and a half away from our school. We’re going to get that done, but it takes a *tremendous* amount of effort.

When we talk about racism, people always assume that racism is simply a Black and White matter. Most people don’t realize that there were more Mexicans that were hung and lynched than all the Blacks that were hung and lynched in the South. They don’t recognize that part. They don’t know about Joaquin Murrieta, what happened to Joaquin and his wife. His wife was raped by twenty-seven guys. And you know what? He killed them all. *That’s* the story of Joaquin Murrieta, not this guy running around stealing horses and doing this and doing that with his bands. I don’t think they ever killed him, by the way.

But you can’t get into those kinds of discussions unless you have an overall discussion about professionalism and where people belong in the educational system. The educational system is Black and White. There are *thousands*, literally thousands of bilingual teacher aids in California. There is no career path for them to become

teachers. Why? Because CTA doesn't want it, AFT doesn't want it. "We're happy with the way things are. Besides, they can't really teach."

So, war, racism, and poverty. Because we can't discuss birth control, because the Catholic Church refuses to recognize that "Go forth and multiply" didn't mean flood the goddamn planet until it sinks. I used to teach a class on Chicana health. I asked the women in the classroom, "How many of you have done a self-vaginal examination?"

And there would be giggles all across the room. "Oh, my god! Oh, my god!"

I said, "I know that your mother told you that was nasty, but let me tell you what you don't get if you do that. You don't get herpes, you don't get AIDS, you don't get genital warts, you don't end up with diseases that will kill you. How many of you have had the shot for genital warts?" When that first came up to be an issue, maybe one or two students in my class.

I said, "Okay, we're going to get on a bus. We're going over to Woodland. They'll give them to you for free." We did that. They didn't do it schoolwide, but I did it in my class. Our children are getting genital warts. Genital warts equals birth defects, that's what it equals, or the killing of the child or the killing of the mother. Our babies are still having babies at twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Menstrual cycles are starting at ten, eleven, twelve because of all the hormones in the food. Nobody's talking about it. Can't talk about that. That's nasty. It's the Catholic Church's fault, 100 percent, in my mind. The pope, I'm surprised they haven't assassinated that guy yet. I'm really surprised, because he's going way out there in the valley of the shadow.

So those are still the same issues. They still affect us as they did when I was a kid and when you were a kid. What year did you go to Vietnam?

Rasul Sixty seven-'68, during Tet.

[00:54:14]

Ybarra During Tet. The fun time, as we used to call it. "Oh, I was in Tet during the fun times." That's the point. When I was working with the Vietnam Vets Against the War in '68, these guys were coming back and they were broken men. Sixty five, '66, the guys that had been in the early part of the war, they were broken men, and a lot of them still are, as you know. Your friends in college, guys are still taking their lives.

Rasul Statistically, twenty-two veterans kill themselves every day.

[00:54:51]

Ybarra Every day, every day, every day. And the goddamn Republicans won't increase the budget for mental health services to the veterans.

Rasul Steve, looking at social, political events and issues, the UFW, *Mendez*, etc., and looking at cultural events, the Chicano community as it was in 1965 to 1980, how has it impacted them today now, the whole issues and Movement?

[00:55:20]

Ybarra I think that the greatest impact has been in education, because now—well, there's two impacts. With immigration, when Reagan declared amnesty and we brought a million people out of the shadows to get them to where they could apply for citizenship, that was a great part of that, and all of us that were involved in Movement stuff were doing those.

I mean, I was at a function in Santa Rosa—well, we did a function here at City College. I remember that because your cousin Deborah Ortiz was working on the thing. And they asked me, they said, "How many people will show up?"

I said, "Five thousand."

They said, "Oh, we were thinking more like 300."

And Kenny Pulliam [phonetic], who's one of my communist friends, a good Catholic girl, said to me, she said, "You think 5,000 people are going to be here?"

I said, "I know they are." We were taking photographs at the time for their passports and everything else, applications, and doing their fingerprinting. I said, "How many photograph things do you have?"

She said, "I've got about 5,000."

I said, "Bring them all."

And my friend Arden Valdoza [phonetic], who has since passed, he was a great loss to our community. He was a *great* loss to our community. Well, I could tell you stories about Valdoza, the Filipinos, and we could go on for hours about him.

But we were scheduled to open at 10:00 o'clock, and I got down here about 7:30. The line from the cafeteria extended around the cafeteria, all the way around, back over to the parking lot. And I looked and I said, "How many of our volunteers are here yet?"

"We got about twenty guys here."

I said, "Open the doors."

"But we're not scheduled to start till 10:00 o'clock."

I said, “Listen, I’m not White. I don’t know who made that rule, but I wasn’t in the room when they made the rule, so the rules don’t apply to me, okay? See this? [demonstrates] It’s not coming off. Open the damn door and get people in and have them start filling out their applications and get them out of the heat.”

We had four lawyers that were there helping people with legal questions. We processed all 5,000 that day.

I went to Fresno. We had 11,000 people that we processed that day. I was the only attorney that was there.

So when I hear the guy at Hastings say, “We have too many attorneys,” I say, “You’re right. You have too many White attorneys. Don’t admit any more. Just admit Mexican Americans, just admit the Hmongs, just admit the Vietnamese, just admit the Japanese, just admit the Chinese, because in those communities there’s a shortage. Let the White people pay to go to Stanford. They want them there anyway. Keep our universities for us.”

The plan of the University of California is to become a private institution, to privatize itself 100 percent, so they don’t have to have people like you and me and our kids go to that school. That’s what it’s all about.

Rasul Well, Steve, we’re just about done here. Do you have any final words? [00:58:21]

Ybarra Well, I would say this to whomever is watching this: go read Davis Hayes-Bautista’s book on Cinco de Mayo, go read Bert Corona’s life story, go read the books about who we are and what we do, read Jorge Ramos’ books to understand the politicization of our community.

I started working on vote by mail to eliminate all the reasons why people had to vote by mail, because you had to have nine reasons. I was the guy that wrote that law that eliminated it. I was told by everybody, "You'll never get that through."

But I talked to Gray [Davis]'s chief of staff, his political chief of staff, and I said, "If I get the bill to Gray's desk, will he sign it?"

He said, "Yeah, he'll sign it."

So we worked it all the way through the legislature. Bob Mulholland was given the job of calling me to tell me that the governor had signed the bill. "Well, you know, when it came down to the right thing, Gray did the right thing and he signed the bill."

And I didn't want to say, "You know what, Mulholland? I knew that a year ago." I just said, "Thanks, Bob. Appreciate the call."

And then I changed the name from "absentee ballot" to "mail ballot," because our people would say, "*Yo no soy absentado*. I'm not absent." Oh, okay, then we have a mail ballot.

This year I'm going to increase voter turnout in our community by 30 percent here in California, and I'm going to do it with vote by mail. Our people are going to vote because people are going to knock on their door and they're going to say, "Mr. Rasul, do you like your streets the way they are? Do you like your community the way it is? If you like it that way, then don't vote. But if you don't like it that way, here, fill out this application and you can vote at home, in privacy, in secrecy, and you'll never have to worry about a member of the Ku Klux Klan asking you if you're a U.S. citizen."

Rasul Thank you, Steve.

[01:00:11]

Ybarra My pleasure. Always a pleasure to have known you all these years.

Rasul Thank you.

[End of interview]